

# YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE BIG

## *Just Well Prepared and Wise*

**S**TORCH INTERNATIONAL INC. ISN'T A HUGE CONGLOMERATE. But it is a multinational. The Wisconsin-based export-marketing firm, which sells raw materials to fabricators of window covering products, has a staff of just four people and annual sales of under \$10 million. Yet **Richard Storch '75** has successfully entered China, Hong Kong, and more than 30 other markets. His company has also won Wisconsin's Small Business Administration's Exporter of the Year 2000 Award.

"The majority of the money I've invested in my business has been in travel," said Storch. "Yes, you have to read the preliminary reports, but I never work with a prospect or market unless I take two or three trips over to the country myself. I guess I believe in getting to know the market by doing basic 'street market research.' Then you know your decisions are based on good, solid first hand information."

Storch also stressed knowing your products and market thoroughly enough to find the proper fit – and in finding the right partner. "You can't go in with the attitude that the first contact that comes along will do. You have to pick the right partner from day one." If not, Storch believes, you foster ill will in the market, cause marketing delays, and risk setting yourself up for costly legal problems.

Although Storch's company has successfully entered many countries during its 14-year history, he is proudest of his recent entry into China. That's because he worked closely with his Hong Kong-based partners and invested heavily to establish a local office of his company.

"Asia is one of our most critical areas for future growth and my Chinese customers, in particular, are some of the most demanding customers I have," Storch said. "They expect outstanding quality and service for the price."

After interviewing college graduates in Hong Kong, Storch believed it was important to bring his new-hire to the States for a full year to really learn his products and strategies, visit his factories, and attend trade shows. That investment has already paid off.

"The fact that I was committed enough to open an office there and staff it with someone who really understood their culture and language — as well as my business — made my Chinese clients realize just how important they are to me," Storch said.

