

9 tips for finding buyers on the European outsourcing market

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This document provides information about how and where to find European buyers for your IT or business process outsourcing (ITO/BPO) services. Discover the key elements that pave the path to success: understanding your unique offerings and target audience, establishing a strong online presence and making meaningful connections.

While we cannot promise instant results, this document provides essential strategies for navigating the competitive landscape.

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1. Know which buyers you want to target

Identifying your target audience means figuring out who your ideal customers are, what they are interested in and how you can best communicate with them. It helps you to focus your marketing efforts on the people who are most likely to buy from you, saving you time and money.

Once you know your target audience, you can create a message that resonates with them, and you can customise your marketing efforts to their specific needs and preferences. This makes it more likely that they will engage with your brand, potentially increasing both sales and loyalty.

Overall, identifying your target audience is crucial to the success of your business. By understanding your customers and targeting your marketing efforts towards them, you can increase your chances of success and grow your business.

Here is how to do this

1. Start by identifying your ideal customer: Think about the type of business or organisation that would benefit the most from your services. Consider their size, industry, location, and budget, amongst other factors. One idea could be to explore online resources that offer [step-by-step ideas](#), [guides](#) or [templates](#) for doing this.

This is also known as ‘writing a buyer persona’.

2. Conduct market research: Use market research to gather information about the IT outsourcing (ITO) market in Europe. Identify trends, key players and potential gaps in the market.
3. Look at your competition: Identify your competitors and analyse their target audience. Look for gaps in their strategy that you could capitalise on. Look for their strengths and weaknesses. Understand their market share, pricing strategy and types of clients.
4. Analyse your current customer base: Look at your current customers and identify common characteristics, like industry, company size and geographic location.

Figure 1: 5 types of buyers in global IT outsourcing (ITO)

Cost savers	These buyers focus primarily on reducing expenses and maximising cost savings. They are looking for outsourcing options that offer competitive pricing without compromising quality. Their primary goal is to decrease operational costs and improve their bottom line.
Scaling businesses	These buyers represent growing companies that need to scale quickly. They require additional resources and expertise to handle increased workloads or expand into new markets. They seek outsourcing partners who can provide flexibility, scalability and rapid deployment of services to support their growth trajectories.
Specialised experts	These buyers are looking for specific skills and expertise that may be outside of their core competencies. They seek outsourcing partners who possess specialised knowledge and experience in specific areas, such as software development, data analysis or digital marketing. They value expertise and industry insight to complement their existing capabilities.
Global expansionists	These buyers aspire to expand their operations globally or enter new international markets. They seek outsourcing partners who can help them navigate cultural, legal and logistical challenges associated with global expansion. They seek providers with global presence, language capabilities and a deep understanding of international markets.
Innovation seekers	These buyers focus on driving innovation within their organisations. They seek outsourcing partners who can bring fresh perspectives, advanced technologies and creative solutions to their business challenges. They value collaboration, out-of-the-box thinking and a proactive approach to innovation.

It is important to note that these are merely examples, and individual buyers are likely to have unique needs and priorities with regard to outsourcing services. Some buyers may also fall under more than one category.

That having been said, understanding these specific buyer personas within your target market could help you customise your offerings and effectively communicate your value proposition to each segment.

Tips:

If you have, or are looking for, both local and international clients, it would be good to separate your offers for each type of client. Buy separate domains or use subdomains to separate your local offers from your international offers.

Specialisation is very important in the outsourcing industry. Avoid being a company that offers everything to everyone; this will not help you make a sale. In addition, specialising your offer will make it even easier to write a buyer persona.

If your company offers opportunities to young people and women, be sure to communicate this clearly on your website and through your social media pages. This makes it easy for buyers who are interested in impact sourcing to notice your company. If you have a certification for impact sourcing, be sure that it can be found in a database, so buyers can find you there as well.

2. Expand your network

Through personal connections

Approaching the European market for IT/BPO through personal connections can be very successful. One-on-one and social selling is very important, as the business is based on trust. The good news is that the pandemic lowered the threshold for online meetings and doing business online.

