Mopping up oil spills worldwide: Elastec

Shon Mosier, Vice President of North American Sales

Elastec oil spill response equipment

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Practical tips - Costa Rica / International Business News / Travel – Costa Rica
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When you think about oil spills, big companies come to mind. But, mopping up the spills is often the work of smaller companies like Elastec, featured on pages 4 & 5 of this edition of IBNewsmag.

Based in south-eastern Illinois, Elastec exports environmental equipment to clean up oil and other hazardous spills to some 145 countries. To keep with specific customer needs, the company continually develops new products.

We also feature the country of Costa Rica in this edition – both from a business profile and a travel & tourism standpoint. Having traveled there extensively, I can attest to its natural beauty and friendly people. With no army, the country focused on education, which resulted in a 98% literacy rate.

In our International Breaking news, you’ll read articles that rarely make the media here in the US.

Speaking of international news – what’s happening with Brexit? With Britain’s general election coming up December 12th, Boris Johnson’s approval rating appears to be fading. What does this mean for Brexit? It could very possibly signal a second referendum.
When it comes to cleaning up oil and other hazardous spills, Elastec based in Carmi, Illinois, is one of the world’s largest environmental equipment manufacturers.

While globally and domestically the company is best known for its oil spill response equipment, it also manufactures and sells silt and debris floating barriers, vacuum systems, aluminum workboats and batch load incinerators to name a few.

One of its better known assignments was the clean-up of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, for which it successfully employed its oil spill response equipment and fire boom technologies. It has also sold specialty fire-booms to Brazil, and corrosion resistant skimmers for mining regions in South America.
The company makes and exports more high-tech products, such as its portable MediBurn waste incinerator, which can be easily deployed and operated in remote areas as it was in the Congo during the Ebola outbreak to dispose of medical wastes.

One of its major advantages over competitive products is the extensive international training Elastec offers its dealers, distributors, sales reps and end-users. The training sessions take place in conjunction with major trade shows by appointment, and twice-a-year at its home office allowing customers to really dig into specific product education.

With some 129 team members operating out of 200,000 square feet in five different facilities, and selling in 145 countries, Elastec is among the world’s largest manufacturers of oil spill cleanup and surface water pollution.

Elastec conducts extensive R&D, engineering and testing of its equipment. Elastec tests regularly at the OHMSETT National Oil Spill Response Research & Renewable Energy Test Facility.

While the implementation of free trade agreements is important, in reality they serve more as a credible calling card in soliciting sales in countries under such agreements.

The company continues to face competition both nationally and internationally, with major competition coming from manufacturers in Finland, Germany and the UK. When it comes to price, the most recent period of a strong dollar has been a challenge. But according to Vice President of North American Sales, Shon Mosier, “When our customers and prospective customers learn about and see our product quality and effectiveness in use, we typically come out ahead.”

Another advantage is the rapid customization of spill equipment, which once deployed is typically in demand by other customers based on its specific effectiveness. An example is Elastec’s customized drum skimmer, which cleans up wastewater or can be used to recycle frac water. Both applications help reduce pollution from water.

“In recent years, China has been a significant market for us,” said Mr. Mosier. “We’ve been successful there due to the quality of our primary dealer and his specially selected end-users.” Elastec’s sales success in China is based on product effectiveness and, according to Mr. Mosier, has not been readily copied. “In fact, we’ve had more copycats in other countries,” he noted.

An important factor owing to the company’s sales success is product simplicity. “By design, the majority of our products are simply well-made mechanical devices that do not require a great deal of sophisticated automation,” pointed out Mr. Mosier. “Many countries do not have the technology or tools to maintain complicated equipment. We find that the simpler we can make the operation with minimal maintenance, the more successful our client is in combatting spills.”

For more information, visit www.elastec.com
Express News from Around the World

Asahi Shimbun
Hong Kong confirmed that its economy plunged into first recession in a decade due to anti-government protests and US-China trade war.

Sydney Morning Herald
China Mengniu Dairy Company has been approved by the Australian government to acquire Bellamy, a large organic infant formula producer for AUD 1.5B. The company has been hamstrung to sell to the Chinese retail outlets because it has not received government approval to do so. It has been selling to China via other outlets only.

