



# Up Our Game, Canada! Effectively Learn From New Knowledge & Apply It

Framework vs playbook, trade block markets, & AI stack

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# Objective

- Encourage immediate action among Canadian SMEs to capitalize on trade opportunities beyond the U.S. and proactively address U.S. tariffs & annexation threats
- Proactively address threats from U.S. tariffs & annexation risks, emphasizing the need for market diversification
- Present a structured roadmap combining strategic frameworks & execution-focused playbooks
- Highlight the role of AI and trade pacts in scaling Canadian SME operations efficiently

# Act Now—Seize Growth & Protect Your Canadian SME

- Every delay costs you opportunities—secure your SME’s future by taking action now
- U.S. tariffs & annexation threats are real, but the growth potential for Canadian SMEs is even greater
- Waiting increases risks—rising tariffs, supply chain disruptions, & stronger competition will make expansion harder
- First movers win—act now to capture profitable markets before competitors do
- Government incentives won’t last—early adopters maximize funding & minimize entry costs

# Why These Modules Matter for Canadian SMEs

- Accelerate your time to market
- Transform insights into action with AI-powered tools that drive real business results
- Provide a clear roadmap by separating big-picture strategy (Internationalization Framework) from step-by-step execution (SME Playbook)
- Shift focus from defense to growth, helping Canadian SMEs expand & strengthen resilience—not just react to U.S. tariff and annexation threats
- Unlock AI & digital trade as powerful tools for scaling
- Break down complex strategies for smarter decision-making
- Deliver practical, ready-to-use steps to grow and operate with confidence

# Our Unique Advantage

- Strategy & execution – A clear roadmap combining big-picture strategy & a step-by-step playbook
- AI-driven growth – Use AI, automation, & e-commerce to cut costs & simplify expansion & operations
- Maximize trade advantages – Leverage CPTPP, CETA, & USMCA & unlock export program funding
- Tailored & adaptive – Structured yet flexible strategies that fit your business & market shifts

# Agenda

1. Framework vs your SME playbook – Strategic planning vs actionable execution
2. Global vs trade block markets
3. AI Stack: Your secret weapon for faster, smarter, & more-cost effective expansion
4. Executive summary – Takeaways & your next steps

# 1. Framework vs Your SME Playbook: Strategic Planning vs Actionable Execution

Aspect	Framework	Playbook Template	SME Playbook
<b>Purpose</b>	Provides a high-level, structured approach for strategic planning	A standardized format to create your customized playbook	Your company's detailed, actionable guide for international expansion
<b>Level of detail</b>	High-level strategic overview	Detailed, step-by-step guidance	Company-specific & highly detailed
<b>Flexibility</b>	Adaptable to various situations	Ensures consistency & best practices	Tailored to your specific needs & goals
<b>Usage</b>	Strategic planning & decision-making	Develop customized playbooks	Guide action & document insights
<b>Components</b>	Key concepts, components, & processes informed by research	Pre-designed step-by-step guidance & best practices	Sections that capture SME expertise

# Choose the Right Tool for Doing Things

- A Framework is best suited for strategic planning & high-level decision-making
- Playbook Template is ideal for creating SME playbooks, standardizing processes & driving continuous improvement
- SME Playbook is best for hands-on execution & implementation



# Our Partnership: Working Together for Your Success

## What we do

- Provide expert-developed frameworks & templates, based on the latest research
- Continuously refine these tools based on real-world feedback & results
- Offer ongoing support & guidance throughout your journey

## What you do

- Develop your company-specific playbooks using our provided framework & template
- Implement your playbooks, actively monitoring & measuring results
- Provide feedback to continuously improve the framework & template
- Embrace a culture of continuous learning & adaptation

# Benefits of Frameworks

- Strategic clarity & direction – Provide a structured approach to decision-making, goal setting, & resource allocation
- Risk mitigation – Help identify business challenges early, reducing uncertainty & improving adaptability
- Scalability & consistency – Ensure that processes, strategies, & objectives are aligned across teams & can grow with the organization
- Data-driven decision-making – Encourage the use of metrics, AI, & analytics to refine strategies & improve performance
- Efficiency & productivity – Reduce time spent on trial-and-error approaches by offering a structured plan for execution

# Addressing Challenges of Frameworks

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>How to Address</b>
Execution gaps due to lack of leadership buy-in	Implement structured accountability measures & ensure leadership alignment early in the process
Requires significant time & effort to implement	Use pre-built, modular frameworks that can be customized instead of starting from scratch
May be too general & require customization	Provide industry-specific examples, case studies, & AI-driven recommendations for better applicability

# Benefits of Playbook Templates

- Process standardization – Provides step-by-step guidance, making execution efficient & repeatable
- Faster implementation – Helps teams transition from strategy to action quickly, reducing delays
- Customization & Flexibility – Can be adapted to different industries, business models, & operational needs
- Performance Tracking & Continuous Improvement – Incorporates KPIs, monitoring systems, & feedback loops to refine execution
- Team Alignment & Training – Helps onboard employees, document best practices, & maintain consistency across teams

