Strengthening Competitiveness of Ukraine in Global Markets

Over the past four years, Ukrainian business has defied many conventions. It has demonstrated extraordinary resilience, adaptability and creativity in the face of the full-scale invasion. Companies relocated production and employees, rebuilt supply chains, and adopted new technologies. They learned to function amid missile attacks and energy shortages. Decisions that would previously have taken months were made in days.

Ukrainian business has learned to run into the wind. It has not become stronger because conditions were favorable. It was forced to adapt continuously. The same capabilities that enabled survival at home are now helping companies compete globally.

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION EVOLVES FROM NECESSITY TO STRATEGY

The internationalization of Ukrainian business did not begin with Russia's full-scale invasion. Long before 2022, Ukraine was integrated into global markets as a major exporter of agricultural products, metals and industrial materials. The country's technology sector had already established itself as a supplier of digital services worldwide.

The war, however, fundamentally changed the pace, geography and nature of this expansion. Companies that might otherwise have entered foreign markets gradually established overseas offices and manufacturing, forged new partnerships and acquired assets abroad within just a few years.

The first phase was driven by business continuity. Companies sought to protect their people and preserve operations. Offices abroad served primarily as lifeboats rather than engines of growth.

As the war continued, the rationale evolved. Expansion has shifted from an emergency to a long-term business strategy. Temporary offices became regional hubs. Businesses that initially followed displaced Ukrainian communities began to target local customers. Companies invested in distribution networks, local partnerships and brands. They are diversifying sources of revenue and investment.

The profile of Ukraine's international business is changing too. Agriculture and food remain its backbone, accounting for approximately 59% of Ukraine's merchandise exports in 2024. At the same time, IT continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, with digital services making over 41% of Ukraine's total services exports in 2025, according to the National Bank of Ukraine and the Export Promotion Office.

Other sectors are also developing international footprint. Pharmaceutical and health technology companies are expanding internationally through partnerships and acquisitions. Renewable energy companies are investing in projects across Europe. Ukrainian defense companies are attracting interest due to their expertise tested in battlefields.

The direction is clear. Ukrainian moves to global markets with knowledge-intensive, higher value products and services complementing its traditional commodity exports.

SUCCESS ABROAD REQUIRES MORE THAN COMMERCIAL EXCELLENCE

Planting a flag in international markets is only the first step. As Ukrainian businesses enter mature and highly regulated markets, traditional measures of competitiveness, like quality and price, are no longer sufficient. Investors, regulators, and customers expect robust governance, transparency and responsible business practices. Geopolitical sensitivities and protectionist pressures can add another layer of difficulty.

Building recognition

Ukraine's international profile has generated significant goodwill. Yet solidarity is not a sustainable commercial basis.

Companies need to demonstrate why they are strong players in their own right. Their story should not focus solely on surviving the war, but on the capabilities developed through it: adaptability, discipline, speed of innovation, the ability to perform under pressure. These are powerful competitive advantages when communicated strategically.

Speaking the language of local stakeholders

Messages that resonate in Kyiv may not work in London, Brussels or Washington.

International stakeholders will ask focused questions. How does the company contribute to the local economy and jobs? Is it committed to the market for the long term? Does it meet contemporary standards of governance and sustainability?

Ukrainian companies therefore need a clear global story that can also reflect local priorities.

Navigating an increasingly complex policy environment

International expansion exposes businesses to complex new rules. The repertoire is overwhelming and keeps growing.

Challenges differ across sectors. Agribusinesses may encounter concerns about competition with local farmers. Defense technology companies must navigate export controls and debates about responsible use. Energy businesses will need to manage climate and security agendas. Digital companies face rapidly changing rules around artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and data governance.

Compliance with rules is essential but it is only the starting point. Companies need to anticipate policy developments and eventually aim to shape their operating environment.

Building trust before it is tested

Wartime conditions inevitably bring additional scrutiny on business. Customers and investors may question the resilience of a company even when its operational performance is strong.