Through events

Large general IT trade fairs no longer exist. Smaller and more specialised trade events have become more important, especially for companies within specific sectors. While attending these events may not result in immediate sales, they offer valuable networking opportunities to expand your professional connections.

When participating in European events, it is best to take a soft approach and focus on establishing high-quality contacts for future follow-up. Attending carefully selected trade fairs, B2B events and conferences in Europe allows you to expand your network, conduct market research, explore new business ideas and stay abreast of industry trends.

Due to the pandemic, there are now more online events and meetups. Examples include [the events organised by the Global Sourcing Association](#) and the [webinars held by CBInsights](#). Originally developed to replace offline events, they are increasingly being organised explicitly online.

If you cannot attend an event in person, you can still use online exhibitor catalogues to find potential clients and gather information for future trade fair visits.

Through existing connections

Your network could be one of your most valuable assets for generating new business. Most companies do not have strategies for growing their professional networks through their existing connections. Being aware of this can help you avoid this mistake.

Appoint at least one person in your company to systematically develop high-quality contacts and maintain communication with existing contacts. Your strategy should include targets and indicators, as well as an

evaluation of how you are going to achieve them.

[LinkedIn](#) is the most widely used international networking source. The platform has [groups](#) and discussion pages for all types of industries. For example, one focuses specifically on [analytics and Artificial Intelligence in Marketing and Retail](#), and another ([Africa Business Communities](#)) is intended for the African artificial intelligence industry.

Join several of these groups, be active, participate in discussions and invite other regular visitors to connect with you. Build your network and make contacts in your target market. As your professional network grows, you will have more opportunities to develop business successfully. Bigger is better: while the quality of contacts is important, the size and growth of your professional network is equally important.

Invest carefully in [Google Ads](#), [advertising on Instagram](#) or [Facebook Ads](#). Test your advertisements before committing large amounts of resources, time and money to them. Experience has shown that using these tools to make connections can be very disappointing.

Cold-calling and mass email campaigns are two of the least efficient ways of promoting your IT or Business Process services in Europe. This type of promotion requires expertise and specific skills. If you are thinking about taking this approach and do not have the right people in-house, hire specialists to help you.

Tips:

Select events carefully. Attend only events that fit your profile well. Many directories of trade events are available online, such as [10Times](#), [EventsEye](#) and [Exhibitions.co.uk](#). Create a list of relevant events and update this list regularly. Use trade-fair exhibitor directories to organise meetings with exhibitors before the fair. Participate in B2B activities at events (if available), and contact the organisers and ask relevant questions. Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.

When attending a conference, try to apply for a speaker spot (if you are an expert or innovator in your field). In addition, invite some of your existing contacts to meet with you at the event. You can also use your visit as an opportunity to organise meetings with some of your contacts at their offices. Read this blog for [more tips on trade fair participation](#).

Seek support for your event participation. Contact business-support organisations in your country. Some development-cooperation organisations and programmes provide support for event participation. Examples include [SIPPO](#), [CBI](#) and the [Enterprise Europe Network](#).

Ask satisfied clients to refer you to other companies or individuals who may be interested in your service.

Work with your contacts. They are not just records in your database. Keep them informed about your latest company news, connect with them on LinkedIn, involve them in your market research, invite them to events you are attending (online and offline) and socialise with them when possible and appropriate. Your next sales will most likely come from these contacts.

3. Build an excellent online presence

Buyers do not wait for companies to introduce themselves. They are looking for you, and they like to do their own research. This means that it is essential for you to have a good online presence essential. It enhances credibility, expands visibility, showcases expertise, facilitates communication and provides a competitive advantage.

Elements of a good online presence include a professional website, social media profiles and positive online reviews.

Build credibility and trust

A strong online presence helps establish credibility and builds trust among potential European buyers. It shows that your business is legitimate, reliable and capable of delivering high-quality IT services. Remember that, in ITO, business is based on trust—without trust, there will be no business.

