

## Tips for Education Suppliers from International School Leaders

Diane Glass – ISC Research



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At this year's GESS Dubai conference I hosted a session for education suppliers and invited two superb people to speak: David Baldwin, Headteacher of BSME member school, Horizon English School in Dubai and Chris Bromham, Principal of Uptown School in Dubai (part of the Taaleem group of schools). They shared some valuable advice for education suppliers wishing to work with international schools. Here are some of their top tips:

**Get your brand known by the schools:** "We look to meet suppliers at fairs and exhibitions" said Chris. "Many of our new initiatives originate from these types of events. Word of mouth is also important. As a group of nine schools, the Taaleem schools share a vast range of experiences from all over the world. Good ideas that work, spread very quickly through this community."

**Know what schools want from suppliers:** "Stand out in what you offer and the service you provide," said David. "Being able to provide a fast turn-around, good post

sales service, and showing that you understand a school's direction and the external influences that will impact the school are important too. If you're trying to get your company known to a school, limit cold emails. Instead, start with conversations at events, send us a physical catalogue, or share free quality resources that we can trial."

**Target schools carefully:** "Be aware of the great range of international school types there are and know what is important in each," said Chris. "A company recently sent me a very long email all about how their product was perfectly matched to the British curriculum and would be the answer to all my problems. When I pointed out that we were an IB school and did not run the British curriculum, he had very little to add!"

**Develop relationships with schools in the right way:** "The relationship has to come first," said Chris. "School principals are inundated with unsolicited emails and post. These days, most principals I know have systems that stop these emails even getting through to them. When they do sneak through, they are deleted after reading the first line."



### **Communicate with schools at the right time of year:**

“International schools typically put in a large order to the UK or US sometime between January and March, so communicating before this time slot is vital,” said Chris. “Local suppliers may be better waiting until a bit later. Often budgets need to be spent up by May to count for the current academic year, so April is a good time for local companies to approach schools.”

You can view a recording of my presentation on the international schools market at GESS Dubai [here](#) If you would like more advice about supplying education products, resources and services to international schools do get in touch directly: [diane.glass@iscresearch.com](mailto:diane.glass@iscresearch.com)

Word of mouth is, of course, powerful. However, where I have seen very positive practice is when suppliers start by giving something to the school. For example, most new products or services start from a perceived need or new way of looking at old problems. Sharing the research that companies have undertaken to devise their product, or providing Professional Development sessions with staff in the area that the product sits, are both good ways to start. Having ex-teachers on sales teams is now quite well established, but does still work!”

### **Be aware of priorities and new areas of focus for**

**schools:** “Innovation and inclusion are both important for resource expenditure right now,” said David. “Be aware of shifting national priorities and trends happening within the international schools market.”

### **Help schools to be competitive in a highly competitive**

**market:** “As competition gets tighter, schools are looking to give increasingly good value for money,” said Chris. “In this environment, schools are less likely to take a risk with significant purchases of unproven initiatives and technology. Conversely, we are all looking for that special initiative that will help us stand out from the crowd. In this environment, products and services that have been successful in top schools in other countries are very attractive.”