

Export Controls Consultant of the Year

Winner: Strong & Herd

Manchester, UK-based, **Strong & Herd LLP** ('S&H') was set up in 1995 to operate as an external support to businesses in the areas of export control and customs compliance. It has a reputation for being practical and hands-on in serving clients' trade compliance needs.

S&H was born out of the legal department of Ferranti International, an international business heavily involved in aerospace and defence, after the group had been defrauded during a merger with a US company. S&H was set up initially to support former Ferranti International businesses that were still viable after the corporate group was disbanded

under administrative receivership. Since 1995, the team has grown and S&H has also introduced training, consultancy and a cost-effective helpline service. Key team members are Sandra Strong, Anthony Griffiths, Bernard O'Connor and Steve Berry. Sandra Strong is a popular speaker at trade compliance events who 'knows her nuts, bolts and widgets'.

The team assists clients in compliance with UK, EU and US export controls and in dealing with embargoes and sanctions. It works with clients to ensure they are compliant with the law and also helps introduce efficiencies into their export and import services.

With the planned UK departure from the EU, S&H has introduced a



new consultancy service, 'Brexit: Supply Chain Planning', which focuses on various areas of trade compliance likely to be impacted, including export controls, sanctions, customs procedures. The team works with clients to analyse how they

currently operate under EU regulations so that when the changes are introduced, they are ready to adjust working practices accordingly.

Given that S&H rose out of the ashes of a leading defence business, it comes as small surprise that much – though not all – of the client base is drawn from that sector. A quick peek shows clients are from

- Military and defence
- Aerospace – civil and military
- Marine – civil and military
- Automotive – civil and military
- Industrial manufacturing and engineering
- Electronic/computer/software
- Chemical and pharmaceutical
- Textiles, clothing and household goods
- Food and drink

A couple of examples of recent work the team has been involved in illustrate its hands-on approach and the real benefits that can be gained from employing the right consultant.

A small UK business (18 staff) had traded with Iran when the sanctions were in place and though it had obtained licensing permission from the UK Export Control Organisation it failed to obtain Treasury permission to receive funds. The company received a letter from the recently formed OFSI (Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation) requiring an explanation as to why this had happened and advising a corrective action plan. The company was given 28 days to respond and threatened with high financial penalties and legal action.

S&H was recommended to the company by the Department of International Trade ('DIT') local business advisor but this was two weeks into its deadline. 'We reshuffled our diaries,' says Sandra Strong, 'so we could visit immediately, working for two full days pulling together the details for the reply and setting out the corrective action plan which includes a written compliance statement by the CEO, amended wording in distributor contracts and registration with key websites. OFSI is taking no further action and the business feels able to develop its export market with confidence.'

In a second example, S&H was contracted by a company that builds and services military vessels (hoping

to obtain a new lucrative contract that involved ITAR goods and technology) to train staff, including the engineers who would be working within the ITAR-controlled areas of the vessels, and to check and create ITAR procedures. S&H worked closely with the company, developing its compliance understanding and it won the order. According to S&H, 'They now feel confident to pursue other ITAR business.'

A final word is for its well-regarded training services. S&H offers training in person and on line and also provides offers an innovative telephone support subscription service called 'One call' by which, 'for a very reasonable fee, users can contact a consultant with an export (or import) query.'