



# FOURTH DAY

Want to build your reputation across the water?

Here are some things you should know

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# Table of CONTENTS

Want to build your reputation across the water?	3
Where to begin?	4
Understand the territory	5
Harmonise your channels	6
Language matters	7
Think with a local mindset	8
Never underestimate cultural differences	9
Finding the right agency – what should you look for?	10
Take the first step	11



# Want to build your reputation across the water?

## Here are some things you should know

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We've worked with US companies for over 20 years. This experience has given us an understanding of the ambitions, successes and challenges of those crossing the pond, but we don't like to make assumptions. We therefore asked 53 US technology companies about their plans for European expansion and the type of support they want from agencies based within the territory.

One consistent finding was that local advice and know-how are still highly valued. Over three quarters of the people we contacted said that they would be likely to seek help from agencies. Strategic advice, adaptation of US content and social media support were the services mentioned at the top of list, followed by media relations and events.

On the basis of these findings we have created this guide. Our aim is to answer many of the questions that US tech firms, and their marketing teams, will ask themselves before venturing into Europe. From language challenges to cultural attitudes, we provide some guidelines that will help. To place our advice in context, we've included contributions from some of our colleagues and partners operating in the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and Poland.



*Xavier*



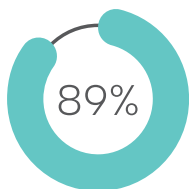
## Where to begin?

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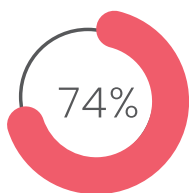
When it comes to taking the first steps into the European market, it's not unusual for US tech firms to set up their initial operations in the UK. There is no doubt that the common language between the US and the UK means that we have a special bond. Pleasingly for those of us based there, London ranked highest in response to the question "If you could host a customer event in any city in EMEA, where would it be?"

But, of course, many companies start elsewhere. In our survey, **89%** of companies said that they had plans to enter the UK, but France and Germany were very close behind at **74%**.

With Germany seen as a hub for manufacturing specialists, and Paris becoming increasingly attractive to the financial services sector since Britain left the EU, this is not surprising. If you are planning to target more than one country, how do you decide where to begin your communications? The most obvious path is simply to launch campaigns to match your international sales regions, but is that all there is to it? Do you need to have someone on the ground? Or can you just conduct outreach at a distance?



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The answer to all these questions is that it depends. Generally speaking, the more local your communications, the more likely they are to work. It makes a lot of difference to have a spokesperson who knows the region well, has strong relationships with customers and can really get to grips with local issues.

However, it's worth bearing in mind that if your customers are distributed much more widely than your team, your communications might need to be correspondingly broad. In some cases, there's also a question of "preparing the ground" – encouraging discussion around a particular topic so that when you finally arrive you are known as an expert in the field and don't have to educate your market from scratch.



## Understand the territory

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In all cases make sure you do your homework. Requests for PR in “The Nordics” are a case in point. One of our Swedish partners, Mikael Westmark, from [Westmark](#), explained that he is often asked to quote for PR in the Nordic region as though it is a single country. For those who aren’t experts in this part of the world, the region comprises Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland. While English is commonly understood, five official languages exist so campaigns must be localised for each country. As Mikael says, “If you want results in Sweden, be prepared to deliver stats and facts that relate to the Swedish community, companies and people.”



We recommend that even where a sales team has already carried out local market research, marketing and PR teams should also conduct their own.

With a landmass that is similar in size to the US, it’s easy to forget that there are around fifty separate countries within Europe and 24 official languages within the European Union alone. There’s no doubt that English is widely spoken as a default business language in the area, but that doesn’t mean that every customer will be fluent. Even where these languages overlap, culture may not. A common language may unite Austria and Germany, for example, but they have very different business landscapes. The same applies to France and parts of Belgium.

We recommend that even where a sales team has already carried out local market research, marketing and PR teams should also conduct their own. Even if you don’t invest in paid-for research, finding out what existing customers care about and the particular pressures they are under can really help feed local campaigns.

## Harmonise your channels

Our research showed that email marketing and social media online ads are among the most frequently chosen forms of marketing communication for US tech companies in Europe. If you are also conducting media outreach, make sure these channels are all communicating in the same way. This can sometimes be challenging if, for example, social media is managed from the US, but media relations are conducted locally.

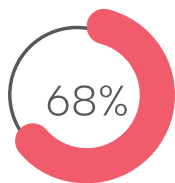
[Antoine Billon](#), head of our own Paris-based operation, [Quatrième Jour](#), finds that the majority of his US clients are very clear about the need to develop a local strategy: “Most of our US clients understand the importance of localising PR and not directly duplicating the PR campaigns and activities implemented in the US,” he comments. He also finds that learning can go both ways. “Beyond marketing, US technology companies are often pioneers in their market – or market segment. So we learn a lot from them and they help us understand the trends and transformations that are taking place.”

[Matylda Setlak](#) from our partner All 4 Comms in Poland agrees: “US clients usually look for strategic advice and content localisation. But most importantly they want to work with an agency that has worked with clients from the same sector before.”

