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Here's a pound of advice for those seeking to make a mark with a yen towards global growth...

Bad puns aside, firms seeking higher revenue in a tight, competitive US economy may look to global growth as a strategic next step. But along with opportunity, global expansion can also bring cost and complexity. Firms enamored with global expansion can easily overlook a few typical challenges, so here are four considerations to keep in mind.

Push Out Complexity

Global expansion brings a new layer of administrative complexity. Working across time zones, currencies, and various regulatory statutes is burdensome— and potentially costly, if you need a separate administrator in each geography. Instead of overlapping responsibilities across isolated geographies (often accompanied by disconnected data and broken processes,) why not centralize?

Gains exceed the obvious cost-savings that greater efficiency brings to the administrative expense of going global. The more you can centralize, the closer you'll become to being a single connected firm— with each location sharing standard business practices, and all working from consistent information about clients, projects, and people.

Most helpful is a global information infrastructure that provides the international backbone your firm needs. Ensure your financial systems work in multiple

currencies, can address local tax & regulatory jurisdictions, and allow staff to work in

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Not all firms have the experience or resources to launch a direct overseas presence nor the patience to wait for profitable revenue. If global expansion seems daunting, consider aligning with an accounting firm alliance. These alliances share the revenue, but also mitigate risk.

You can offer in-country expertise to clients with global needs, deepening your client relationship by keeping more of their work “under one roof.” At the same, working with a local alliance helps build expertise and credibility in the new geography. Such alliance partnerships mean delicate management: You need control over the work (but not too much control), and the partner needs visibility (but not too much visibility) into your operations. Once again, your practice-management system should help create this balance.

Ensure your practice-management system allows sufficient information-sharing (like client-contact or project information) among the firm and its alliance network, yet is also appropriately role-based to restrict partner access to sensitive data like payment terms or credit limits.

Communicate Constantly

Communication across a global organization must be effective as well as efficient. Direct communication by telephone, video, or instant messaging is most effective. Sure, direct communication requires near-fluency, but conveys more emotion- easily understood in *any* language. When direct communication isn't viable across time zones, you don't want the organization drowning in e-mail “conversations” that span days before issue resolution.

Modern management systems make communication as efficient as it is effective. With global staff or partners collaborating on the same engagement, look for modern approaches that place conversations in context of the work- able to add comments, instructions, or next steps to the project. As a non-US team departs for

the day, imagine their work ready for review and instruction as the headquarters

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at work at 9:30 PM. Yet, going in a Saturday is unheard of.

Your firm's own culture sets it apart from competitors, establishing the environment that attracts and keeps talent. When seeking global expansion, consider how local customs will merge with your firm's culture – and how you'll extend it to a new geography.

Global expansion brings a world of opportunities – to grow revenue, develop relationships, and build an even stronger reputation. Effectively reducing the additional administrative complexity with effective cultural management, shared information, and efficient business process can make your international growth rewarding and profitable.

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