



Reprints of articles about your community bank • www.JohnMarshallBank.com • 703.584.0840

Panel Schools Business Owners on Challenges, Pitfalls of Trade with Asia

Sun Gazette

By Brian Trompeter/ reprinted from *The Arlington Sun Gazette*

Successfully conducting business in Asia requires persistence, planning, networking and attention to detail, business leaders told entrepreneurs May 8 at a small-business summit in Falls Church.

"The best sector to export from is the one you know intimately," said Bill Fanjoy, U.S. Export Assistance Center director for Virginia and Washington, D.C., who was among six panelists who spoke at the James Lee Community Center.

Because of myriad hurdles that must be overcome, it usually takes 18 months' worth of preparation before export companies can start shipping goods, Fanjoy said.

"Don't reduce the amount of time placed into market research and ensure you will be paid," he advised the audience. "You should have zero surprises."

Del. Mark Keam (D-35th) moderated the panel discussion, which had the theme of "Building Bridges Between Northern Virginia and Asia."

Keam stressed his own "Three E's" for success—education, economic opportunities and equal opportunity for all groups—and said networking also was crucial.

"In politics, we have a saying: 'It's too late to make a friend when you need one,'" he said.

Panelist Michael Kwon, president of Sunnect Inc. in Springfield, recommended entrepreneurs employ technology to their best advantage. Kwon said to avoid being chained to his desk, he often communicates with people over the Internet using Skype and carries an iPhone to receive faxes and check inventory.

Kwon advised the entrepreneurs to attend trade shows, but plan their time carefully and skip the booths of huge corporations, where they are less likely to get much of an audience.



**"We believe
this is an
opportunity
country"**

Sonia Nga Johnston of John Marshall Bank talked about financing during a small-business summit May 8 at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church.

Fanjoy urged the audience to learn about his agency's programs at www.export.gov and said for \$600 the organization would set up five business meetings overseas. He urged business owners to have embassy personnel review contracts before they sign the documents.

Lining up financing also is important for companies doing business in foreign countries, said Christopher Lipscomb, a vice president at John Marshall Bank.

“The best time to borrow money is when you don’t need to borrow money,” he said.

U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8th), who convened the summit, said recent trade negotiations are opening up opportunities in Asia.

Congress last fall passed the Republic of Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS), which took effect March 15 and will break down trade barriers for U.S. companies doing business in South Korea, Moran said.

“Unfortunately, today U.S. businesses and workers are getting the short end of the stick in terms of their trade with Korea and many other Asian nations,” he said. “Korea, in particular, taxes our products at much higher rates than we impose on their goods.”

U.S. officials currently are negotiating terms of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a regional free-trade agreement that will include the United States, Australia, Brunei, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam and Chile.

The partnership “will be a landmark, a 21st-century trade agreement that’s going to set a new standard for global trade,” said Moran, who also hopes Japan, Canada and Mexico eventually will participate in the agreement.

Panelist Sonia Nga Johnston, a regional president with John Marshall Bank, knows from first-hand experience the importance of opening up possibilities. She told the audience about coming to America from Vietnam 40 years ago with just \$10 in her pocket.

“We believe this is an opportunity country,” Johnston said of her bank’s philosophy. ★ *May 2012*