This brings in another important point. 62% of the companies we spoke to ranked strategic advice as a service they would require from a local agency, and 68% included knowledge of European competitors as a factor that would influence their choice of partner. An agency needs to be your eyes and ears on the ground, watching your competitors and constantly on the lookout for opportunities for you. Knowledge of your sector is an enormous advantage.



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## Language matters

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It's all too easy for language – and even different versions of the same language – to become a barrier to communication. Written content is at the heart of many communications campaigns, from direct marketing to media relations. But a US style can sit uncomfortably with European audiences. US writing is often very direct, and sometimes doesn't hold back from focusing on product claims. As Antoine Billon commented, "US companies use a lot more superlatives."

Almost every country in Europe has a slightly different style. UK journalists in particular are quick to press the "delete" button if things aren't communicated in the right way. And while translation software has come on in leaps and bounds in recent years, it has a long way to go before it can understand the subtleties of local communications. [Astrid Hornlein](#), Fourth Day's Berlin-based consultant, comments that her US clients "...often think that US content which was translated into German is good content and will be published in German media." This is not the case. "The tone here is more objective, less excited." As German journalists often prefer to receive pre-written content, using the right language is particularly important.

Mikael Westmark says that the same applies to Sweden. "We spend a lot of time explaining why we need 'adaptations' not 'translations'."

There is an opportunity here to stand out from other US competitors who are not making the effort to adapt their content. Things have moved on since the days when every tech news release began with "the world's leading provider of..." but there is still an undeniable difference in style between the two continents, so take local advice in order to talk to the locals.





## Think with a local mindset

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As important as the writing style is what you choose to say. Astrid Hornlein stresses that German media want entirely different content from most of their European colleagues, as well as from the US.



Make sure your company has a connection to the German market. Provide German contacts for interviews, German customers or, when it comes to surveys, for example, figures from a German or European perspective.

Print media is still alive and kicking in Germany, so you may need to be patient to wait for an article to appear. Possibly in connection with this, they are resistant to the SEO focus that exists in the US and UK. Don't ask for a link unless you are paying. "Journalists here HATE it," says Astrid.

Striking the right note locally also means thinking about your spokespeople and your stories. Flying in a CEO and expecting journalists to line up will no longer work unless you have something truly compelling to say to the local market. A spokesperson able to communicate in the local language is no longer essential everywhere, but it certainly helps.

In the UK, "local" can be taken to another level. Regional media – particularly broadcast – still matters enormously and wields great power, [as Liz Truss found to her cost during her brief tenure as UK Prime Minister](#). It is often overlooked by US companies as the UK appears so impossibly small that it's hard to imagine regional publications holding any sway at all. The truth is that with a strategic approach, local media can be a great way to boost your brand in a new territory.

In our work with Uber-owned Autocab, for example, local media played an invaluable role in raising awareness of Uber's Local Cab offering, which is built on Autocab's technology. Our aim was to reach local taxi operators, who could adopt the technology, and to keep the public informed when the service arrived in their local area. The result was over 111 pieces of regional press coverage across more than 50 towns and cities, covering a large proportion of the UK.

## Never underestimate cultural differences

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Finally, an appreciation of cultural differences is vital. Online meetings now dominate everywhere so face to face meetings are an invaluable way to gain a better understanding of a country and its working practices – no matter how much the pandemic may have changed these. While it's harder everywhere to lure journalists out for meetings, they are still happy to come out in Poland, and in France they are still fond of face-to-face meetings, even though these are fewer than they were pre-pandemic.

Little pieces of knowledge can go a long way. For instance, it's important to know that business quiets down in France after 14th July, while in Sweden the summer holiday is from mid-June until mid-August to take advantage of the daylight that is so lacking in winter. It's also helpful to know that Swedes still enjoy an afternoon "fika" (coffee and cake), the French still like a glass of wine over lunch and that "kaffee and kuchen" is still a thing in Germany.

## Finding the right agency

### What should you look for?

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A supportive partner on the ground can make your arrival in a new territory smooth and effective. Unless you have a recommendation or an existing relationship, it can be laborious and difficult. You've probably been through the process many times already in your own country, but we've summarised five points based on our advice above that we hope will help.

#### Five things to look for in an international agency:

- 01** Do they understand your company and the significance of your product/service in their local territory?
- 02** Can they put forward a credible plan of how your US strategy can be adapted to the local market?
- 03** Do they have excellent writing and media relations skills so that they can present your ideas the right way?
- 04** Will they be prepared to push back when they think something won't work?
- 05** Are they flexible enough to listen to you? Make sure that local expertise doesn't come with a mindset closed to new ideas.



## Take the first step

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Working with a new culture is never straightforward. At Fourth Day we have two decades of experience of helping US companies to expand across Europe. They have learned a lot – and so have we. If you would like support on your own journey, please contact us.

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Fourth Day has teams on the ground in London, Manchester, Paris, Berlin, Casablanca and Brisbane as well as partners across Europe and the US.

We run many cross border PR and content campaigns. We tailor messages and translate content for local markets and have strong relationships with top tier media and influencers worldwide. This means we can help our clients to build brand awareness and credibility across territories – by identifying the most appropriate channels, securing quality coverage and introducing them to the most relevant international contacts in their industry



FOURTH DAY