

‘Feet on the ground’ gives Florida manufacturers a leg up in Mexico

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Enterprise Florida Inc has maintained local representation in Mexico City for 25 years

Florida marine companies looking to do business in Mexico have a leg up on their competition thanks to the state’s public/private commerce department and its local field office.

For the past 25 years, Enterprise Florida Inc (EFI) has maintained local representation in Mexico City to look for both export and import opportunities.

“We help Florida companies to export to the Mexican market. We provide information about the market, distributors – to validate likely partners. We help schedule appointments, and we attend the meetings to provide translation and understand cultural issues,” explained Ana Arroya Yllanes, director, EFI Mexico City.

“We also promote Florida as a business destination. We deal with small and medium-sized companies that are looking to expand to the US market. These are companies that we seek out or are referred to us by the US embassy or the American Chamber of Commerce.”

Arroya has been at the helm of EFI Mexico since the office opened. She told *IBI* during a recent interview that her office helps expedite what could otherwise be an arduous process.

“When we approach the Mexican firms we approach as the Florida government, and so [Mexican companies] understand that a vendor is reliable and lends more credibility,” she said.

And, as designed, the recent Cancun International Boat Show provided a text-book example.

Paul Westrope, CEO of Onan Technologies, makers of the ceramic protective coating line Glidecoat, shared an encounter he had at the show.

“We had a gentleman come by the booth who was very interested in the product and told us of a friend in Mexico City who does distribution and some chemical manufacturing and is looking to get into ceramics, and he thought it would be a good opportunity for us to open discussions and see where it might go.

“He reached out to his friend, who was interested, and came back later giving us the friend’s contact information.”

That is when, Westhrope said, Ana Arroya stepped into action.

“The moment I told her about the gentleman, she asked for his contact number, and she literally dialed him, explained who she was, explained why she was calling, and they had a great conversation. He was very responsive, had been to the website, was very interested in the product line, indicated that he did distribution across Mexico as a whole. Ana set the call up.”

For Westhrope, what was accomplished with Arroya in hours could have taken him a week or more.

“By then, the gentlemen may have moved on to other things he has to focus on and it’s no longer a concern. The fact that Ana got back to him within an hour of his buddy being here, he was really impressed.

“The [financial assistance provided by EFI] grants for attending a show are a nice have as a small business owner, but what’s really important is having someone like Ana on the ground who you can talk to, who can set up the meetings, do the introductions, even do the translation. That’s critical. This could be a huge client for us in Mexico and only has come about as a result of Ana being here as feet on the ground.”