Iberdola (Spain), the largest wind energy producer in the world, will enter the Australian market via a 320-megawatt facility to be built near Adelaide.

Korea Times
Tensions are escalating between Chinese and south Korean students at South Korean colleges and universities over the Hong Kong protests.

Hyundai Motors will build their Santa Cruz SUV at their Alabama plant in 2021 and will also establish a future mobility lab in the Los Angeles area.

Japan approved 1st shipment of liquid hydrogen fluoride to South Korea amid restrictions. It is one of the key materials under export restrictions to South Korea companies. Liquid hydrogen fluoride is used in the production of semiconductors and flexible displays.

Buenos Aires Times
Drillers in Argentina are concerned that government interventionists will foil the development of a major shale formation in Patagonia that could turn the nation into a global energy provider. The new President of Argentina, Alberto Fernandez campaigned on regulating energy markets. Mr. Fernandez plans to visit the US after his December 10 assumption of the presidency that would include a meeting with President Trump and a visit to Houston to meet with major oil production companies.

Argentina is running dangerously low on US dollars to pay back debt to the IMF. They must repay US$ 5 billion by the end of 2019.

Straits Times
Singapore's first electric motorcycle (Scorpio EST-X1) developed by Singapore based Europports Technologies with seed capital from its parent company, Europsports Global. The prototype will be built in February 2020 with a Singapore assembly plant to follow. The venture is receiving support from the Singapore government.

China unexpectedly injected cash into their banking system.

Tieng Seng holdings (Singapore) has signed a 5-year cooperation agreement Ngee Ann Polytechnic, a Singapore university. They will jointly develop robotics for the construction industry.

Bangkok Post
Nissan Motors Thailand is investing 10 million Baht ($333,333) for a 3-year operation to increase capacity and for development.

Chinese companies are looking at Thailand as location for future production facilities in order to avoid US tariffs.

Jerusalem Post
Toyota Tsusho Corporation, the trading arm of the Toyota Group will partner with Israeli venture capital crowdfunding platform, Our Crowd, to source and invest in innovation in Israel and worldwide.

Israel has gained approximately 20,000 millionaires and enjoyed a significant increase in adult wealth in the past 12 months according a new report published by Credit Suisse.
In this era of interconnectedness and technology, gaining a global audience for your business has become a completely feasible (and even necessary) strategy. An international market immediately rocketed your exposure, which in itself can do more for your brand than personal outreach and word of mouth.

Here are five tips on building an effective, global-facing plan:

Don’t be afraid to test the waters
Slow and steady wins the race when it comes to global expansion, which is why testing the market is crucial. Narrow down your potential reach to one or two cities, and from there you can hire distributors to market and test your product out for you. As our IBNewsmag post on international sales suggests, you may also want to join trade fairs as a way to gauge the market and foster connections.

Understand the competition
In the same way you thoroughly researched your competition before starting out your business, you should look to compile a growing file of your international competitors. You may also want to reach out to local experts to determine the feasibility of your product as well as gain tips on how to better appeal to the local market. If you’re deciding where to expand, getting a lay of the competition can help narrow down your choices until you find a good fit.

Adopt the language of the market you want to penetrate
While you may not be able to pick up a new language immediately, it helps to familiarize yourself with slang and communication preferences for the country you want to enter. Research from the Centre of Language shows that using consumer’s native language boosts sales only when used effectively. Knowing the cultural nuances behind a country’s language (even if it’s English) can help distinguish you from the competition.

Go online
Even small businesses that have been around for decades are going online to connect to their customers and attract new ones. SEO experts Ayima highlight that digital marketing blends naturally with an international reach, especially with the prevalence of smartphones. You should establish your social media presence on every major platform (ie. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook), and consider boosted ads to increase engagement.

Keep in mind the legal considerations
This is perhaps the trickiest part of international expansion, albeit the most important. You’ll want to make sure your business has the right to operate legally in whatever country you choose, with Chron noting that some locations have lax human rights and environmental regulations. You should be deliberate about the countries you want to expand to and grow your business in such a way that respects local laws and the employees you will hire.

It’s no secret that coming up with a comprehensive marketing plan is tough. The added global aspect makes this plan even tougher, especially considering the sheer number of competitors you’ll be pitting yourself against. That said, a well-executed global marketing strategy can outweigh all the time and effort it takes to plan and prepare.
Costa Rica is the shining star of Central America to visit.