Increase your visibility and reach

A good online presence increases your visibility and reach within the European market. This makes it easier for people to find you and learn about your services through search engines and online directories. It broadens your visibility and increases the chances that relevant potential buyers will find you. You can become even more visible by using [Search Engine Optimisation](#) (SEO) to help you appear higher in search engine results.

Depending on your profile, good keywords to use as an outsourcing service provider could include: outsourcing services, offshore outsourcing, BPO, ITO, staff augmentation, remote staffing, managed services, global sourcing, cost-effective solutions, vendor management, onshore outsourcing, IT support services, software development outsourcing, customer support outsourcing, data entry outsourcing, call centre outsourcing, back-office services or human resources outsourcing.

Show your expertise

See your online presence as a business card with extended options. It allows you to showcase your expertise and highlight your past successful projects. You can do this by adding case studies, client testimonials, blog articles or other examples of your work. Your online presence should demonstrate your knowledge and professional capabilities. This could attract potential European buyers who are looking for your skills and/or solutions.

Communicate and engage

Use your website, social media channels and other platforms to engage in conversations, respond to questions and provide quick customer support. Direct interaction helps potential buyers to trust you.

Gain a competitive advantage

The ITO market is competitive. If you have a strong online presence, you will have a competitive advantage over competitors who are hard to find online or whose online presence is limited. Even if the online presence of your competitors is just as strong as yours, potential European buyers will use the information they find online to make informed decisions and choose between available service providers.

Website

Treat your website as your most important and valuable marketing asset. Provide enough high-quality information that is easy for your prospects to find. The first impression your website makes is critical. You need a professional, well-maintained website that helps to promote you and that is ready for marketing. Even though you are an IT company, it is important to remember that this is not a do-it-yourself activity, unless designing and building websites is your core business.

Make sure that your website focuses less on you, and more on your customers. Try to understand how your potential customers think. What are their wishes and challenges, what information do they need? References from current or previous clients can be useful for building trust. Your information must be accurate, to the point and up to date. Your website is an extended brochure where potential buyers should be able to find most of the information they are looking for.

When potential customers are browsing through your website, they should find a call to action: an opportunity

to move from being a visitor to becoming a customer. It is the most important part of making a sale. This [WordStream blog](#) and [Hootsuite article](#) are just two of many examples of practical, innovative and/or humorous calls to action.

Example: CrossWorks

The website is honest about offering access to a global talent pool and combines this information with a self-proclaimed 'Nordic guarantee'. They offer specified skill sets and cost-effective solutions, customised to the specific needs and organisational culture of the client. It has a user-friendly interface and an original call to action. It might be helpful to arrange an inspiration trip to meet their Egyptian developers.

Social media

In addition to having a website, social media can offer good tools for promoting your company. People and companies can use these tools to create and share content and connect with one another (thereby expanding their social networks). The most common social media platforms in Europe are [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [YouTube](#), [X \(formerly called Twitter\)](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Unlike the other platforms, LinkedIn is specifically intended for professional networking.

Example: [ScaleHub](#)

This company found a very good image to accompany their claim: a chameleon to illustrate their ability to adapt as needed. Its website has a blog and is very clear about the services they offer. ScaleHub also has a [YouTube channel](#) that provides good insight into the company.

Tips:

Consider using targeted online advertising to reach potential buyers in the European market. Platforms like Google Ads and Facebook Ads can help you reach specific audiences.

Use LinkedIn to connect with potential buyers and industry leaders, as well as to join relevant groups and discussions. LinkedIn is particularly useful for B2B marketing.

[Optimise](#) your LinkedIn profile for sales. Consider upgrading your LinkedIn membership and use [Sales Navigator](#). Read blogs to find [tips and tricks](#) to make the most of your Sales Navigator membership, and browse LinkedIn's tips for [using your network to find buyers](#).