# Addressing Challenges of Playbook Templates

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>How to Address</b>
Requires extensive data input & research	Utilize AI-powered automation & analytics tools to gather & structure data efficiently
May not adapt quickly to market or operational changes	Incorporate agile principles, allowing for iterative updates based on real-time feedback
Depends on consistent execution across teams	Establish clear roles, ownership structures, & progress-tracking mechanisms to ensure compliance

## 2. Trade Block Markets

- A Trade Block Market creates a predictable, low-barrier environment for SMEs to expand internationally
- For Canadian SMEs, the Comprehensive & Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) & United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) provide the best opportunities to access diverse, high-growth international markets with lower costs & reduced trade risks
- Provide SMEs with preferential entry to multiple economies at once, instead of negotiating separate trade terms with each country

# Global vs Trade Block Markets

Factor	Trading in Global Markets	Trading in Trade Block Markets
<b>Market access</b>	SMEs can access any country, but face higher trade barriers, tariffs, & compliance costs	Preferential access to 51 countries under CPTPP, CETA, USMCA, reducing tariffs & regulatory barriers
<b>Tariffs &amp; trade costs</b>	Higher tariffs, unpredictable regulatory changes, & more expensive customs procedures	Lower or eliminated tariffs under agreements like CPTPP & CETA, leading to cost savings
<b>Regulatory complexity</b>	SMEs must comply with varied & often complex foreign regulations with no harmonization	Trade blocks offer harmonized regulations & simplified trade procedures across multiple countries
<b>Geopolitical &amp; economic risks</b>	Vulnerable to trade wars, sanctions, & policy shifts (e.g., U.S.-China tensions)	More predictable trade relationships, as agreements provide legal protections & dispute mechanisms
<b>Supply chain stability</b>	Global sourcing options, but longer supply chains increase risks (e.g., China dependency, shipping disruptions)	More secure & diversified supply chains, as trade blocks promote regional cooperation & nearshoring
<b>Trade support &amp; financing</b>	Fewer government-backed incentives for non-trade block markets	Canada provides export support programs (EDC, CanExport, TCS) specifically for trade block partners
<b>Competitive advantage</b>	Harder to compete with large multinational corporations in open global markets	Trade agreements offer competitive benefits (e.g., Canadian dairy & agriculture get exclusive access under CETA)
<b>Ease of market entry</b>	Requires extensive market research, adaptation to different standards, & logistics setup	Faster & easier entry due to harmonized standards, reduced red tape, & existing trade relationships

# Major Trade Blocks

<b>Trade Block</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Key Members</b>
<b>United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)</b>	North America	USA, Canada, Mexico
<b>Comprehensive &amp; Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)</b>	Asia-Pacific & Americas	Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, United Kingdom
<b>Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)</b>	Europe	Germany, France, Italy, Spain, etc.
<b>Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)</b>	Southeast Asia	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.
<b>MERCOSUR</b>	South America	Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay
<b>African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)</b>	Africa	54 African countries



# Best Industries for Canadian SMEs to Expand Under CPTPP

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Why It's a Great Fit for CPTPP Expansion</b>
<b>Agriculture &amp; Agri-Food</b>	CPTPP removes tariffs on beef, pork, seafood, grains, & dairy products, opening lucrative Asian markets (Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia)
<b>Technology &amp; SaaS</b>	Digital trade rules allow Canadian tech startups & SaaS companies to scale internationally with fewer restrictions
<b>E-Commerce &amp; Retail</b>	Preferential trade terms for Canadian online retailers, reducing shipping & import costs to Asia-Pacific & Latin America
<b>Clean Energy &amp; Green Tech</b>	CPTPP promotes sustainability-focused trade, supporting Canadian renewable energy solutions & clean tech exports
<b>Professional Services</b>	Consulting, legal, finance, & engineering services benefit from simplified cross-border trade
<b>Manufacturing &amp; Automotive</b>	Access to fast-growing industrial markets in Vietnam, Mexico, & Japan with lower import duties

## Example: Why CPTPP offers to be a game changer for Canadian SMES under U.S. tariff threats

- Reduces tariffs & opens high-growth Asia-Pacific & Latin American markets
- Digital-friendly trade agreement enables tech, SaaS, & e-commerce growth
- Expands Canada's global trade footprint beyond the U.S. & EU
- Encourages supply chain diversification & stronger business partnerships
- Government-backed trade programs provide funding & risk mitigation for SMEs

# Key Benefits of CPTPP for Canadian SMEs 1/2

## **Lower tariffs & market access**

- 99% tariff elimination on exports to CPTPP countries (agriculture, tech, manufacturing, services)
- Cost-effective entry into Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, & more
- Diversifies trade beyond the U.S., expanding into Asia-Pacific & Latin America provides competitive advantage over non-members

## **Competitive edge**

- Preferential access unavailable to non-CPTPP competitors
- Stronger positioning in fast-growing economies with rising demand for Canadian goods & services

## **Digital trade & e-commerce growth**

- No barriers to cross-border data & transactions
- Easier market entry for tech startups, SaaS providers & digital services
- No localization requirements, enabling seamless cloud-based operations

