THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND THE TRAINING OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EMPLOYEES

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Introduction

Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover reached $81.2 billion in 2025, 20.7% higher than a year earlier, with exports of $33.8 billion — a 24% increase (Stat.uz, 2025). Behind these totals are thousands of individual firms that chose, at some point, to sell abroad instead of staying inside the domestic market. Not every firm that tries this succeeds. Entrepreneurship science asks why some firms cross the border and others with similar resources do not. This article uses that question to look at Uzbekistan's recent export growth, and at how the employees who actually carry out foreign trade — not only company owners — should be trained for it.

Discussion

Entrepreneurship as a Driver of International Trade. Small business already produces more than half of Uzbekistan's economy. In the first nine months of 2025 it accounted for 51.5% of GDP, generated by 1.21 million registered small business entities, individual entrepreneurs, dehkan farms and family businesses (Stat.uz, 2025). Its share of foreign trade is smaller but rising fast. In the same nine months, small business exported $8.5 billion worth of goods — 32.0% of everything the country sold abroad (Stat.uz, 2025). A third of national exports is now coming from firms that, individually, are far smaller than the state enterprises that used to dominate the trade statistics. Rauch and Watson (2001) explain this with a simple idea: firms cross borders not because they have more capital, but because someone inside the firm recognizes a foreign opportunity and is willing to act on it before all the information is available. Uzbekistan's export growth in 2025 fits that pattern — 24% for the year, and 34.9% in the first half alone (Stat.uz; Gazeta.uz, 2025) — well ahead of overall economic growth, which suggests firms are actively pursuing new buyers rather than simply benefiting from higher prices.

It also means the trade deficit is not shrinking on its own. Small business imported $17.77 billion in the same period — 53.7% of total imports — more than double what it exported (Stat.uz, 2025). Export capability is growing, but it still lags behind the appetite for imported goods and equipment.

Core Entrepreneurial Competencies for Foreign-Trade Employees. The Rauch and Watson logic applies below the level of the company owner as well. A firm can only act on a foreign opportunity if the employee handling that deal is able to recognize it, and most of the people who negotiate contracts, arrange logistics or manage a foreign account are not the entrepreneur — they are hired staff.

1. **Opportunity recognition —** noticing a buyer, a market gap, or a shorter logistics route before a competitor does.
2. **Cross-border negotiation —** closing a deal with a partner working in another language, currency and legal system.
3. **Risk tolerance under incomplete information —** deciding to ship, sign or pay before every variable is confirmed.

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4. **Network maintenance** — keeping a foreign partner relationship active between orders, not only during a transaction.

None of this is an innate trait reserved for business owners. It can be taught. In practice, most Uzbek firms do not teach it deliberately — employees learn by making mistakes on real contracts, which is an expensive way to learn when a shipment or a payment is already committed.

A training program built around the export process, rather than generic management theory, is more likely to change what an employee actually does on the next deal. Four modules follow directly from the competencies above.

1. **Market and buyer analysis** — how to read demand signals and evaluate a new foreign market before committing resources to it.

2. **Cross-border negotiation and documentation** — contract terms, incoterms, payment methods and the paperwork specific to export transactions.

3. **Currency, logistics and contract risk** — hedging exchange-rate exposure, choosing carriers, and recognizing contract clauses that shift risk unfavorably.

4. **Long-term partner management** — keeping a relationship with a foreign buyer or supplier productive after the first shipment.

For an exporting company such as a timber producer, the practical value of this is direct: an employee who can independently qualify a foreign buyer and manage the paperwork reduces how much of that work has to run through the owner personally, which is usually the actual bottleneck in a growing export operation.

Challenges and Considerations

1. **Cost.** Structured training has a real budget line, and small exporters have to weigh it against other pressing needs — this is one reason training tends to stay informal.

2. **Measuring results.** Unlike a machine or a certificate, entrepreneurial competence is hard to test directly; firms usually only see its effect months later, in whether a deal closed or fell through.

3. **A widening gap.** Small business imports are growing faster in absolute terms than its exports (Stat.uz, 2025), so training aimed only at selling abroad addresses one side of a two-sided problem.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan's 2025 trade figures show two things at once: exports are growing quickly, and a third of that growth is already coming from small and private business rather than large state enterprises (Stat.uz, 2025). That is a structural shift, not a one-year fluctuation, and it means the country's future export performance depends increasingly on decisions made inside ordinary firms — by managers and staff, not only by policy. Entrepreneurship science gives a reasonably clear account of what separates a firm that exports successfully from one that does not: the ability of the people inside it to recognize an opportunity and act on it under uncertainty. That ability is not evenly distributed inside a company. An owner may have it; the employee negotiating the actual shipment often does not, simply because no one has taught it to them. This is the practical gap that training programs should close. The four-module structure proposed here — market analysis, cross-border negotiation, risk management and partner relationship management — follows the stages of an export deal rather than abstract management theory, which should make it easier for firms to adopt in pieces rather than as one large investment.

It is also, from the perspective of a company that trades internationally, a matter of ordinary business sense. Every export contract that depends entirely on one person — usually the owner — is a bottleneck and a risk if that person is unavailable. Training a second and third employee to recognize opportunities and manage risk is not a theoretical exercise; it is what allows an exporting firm to grow

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past the size a single entrepreneur can manage alone. Further research should measure this directly — tracking export performance in firms before and after they adopt structured training of this kind — rather than relying only on the aggregate statistics used here. But the direction indicated by Uzbekistan's current trade data is clear enough to act on now: entrepreneurial competence is no longer a side skill for exporting firms, it is close to becoming the main constraint on how fast they can grow.

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