

**ANN MCERLEAN, EUROPEAN SALES MANAGER WITH SPERRIN METAL, SHARES THE BENEFITS OF NI CHAMBER CONNECTIONS FOLLOWING THE COMPANY'S LINK-UP WITH ROWENA MCCAPPIN, MARKETING MANAGER AT GLEN DIMPLEX.**



Sperrin Metal is a leading storage manufacturer based in Draperstown and has been in business since 1963. The company specialises in the manufacture and distribution of storage products such as lockers, shelving, racking and mezzanine flooring. It has a wide range of customers including schools, government departments and multinational companies and exports its products to Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The company was keen to explore the market in France and sought guidance from NI Chamber on how to do this. Through NI Chamber Connections, partnered with Ulster Bank, Sperrin Metal was put in contact with Glen Dimplex, the Craigavon based electric heating and renewable energy solutions giant, which operates across the world. A conference call was set up connecting Sperrin Metal's European Sales Manager, Ann McErlean, and Marketing Manager, Caroline McKenna, with Glen Dimplex's Marketing Manager, Rowena McCappin. Rowena advised Sperrin Metal on issues around entering the French market and suggested the company contact the French Embassy in London which holds commercial information which businesses can tap into.

Ann McErlean says: *"We wanted to explore securing a distributor in France but were unsure what the market was like. We were keen to look at potential in the country. Rowena was very helpful and informative. Having a connection with someone as experienced as Rowena was of great benefit and also showed how local companies are willing to help each other. Rowena advised us to contact the French Embassy. I never thought in a million years the Embassy was there to help businesses with research. That really opened my eyes and was a learning experience for us."*

Rowena says she was delighted to have been able to help Sperrin Metal in its quest to secure new business.

*"I established what Sperrin Metal wanted to achieve in the French market and provided advice. Glen Dimplex has a presence in many markets across the world so I talked Ann and Caroline through how we explored new market opportunities. Because we have been working in this sort of environment for so long it is second nature to us. I stressed how important it is to undertake market research and to have a plan in place. I explained to Ann and Caroline how to undertake the research and establish links in order to find a distribution partner. Invest NI, who have experts in various markets, is a great source of information and research. Also, most embassies have a commercial division who are there to help businesses get established in a particular market. However, it is important to make it clear from the outset that you want free advice as many will charge for detailed information. Sperrin Metal took my guidance on board and I was very pleased to help."*

*"A programme such as Connections is a great idea especially in a market like Northern Ireland where everyone knows each other and you can find there is someone on your doorstep doing something that you would like to get into as well. It is all about making the right connections."*



NI Chamber Connections, partnered with Ulster Bank, supports local companies on a one to one basis to grow and trade internationally.

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Assist businesses to develop and grow
- Provide a vehicle for shared learning
- Encourage new market development
- Inspire businesses to investigate opportunities.

**FIND OUT MORE AT**  
**WWW.NORTHERNIRELANDCHAMBER.COM/CONNECTIONS**

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**A WORD FROM OUR PARTNER**

At Ulster Bank we are very pleased to partner with the NI Chamber to support the Connections programme. Fostering a culture of collaboration that can support businesses with their international growth ambitions is important to the success of our economy. Supporting entrepreneurship is very important to us at Ulster Bank.

We have a suite of products available to assist aspiring exporters and we are the only local bank with a full membership of the international banking association, IBOS. We have the people, connections and experience to help so wherever you're business takes you we'll make sure you are equipped to succeed. With £1.5bn available to lend to businesses this year, we look forward to supporting sustainable growth and development in NI companies.

