

## exporter case study



# GroundProbe



### Company profile

GroundProbe was formed in 2001 as a spin-off business from the University of Queensland. GroundProbe is an innovative and dynamic company providing unique measurement systems to the global mining and civil infrastructure industries. The company is based in Brisbane and operations have expanded rapidly, with units now employed in seven countries.

GroundProbe's primary product is a unique Queensland invention called the Slope Stability Radar (SSR). This system is the world's leading technology for measuring and monitoring the stability of rock walls in open-cut mines.

GroundProbe's systems have achieved outstanding recognition in the global mining industry, having detected numerous significant wall failures with sufficient warning to allow evacuation of people and equipment. It is now possible to extend the life of mines, and re-design the mine plans based on the increased knowledge and risk management possible through the use of GroundProbe's technology.

### Motivations to export

The majority of GroundProbe's clients operate within the global mining industry so their focus has been on exporting to these clients. The company did not perceive much difference between servicing Australian clients compared to global clients. However there are different requirements depending on where the clients are located and the operational support required within the region.

### Activities that contributed to its export success

GroundProbe understood what its clients' needs were and provided solutions to their business requirements. The company was honest in advising what they could deliver and what they could not, and took a collective approach by having clients assist, overcoming the problems together.

When operating in a new country there were many commercial and logistical issues to be worked through. GroundProbe was upfront with clients and advised that they had never worked in the country before and sought their assistance. Clients were willing to help, provided GroundProbe was willing to deliver the technical solutions the clients needed.



## Lessons learnt and mistakes made along the way

GroundProbe learnt not to underestimate the logistical, legal and commercial difficulties of moving their equipment into new regions. This included the various tax regimes, duties, customs clearances and paperwork required by other countries.

GroundProbe recognises that the difficulties have not been in generating the market and winning work with overseas clients, but actually delivering their products into the countries.

## How exporting has benefited the business

GroundProbe believes that it would not have become the company it is today without exporting. Over 50% of GroundProbe's products and services are supplied to overseas markets and company growth has occurred as a result of exporting.

GroundProbe has developed alliances with overseas mining companies which have generated more revenue and grown the business rapidly, allowing it to employ more people. This has enabled GroundProbe to develop the next phase of its technology.

## Assistance received from the Queensland Government

GroundProbe has received financial grants from state and federal governments which have been used for international marketing and product certification.

The Queensland Government Trade and Investment Offices (QGTIO) have provided on-the-ground expertise within countries and have also facilitated introductions at trade expos. The Americas QGTIO office provided assistance with the company product launch in the United States.

## Words of advice for exporters

GroundProbe recommends companies go ahead and become involved in exporting. Companies should incorporate exporting into their strategic plan to grow the business, rather than viewing export as an add-on activity.

Exporting came upon them quicker than they expected when an overseas client approached them. GroundProbe also talked to major clients, undertook market analysis and made decisions to pursue the opportunities within that market. Trade shows have also been beneficial in understanding interest and assessing the market.

**This case study was prepared for the Getting Export Smart workshop series. Please contact your local State Development Centre to register for export workshops and training programs.**



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