“Pura Vida” is not only a Costa Rican phrase meaning “enjoy life, live it”, but also a precept they actually live by. While tourism remains the major industry, keeping the natural beauty of the land is also of the utmost importance. Known literally as “the Rich Coast” for the plentiful natural resources you’ll find there, Costa Rica is also rich with wildlife, coffee and banana plantations, surf schools, zipline courses, casinos, museums, beaches, parks and other unique places of interest.

Whether visiting the country for business or pleasure, it is likely you’ll find yourself in the bustling capital city of San José, or one of the many tourist-friendly cities and villages. While the eastern half of the country offers some scenic landscape, it is generally not considered as desirable by tourists as San José and most places west. One exception to this rule is the popular Sloth Sanctuary Costa Rica, located near the Caribbean Sea, outside the city of Limón.

For a quick taste of the bustling capital city of San José, take a walk down the central thoroughfare called Paseo Colón, known for its beautiful buildings. The National Museum of Costa Rica gives visitors an opportunity to learn about the country’s indigenous history and gain a better understanding of the effects of Spanish colonization.

The Teatro Nacional, housed in an impressive neoclassical style building, is worth a visit. While seeing a live performance is the best way to experience this national treasure, guided tours are offered during daytime hours. For a glimpse into the way locals enjoy and live their lives, visit the up and coming Barrio Escalante neighborhood where you’ll find fun street art, cool cafes, and small retail shops. A relaxing stroll through San José’s version of New York’s Central Park, La Sebana, followed by a meal in a typical Costa Rican restaurant called a “Soda”, is a perfect way to round out the day.

After a day or two in the city, it is best to head out and enjoy Costa Rica’s rarely surpassed biodiversity. This eco-tourism dream destination boasts protected rain forests covering nearly 25% of the country. Head west and enjoy beautiful beaches along the Pacific coast, spectacular waterfalls, active volcanos, steaming hot springs, lush rainforests, and a wide variety of resorts to satisfy a variety of travelers. Three of the most popular towns for visitors include:

1. Manuel Antonio - This Pacific coast location is mostly covered by the Manuel Antonio National Park. Here you will enjoy pristine beaches, rainforests, hiking trails and off-shore coral reefs - perfect for exploring.

2. Arenal area - Home to the most active volcano in Costa Rica and one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Central America, La Fortuna, this region is also a paradise for adventure seekers.

3. Tamarindo - This beautiful town, located within the province of Guanacaste, is a tourist haven for surfing, diving, fishing and viewing wildlife. This mangrove-lined estuary is a haven for animals such as crocodiles and howler monkeys.
For a taste of something different, book a stay at Lapa Rios Lodge, designated one of National Geographic’s Unique Lodges of the World. Situated within Central America’s last remaining tropical lowland rainforests, this resort offers an opportunity to commune with nature and enjoy an abundance of activities centered around providing guests an intimate and authentic experience.

By Lisa Osborne Blalock
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A Few Practical Tips for Doing Business in Costa Rica

General

- Lunch is the main meal of the day.
- Outside of the San José area, most small businesses, restaurants and hotels require payment in the local currency - Colones.
- Restaurant bills will almost always include tax and tip except in certain tourist areas, where a 10% tip is totally acceptable.
- When flying out of Costa Rica, you’ll pay a $28 exit fee.
- Spanish is the predominant language.

Business

- Patience is necessary.
- In meetings, it is important to engage in small talk first — family, beauty of Costa Rica etc.
- A well-groomed look is important.
- Suit and tie are appropriate for men and dress or skirt and blouse for women.
- Have business cards in Spanish and English. Be sure to read those received.
- Handshakes are important for all occasions.
- Establishing connections is important.
- Make appointments in advance via mail, email, fax or phone. Confirm by phone before arrival.
- Promptness is not practiced. Delays of 30 minutes are common. However, you should be there at the scheduled time just in case.
- Costa Ricans don’t take midday naps (siestas).
- Conflicts should be handled in an indirect way. Don’t embarrass anybody.

