



Can 11 Countries Agree on Anything?

By Ann Sullivan

Everyone keeps telling me, and I have come to agree, that we live in a global marketplace. Businesses of all sizes must consider that reality when building for success. And you simply cannot talk about the “global marketplace” and trade without mentioning the all-powerful Trans-Pacific Partnership, or just TPP.

For the uninitiated, the TPP agreement is a free trade negotiation between the United States and ten other Asia-Pacific countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam), and it is the key focus for U.S. trade policy this year. If completed, TPP would dramatically reduce barriers of trade that exist between the member countries. Right now, many countries have tariffs and regulations that make trade more difficult and costly.

Improving trade policy is a priority for WIPP. This year, we included export and trade in our economic principles—adding one for the first time ever—that are at the center of WIPP’s policy platform. In addition, WIPP launched ExportNOW to encourage more women entrepreneurs to engage the global marketplace and increase their success.

So what is in the TPP for us? Two big things: increased exporting opportunities and intellectual property protection.

More of us need to export to more places with less restriction. Trade agreements help with that, and this one would complete agreements with not one, but ten other countries. But many of us do not want to sell outside the U.S. because our rights as innovators and entrepreneurs may not be protected. That is why including robust intellectual property protections in these agreements is so critical—especially for smaller businesses. We need our goods and services to remain *our* goods and services.

But achieving all this, and negotiating with eleven countries—soon to be twelve if Japan joins—isn’t easy. In fact, this week marks the 17th round of negotiations since 2011. It takes a lot of effort to make sure widgets in San Diego are good for both the buyer and seller in Santiago or Singapore. That is why I encourage the many diplomats and trade representatives sitting down this week to move forward, as they work to meet their goal of completing the agreement this year.

I often end these articles asking you to advocate, and this is no different. You have a voice, and a stake in this fight. Broadening our market to sell our products and protecting our products as intellectual property matters. So tell Congress and tell the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative that this is important to you—as a woman entrepreneur. Can eleven, possibly twelve, countries agree? Let’s hope so. And let’s make sure we let those in Congress and the Administration know we care.

You can view WIPP’s 2013 Economic Blueprint [here](#).

You can learn more about ExportNOW and find exporting resources [here](#).