Note that, unless you are a professional web developer, developing a website is not a do-it-yourself job. Hire professionals, and brief them properly. Your website should be usable on PCs, laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

Share content and news on social media platforms, like [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and X, formerly known as [Twitter](#) to increase your visibility.

4. Work with an intermediary

Experts in the European ITO/BPO sector agree that collaborating with a sales representative or matchmaker is one of the best ways to enter the European market. This is because such collaboration entails personal contacts and one-to-one selling, which have proven to yield the best results.

There are three types of intermediaries in IT and BP outsourcing:

- Strategic partners

- Sales/marketing representatives
- Matchmakers

Strategic partner

Many companies from developing countries that do business in Europe work with strategic partners. In most cases, these partners are IT companies or consultancy firms with existing clients. Matchmakers and sales representatives can help IT companies from developing countries to find strategic partners. Working with intermediaries became even more important during the COVID-19 crisis, given the difficulty of meeting potential partners in person, due to travel restrictions.

It is important to find an intermediary who understands your solutions and target market. For example, if you offer search engine optimisation (SEO) services for the tourism industry, look for someone with experience in the tourism industry in your target market. They can introduce you to relevant companies.

Sales representatives or matchmakers

You could hire a matchmaker or a sales representative to find potential customers for your products or services. The main difference is that a matchmaker connects you with potential clients and organises meetings, while a sales representative also does the selling and may get involved in projects.

Most companies involved with IT and IT-related services find sales agents or intermediaries through their existing networks or by using various online and offline channels to expand their networks. Diaspora networks have also proven successful for many IT and business process outsourcers from emerging countries.

Make sure to provide the intermediary with detailed information about your company. For example, consultants interact with many potential customers and create lists of potential outsourcing providers. The more they know about your company and its capabilities, the better they will be able to promote you.

Be aware that matchmakers and sales representatives can also generate sales to strategic partners.

The main reasons to work with an intermediary are as follows:

- Market discovery, market research, market entry or market expansion
- Access to and multiple contacts with potential clients
- Acquisition of new European clients
- Professional network expansion in Europe
- Acquisition of new projects and, ideally, recurring work

Tips:

Limit your risk by setting a trial period of a few months, with concrete goals and deliverables. For example, the intermediary should provide a specific number of leads within this trial period. If they do not, you can end the contract. Be cautious of intermediaries who work exclusively for a retainer or success fee, who want to work for you part time alongside another job or who do not have an existing network of professional contacts.

Sales agents often work based on a retainer (a fee you must pay regardless of the work they do). In most cases, this is a fixed monthly payment plus a set percentage of the total project value they deliver. When working with sales agents, you should aim to agree on a retainer fee plus a success fee, which should motivate the intermediary to deliver.

When contracting an intermediary, use a good lawyer who knows the laws of the intermediary's country of residence and who has experience with this type of contracting. Pay special attention to exit clauses (how and when the contract can be ended), success criteria, deliverables and payments.

Learn more about finding buyers in the European ITO/BPO market by consulting our study about the [European intermediary landscape for ITO and BPO services](#).

5. Find buyers on open talent platforms

Although outsourcing services have traditionally not been sold through e-commerce channels, the use of business-to-business (B2B) platforms is quickly becoming a more mainstream method for promoting companies/services and attracting new buyers. In fact, experts expect this to become the most popular sourcing model in the next few years.

Open talent sourcing offers the following benefits for service providers:

- Access to many potential projects worldwide
- Easier competition with big brands
- Focus on talent, not big brand reputation
- Talent as an investment instead of an expense

Register on ITO marketplaces

Some platforms specialise in SMEs (for example, [AppFutura](#) and [Talent Alpha](#)), while others specialise in freelancers and yet others serve both. Examples include [Upwork](#), [Freelancer.com](#), [Fiverr](#), [ITeXchange](#), [Clutch](#) and [pliXos](#). Providers can usually join these kinds of platforms free of charge.