# Key Benefits of CPTPP for Canadian SMEs 2/2

## **Stronger IP protections**

- Safeguards patents, copyrights, trademarks, & trade secrets internationally
- Simplifies enforcement of Canadian brand rights in CPTPP markets

## **Easier expansion & investments**

- Removes foreign investment restrictions, enabling SMEs to establish subsidiaries, joint ventures, & local offices
- Simplifies Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules, reducing bureaucratic delays

## **Streamlined regulations & faster customs processing**

- Streamlined customs processing with simplified documentation
- Recognized certifications lower compliance costs for exporters

# Challenges for Canadian SMEs Expanding Under CPTPP

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>How to overcome it</b>
<b>Cultural &amp; language barriers</b>	Work with local partners or hire consultants to navigate business etiquette. Use AI translation tools (e.g., DeepL, Google AutoML) to assist with localization
<b>Regulatory differences</b>	Consult trade specialists to ensure compliance with market-specific trade & tax laws
<b>Supply chain &amp; logistics</b>	Partner with global shipping providers (DHL, FedEx, UPS) for efficient distribution
<b>Currency exchange risks</b>	Use hedging strategies & multi-currency payment platforms (Wise, Payoneer) to manage fluctuations
<b>Local competition</b>	Differentiate through branding, quality, & digital marketing strategies to compete effectively

# Government Resources & Support for Canadian SMEs Expanding Under CPTPP

- **Export Development Canada (EDC)** – Provides financing, insurance, & market entry support
- **Trade Commissioner Service (TCS)** – Offers free advisory services, B2B matchmaking, & trade missions in CPTPP countries
- **CanExport Program** – Grants covering up to 50% of international expansion costs (market research, digital marketing, export certification)
- **Canadian Technology Accelerator (CTA) Program** – Helps tech startups expand internationally via incubators in Asia-Pacific

### 3. AI Stack: Your Secret Weapon for Faster, Smarter, & More-Cost Effective Expansion

- AI tools can significantly reduce barriers, optimize operations, & enhance decision-making for SMEs looking to expand
- For Canadian SMEs looking to scale domestically & internationally, the AI tools should integrate across marketing, sales, supply chain, & financial operations
- Quantify the overall benefit of AI across all tool categories
- Shift to Canadian suppliers who can provide stronger benefits
- The following AI tools can dramatically streamline your process, providing data-driven insights & automating key tasks

# Examples of AI tools that can be part of a SME stack

Category	AI Tool	Key Features	U.S. based
Market Research	Crayon	Competitive intelligence, real-time monitoring	
Market Research	SimilarWeb	Web traffic & market analysis	
Localization & Translation	DeepL	AI-based translation, high contextual accuracy	
Localization & Translation	Localize	Automated website localization	
Marketing & Lead Generation	Jasper AI	AI-driven content generation & SEO optimization	
Marketing & Lead Generation	Adzooma	AI-based ad management & performance optimization	
Customer Support	Zendesk AI	Multilingual AI chatbot & customer service automation	Replace
Customer Support	Tidio AI	24/7 multi-lingual chatbot & FAQ automation	
Supply Chain & Logistics	Flexport AI	AI-powered freight forwarding & supply chain optimization	Replace
Supply Chain & Logistics	ShipBob AI	E-commerce fulfillment automation	Replace
Payments & Finance	Wise AI	Cross-border payment processing & currency conversion	
Payments & Finance	Stripe Radar	Fraud detection in global transactions	Replace
Compliance & Risk Management	OneTrust AI	GDPR & global data compliance automation	Replace
Compliance & Risk Management	Kira Systems	AI-driven contract analysis & legal compliance checks	



## 4. Executive Summary – Takeaways (1/2)

- Urgency to expand beyond the U.S.
  - U.S. trade policies create risk—SMEs must diversify beyond the U.S. to remain competitive
  - First movers gain an advantage in securing new markets before they become saturated
- AI & digital trade as growth accelerators
  - AI-driven decision-making & automation make internationalization more cost-effective & scalable
  - E-commerce platforms simplify global sales & reduce barriers to entry
- Trade blocks offer safer, easier market entry
  - CPTPP, CETA, & USMCA provide preferential trade access & lower tariffs
  - Diversifying into multiple markets reduces reliance on a single economy

## Executive Summary – Takeaways (2/2)

- Playbooks drive execution & results
  - A SME Playbook ensures repeatable success in new markets
  - KPIs, market tracking, & strategic alliances sustain long-term expansion
- Government support is available, but time-sensitive
  - Delaying action could mean losing funding & missing market entry windows

# Executive Summary – Your Next Steps

- Develop your SME playbooks using the provided template
- Analyze your AI, digital infrastructure, & supply chain readiness for domestic & international expansion
- Leverage automation, e-commerce, & digital trade tools to scale efficiently
- Establish domestic & local partnerships
- Join our community – Connect with other Canadian SMEs on the same journey to share best practices & support

# Up Our Game, Canada!

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