OVERVIEW

Location

Costa Rica is in Central America. It borders both the Caribbean Sea and the north Pacific Ocean. It is between Nicaragua and Panama.
Brief History
In 1563, Spain established a colony in the central highlands of the country. In 1821, Costa Rica, along with other provinces, declared its independence from Spain. Two years later, Costa Rica joined the United Provinces of Central America, but this federation dissolved in 1838 and Costa Rica declared its independence.

- Size: Slightly smaller than West Virginia’s Population: About half of the population is urban.
- San José is the largest city and has approximately 1/5 of the country’s population.
- Population: 5.0 M (July, 2018 est.)
- Population Growth: 1.13% (2018 est.)
- Literacy Rate: 97.8% (2019)
- Government: Presidential republic
- Capital City: San José

Economy
Since 2010, Costa Rica has experienced strong and stable growth. It has a diverse economy with a strong agricultural sector - and a growing manufacturing and service base. Because of its diversity in animal species and plants, it has become an attractive ecotourism destination. It also has a well-educated labor force.

- GDP: $58.27B (2017 est.)
- GDP Growth Rate: 3.3% (2017 est.)
- Unemployment Rate: 8.1% (2017 est.)
- Exchange Rate: 1 US Dollar = 581.95 CRC’s (Costa Rican Colon) 11/8/19 11.42 AM
- Labor Force: 2.29.M (2017 est.)

Major Industries: Agriculture (bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, corn, rice, beans, potatoes, beef, dairy, timber), medical equipment, food processing, textiles, clothing, construction mater-

International Trade
Total Exports: $10.81B (2017 est.)
- Major Exports: optical, technical, medical apparatus, fruits and nuts, miscellaneous process foods, coffee, tea, vegetable preparations, live trees, plants, cut flowers, vegetables, animal/vegetable fats, oils, waxes, spices, dairy, eggs, honey, miscellaneous manufactured articles

According to folklore, catching falling leaves means good luck – one month of good luck for each leaf caught.

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“A fallen leaf is nothing more than a summer’s wave goodbye.”
- Unknown
PROFILE: Costa Rica - continued

- Major Export Partners: US - 29%, Benelux - 12.8%, China (including Hong Kong) – 9.2%, Germany - 5.2%, Mexico - 3% (2017)

Total Imports: $15.15B (2017 est.)
- Major Imports: raw materials, consumer goods, capital equipment, petroleum, construction equipment

Sampling of English Language News Sites
- Q Costa Rica - general news - www.qcostarica.com
- The Costa Rica Times - general news - www.costaricatimes
- The Costa Rica News - general news - www.costaricanews.com

Sampling of Costa Rican Companies
- Florida Ice and Farm Co. SA - beer, soft drinks, canned goods - www.fifco.com - Heredia
- Ujarras - food products - www.ujarras.com - Three Rivers, Cartago
- Atlas Eléctrica SA - home appliances - www.atlas.co.cr - San José
- Camtronics SA - contract mfg - electrical industry - www.camtronics.cr.com - Cartago
- CiberTec National - telecommunications, fraud control etc. - www.ciberTec.com - San José
- HSolis - large construction co. - www.hsolis.com - Cartago
- Constructora Costarricense De La Construcción – construction - www.construccion.co.cr - San José
- Dos Pinos - food, beverages, tobacco - www.dospinos.com - Alajuela
- Establishment Labs Holdings - medical devices & equipment - www.establishmentlabs.com - Alajuela
- Productos de Concretocr - building materials - www.productosdeconcretocr.com - Alajuela
- Edificadora Beta - architecture, engineering & design - www.beta.cr - Alajuela
- Florida Bebidos - food processing, beverages, tobacco - www.florida.co.cr - Heredia
- Constructora Valba SA - construction - www.valba.co.cr - San José
- Tico Electronica - contract manufacturing - electronics - www.ticoelectronics.com - Alajuela

Public Holidays: 2019 - 2020
- December 25, 2019 - Christmas
- January 1 - New Year’s Day
- April 9 - Easter Thursday
- April 10 - Easter Friday
- April 11 - Juan Santamaria Day
- May 1 - Labor Day
- July 25 - Guanacaste Day
- August 2 - Virgin of Los Angeles Day
- August 15 - Mother’s Day
- September 15 - Independence Day
- October 12 - Cultures Day
- December 25 - Christmas