You could also register some key employees individually on open talent platforms. Because buyers sometimes search on people's names, they may never find you if you are registered only as a company. If your employee gets a job and the buyer is happy with the work performed, they are likely to hire that person again.

It is important to note that the ITO and BPO business is based on trust. It is therefore always important to be clear about your intentions. If buyers reach out to one of your employees, let them know that the person works for your company and can do the project either individually or with your team, but in either case, the person will remain in your employment.

Tips:

Use open talent platforms to sell your products or services. Register as a company or register key employees.

You can also use these platforms to find new employees.

6. Participate in programmes offered by Business Support Organisations

Business support organisations (BSOs) exist to help businesses. They offer knowledge, connections and insights that may otherwise be difficult to access. Many BSOs promote exports and organise various events, such as matchmaking sessions, conferences and trade shows.

In addition, BSOs often organise trade missions in which they can introduce you to potential buyers in your target markets. These organisers have established relationships with businesses in those markets, and they can assist you in finding, evaluating and meeting potential buyers.

The following are several examples of BSOs that might be relevant for your IT or business process outsourcing:

Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries ([CBI](#)): a government-funded organisation that has helped more than 800 entrepreneurs become successful exporters to the European market. They publish market information for various products and services, offer export coaching programmes and technical support, inform and influence policymakers and involve importers in the development and implementation of their programmes.

Swiss Import Promotion Programme ([SIPPO](#)): a government-funded organisation that helps BSOs improve their services for export companies and strengthen their own organisational structures, as well as connecting them to an extensive network.

Import Promotion Desk ([IPD](#)): a government-funded organisation in Germany that offers long-term, structural promotion for imports of key products and services from selected partner countries. They match German importers with relevant exporters in emerging growth markets. They are also partners with [Leverist.de](#), a platform that connects companies with existing business opportunities in developing countries and emerging economies.

Enterprise Europe Network ([EEN](#)): a network created by the European Commission to help companies marketing a wide range of products and services, innovate and grow internationally.

Uganda Export Promotion Board ([UEPB](#)): a regional BSO that supports Ugandan companies that sell (or wish to sell) products or services on the global market. For example, they organise an export promotion tour, participate in trade fairs and offer trade fair support. Their website also provides market information on various products and services, export guides, market analysis tools and much more.

Tips:

Be aware of the relevant BSOs in your country, region and market, and connect with them. Explore the kinds of support they offer. Examples include [BPESA](#) (South Africa), [Itida](#) (Egypt) and [TAG \(Georgia\)](#). Actively seek contact with these organisations on a regular basis, so that they will know about your company. Enter your business on their mailing lists, sign up for their newsletters and attend their events.

If you are based in Africa, consult [this list of African entrepreneur support organisations](#). For example, some tech-based initiatives are listed for Nigeria, Niger and Uganda.

Avoid wasting time on fruitless networking. Participate in programmes that truly fit your profile and objectives, and that offer services that could be of benefit to you, in both the short term and long term. You should also share your knowledge and challenges with BSOs, so that they can improve their services.

Embassy programmes in your European target countries could provide a good starting point for finding buyers.

7. Find buyers in company databases and trade directories

Company databases and trade directories offer a convenient way to find potential buyers.

Company databases

Company databases can be useful for finding potential buyers for your business. Some databases are free (like [company.info](#)), while others require payment, including chamber of commerce databases (like the [Kamer van Koophandel](#) in the Netherlands) and commercial databases (like [BoldData](#)). Look for the databases that offer the best prospects, and make a list of potential buyers from them. This will allow you to target the right people who are likely to be interested in what you have to offer. Databases offer a simple and effective way to find potential clients for your business.

Trade directories

Trade directories (like [Kompass](#) and [Europages](#)) can be valuable resources for finding potential buyers for your business. While some trade directories in Europe focus primarily on trade in tangible products, they can still provide opportunities for the outsourcing sector, even though the products are not physical.

