

## **International Markets Increase Revenue For Medium Size Online Retailers**

*Source: Hanks Clothing*

*Dated: Jun 21, 2008*

*Grabbing a piece of the International online business is a challenge for many Small to Medium size Online Retailers.*

When weekly calls were coming into Hanks Clothing's from their website <http://www.hanksclothing.com> asking if they shipped to Canada the company knew they had to test the waters with International shipping.

"We had Canadian customers calling us completely baffled as to why were turning them away," says Hanks Clothing Manager Brian Needels, "Even our employees who answered the phone were asking me "Why don't we just ship to them?" Truth be told it's a bit more complicated.

For one thing the packages had to be hand taken to the Post Office. Sometimes an employee would be in line for 30 minutes over at the local post office." It just wasn't feasible the way were set up.", said Needels.

Then there were the shopping cart hurdles, explaining duties and taxes to customers, time spent filling out customs forms, and worries over fraud. "I dived in to get his setup and it turned into a bit more than anticipated." explained Needels, "Using software from Endicia.com that integrated with our Mail Order Manger Software from Dydacomp we overcame the Post Office dilemma and were able to have Custom Forms automated along with avoiding standing in line at the post office. We started shipping to Canada as our first International test."

Jump ahead 3 months and Hanks Clothing now ships to 20 countries. They just went live in May of 2008 with a sister website, <http://www.muckbootsinternational.com> , aimed to primarily capture international customers. "We still have a ways to go. For one thing we are a long way from being multi lingual and it only displays prices in US dollars", points out Needels, "but orders are coming in we wouldn't have had so we are moving forward with it. Everyday we make improvements and everyday traffic increases."

Hanks Clothing had to spend considerable time on modifying the cart to make the flow easy for international customers and they say they are about 90% there. They are waiting for a programmer to finish up some scripts to integrate that will make the flow of information for the customer easy and transparent. "It had to not only be easy for international customers but also not interrupt US customers."

Fraud is one area that scares most online retailers into not even thinking about International shipments. For Hanks Clothing it wasn't the biggest hurdle and Needels says he easily overcame this but couldn't release details. "I don't want to let the cat out of the bag so to speak", he stated with a smile, "but it wasn't my biggest hurdle." He did add though to be very careful. An inexperienced E-tailer could get burned badly on fraud. "If you're not sure get help in this area."

So is International business for everyone? According to Needels absolutely not. He said he wouldn't discourage a motivated business to go after it but said it needed to be well thought out. Hanks Clothing was months in laying this out and considerable resources were put forth. "Done wrong you could be highly discouraged." he added. "Make sure you have your US based business where you want it before expanding into the international market otherwise both will suffer."

Running the two websites has increased the workload, but if growth continues at the current rate by the Holidays Hanks plans on adding another employee or two. "In closing Needels says," I have to give the

credit for going Global to our employees. They kept asking, "Why don't we just ship to them?" They were asking a good question."

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About Hanks Clothing:

Hanks Clothing is a multi channel retailer located in Binghamton, NY since 1949. Starting out as an Army Navy store and adapting with the changing times over the years Hanks now focuses on Retail store, catalog, and internet sales of work Clothing and Footwear. See Hanks Clothing's Website for more info [www.hanksclothing.com](http://www.hanksclothing.com)

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