To handle this challenge, companies should identify reputational risks, prepare evidence-based messages long before a crisis emerges. Such defensive measures will be important but not sufficient. Businesses need to build proactively positive presence across multiple communication channels.

In that sense, reputation and trust are much like insurance. Their value becomes most visible when adversity strikes, but it must be built long beforehand.

A ROADMAP TO TURN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE INTO INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Success of Ukrainian business to global markets will not hinge solely on commercial expertise. Corporate affairs and communications should be part of market-entry strategies from the outset rather than added once commercial operations are established. These functions will help a company take practical steps to gain strong position in new markets.

1

Analyze the stakeholder and policy landscape in focus markets. Understand who can influence the company´s ability to operate and grow. Map their interests, influence, policy positions, perceptions of Ukraine and the sector. Establish a system to monitor tax, regulatory, political, economic and social trends impacting the business.

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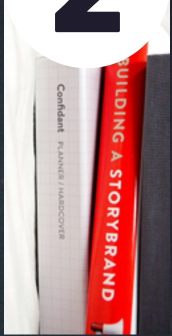

Define the corporate narrative and international value proposition. Be able to explain clearly what the company brings to customers, partners and the economy of the target market.

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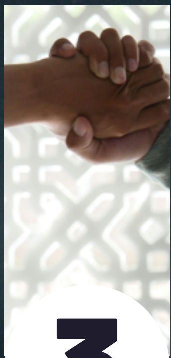

Build alliances that accelerate market entry. Memberships of business associations, chambers of commerce can provide credibility, intelligence and access. International institutions, investors and expert communities can offer additional networks. Strategic participation in public events can bring long-term influence rather than instant visibility.

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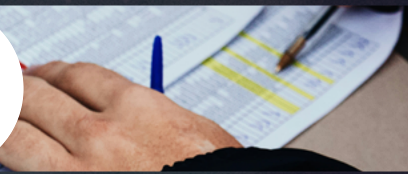

Develop a regulatory engagement strategy. Identify regulatory and tax issues that matter to the business. Build your positions and messages. Keep them fresh. Engage with decision-makers through allies and directly.

5

Prepare for scrutiny and crises. Assess reputational and operational risks, prepare key messages and establish clear crisis protocols.

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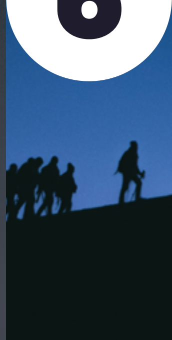

Make leadership part of the international expansion strategy. Build executive visibility selectively through international media, conferences, policy discussions, social media, thought leadership.

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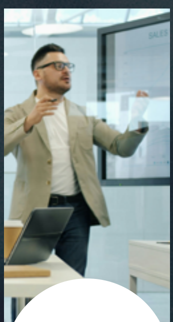

Build capabilities. Develop skills in stakeholder engagement, media relations, crisis management for leadership and commercial functions. Create internal corporate affairs and communications teams, engage external support from reputable consultants and advisors.

Corporate affairs and strategic communications will increasingly determine international success of Ukrainian businesses. Products and services may open the door to a new market. Reputation, relationships and influence will help keep it open.

Leidar is a global communication consultancy that helps clients set their course, navigate and communicate effectively.

This is Leadership Navigation.

We hope you have found this report useful.

If you would like further detail about the findings, or more information about Ukraine's next competitive advantage in global markets, please contact:

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About Leidar

Headquartered in Geneva with offices in London, Brussels, Oslo, Dubai, Singapore, Washington, DC and New York, we mainly work with businesses and organizations that operate on a global scale. We understand how to develop and deliver their messages to a wide internal and external stakeholder audience and how to leverage business opportunities in a rapidly changing political landscapes.

Our clients include companies, both publicly listed and private, industry groups as well as international organizations and NGOs, across all sectors.