These directories can also serve as a platform for showcasing your own products or services. Some may charge membership fees for publishing your information or contacting other traders. In many cases, however, you can start with a free trial to assess whether it is worth paying the annual fee.

Once registered, you can choose to join as a supplier or to search for buyers directly. It is important to be selective in the directories you use and maintain a professional impression. Posting randomly across multiple sites can make you appear cheap or desperate.

Industry experts advise that cold-calling can be problematic in the ITO/BPO sector.

If you nevertheless opt for cold-calling, target small and medium-sized enterprises, as they are generally easier to reach. Unless you have the right expertise, technology and people in-house, you should find a service provider to do the cold-calling for you. This is not a do-it-yourself activity without the proper resources.

Tips:

Most paid commercial databases offer a free trial period. Make the most of this free trial by thoroughly preparing beforehand (see the first tips in this document: know which buyers you wish to target).

If you plan to use a trade directory or database, you should know your buyer persona first. You can often select companies by industry, size or geographic location.

Never spam! Do not send out large numbers of unsolicited (unrequested) emails. Make sure the telephone numbers and email addresses you use are legitimate to use for cold-calling or emails.

8. Look for buyers through sector associations

Several organisations in Europe focus on the ITO/BPO market and its developments. Connecting with these organisations and attending their events can provide you with valuable information and contacts. In some cases, it will also make it easier for European buyers to find you. Follow the websites of these associations, sign up for their newsfeeds and other publications and/or register as a member.

The leading trade organisations for the outsourcing of IT and IT-related services in Europe are:

Deutscher Outsourcing Verband: This independent member organisation for the ITO/BPO sector is a registered association and platform for professionals and organisations involved or interested in sourcing or providing IT and business process services in and/or to German-speaking (DACH) markets in Europe (DACH: Germany, Austria and Switzerland).

EBSA: European Business Services Association: This European BPO association focuses on the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. They organise events, have a directory of members and publish news and studies on the BPO market.

Global Sourcing Association (GSA): This association presents itself as the home of the global sourcing standard. Their aim is to build a positive reputation for the strategic sourcing industry.

Tips:

Follow the leading sector associations listed above. Focus on those that are active in countries where your products or services are in highest demand. Keep track of relevant events they promote, and consult their newest releases and research findings.

Look up the member lists of these associations, which may provide prospects for your marketing campaign. These lists also provide information on the kinds of members they have. This is important if you are thinking about becoming a member yourself or participating in an event.

9. Find buyers in old job postings

You can find potential buyers in old job postings. When European companies have more work than they can handle, or when they want to expand their business, they often prefer to keep the work in-house. They start by looking for people within their own networks and, if that does not work, they try to hire people from outside. Posting vacancy announcements online is a common step in the process of hiring someone new.

If both options fail, they are much more open to outsourcing. They might be ready to hire you.

You can find old vacancy announcements on job posting websites (like [Indeed](#)). These sites often offer the option of searching for new job postings, and not old ones. If this is the case, you will have to change the underlying HTML source code to filter the dates of posting.

Example:

Go to: <https://www.indeed.com/jobs?q=DEVOPS&fromage=120&toage=90&sr=directhire>

The key lies in the `&fromage+120@toage=90` part of the link. This part gives the Indeed website the request to return job postings that are 90 to 120 days old.

The `sr=directhire` part of the link removes recruiting agencies from the results, so that you receive only companies that actually have a need.

The `q=DEVOPS` part of the link is where you enter your specialty. If you are not selling DEVOPS outsourcing services, type in the keywords of your specialty in place of the word DEVOPS.

New job postings can obviously be another interesting source for investigating the kinds of skills and expertise that companies are seeking. If you contact them right away, however, they might tell you they are already working on it and are not interested in working with you directly.

Read our documents on [Organising your Exports](#), [Doing Business](#) and [Buyer Requirements](#) to learn more about how to enter the European market and what it takes to become a successful exporter of ITO/BPO services to Europe.

[Globally Cool B.V.](#), in collaboration with Laszlo Klucs, carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).