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The JBE team talked the right price and pointed out JBE's proven track record for quality work and timely delivery. The Indians' body language—particularly their head movements—told Ellison he and his crew they were scoring points and JBE wound up winning the contract.

The subassembly contract with Cummins' India-based plant created more than 35 jobs at JBE, which now has about 90 employees. Such job creation not only boosted Ellison's company but also helped Hartsville, which has a population of about 7,560 and is located northwest of Florence, bolster its economy.

Ellison credits the South Carolina World Trade Center for being crucial in helping his and other companies do business overseas. Whether a company is a novice at conducting business internationally or a veteran importer and/or exporter, the SCWTC, through its network of 288 trade centers around the globe, offers an educational and strategic helping hand to South Carolina companies seeking to conduct commerce in other countries.

In JBE's case, the South Carolina World Trade Center used its trade center contacts in India to help find a company that was commercially compatible with JBE. The SCWTC helped JBE by researching the legitimacy of overseas companies in which JBE could pair.

"We don't have the capability or the time to do all that," Ellison explains.

JBE first got involved with the SCWTC about 1 1/2 years ago, when company representatives attended the SCWTC's World Trade Certificate Program seminar at Florence Darlington Technical College.

The seminar covered topics such as exporting and importing, purchasing a product from a foreign country, marketing and selling a product or service overseas and negotiating tips.

And, of course, the seminar covered the importance of learning the customs and cultures of foreign markets.

While turbocharger castings from India continue to be shipped to JBE, the company is pursuing a business deal in nearby Camden with appliance manufacturer Haier America—China's only manufacturer in the United States.

As with India, the SCWTC educated Ellison and his JBE associates on Chinese customs—for instance, which glass to raise in a toast, who initiates the first toast (the host of the event does) and when to leave a business luncheon or party (you leave after the guest of honor leaves).

Another tip Ellison learned is that, even if the Chinese agree to do business with you, they continue negotiating with other parties.

"There's never a closed deal with China," Ellison remarks, admitting that such a custom leaves him feeling less than comfortable.

JBE took what it learned from the SCWTC to pursue subassembly agreements with manufacturers in Brazil, Japan, Australia and Canada.

Ellison sees international trade as the future for his 24-year-old company. His 140,000-square-foot facility, which houses and puts together subassemblies for items ranging from jet skis to all-terrain vehicles, is about to grow by another 40,000 square feet. He thanks the SCWTC for helping him show the world what JBE can do.

"They're an invaluable aid," he says.