



**Peter Jones,
General Manager, Marketing
ABB Grain**

<http://www.abb.com.au>

South Australia-based ABB Grain is one of Australia's oldest grain marketing companies. It has been exporting Australian and other countries' grain to the Middle East for around 70 years.

Peter Jones has been dealing with Middle East markets for a decade. ABB has been exporting to Oman for 25 years.

Peter Jones' key message is: Deliver on your promises. If you don't deliver, it could be the end of your relationship.

'It's important to be consistent and not to exaggerate what you can do.

'Oman is a small market, with one large and one small flour mill, but from our point of view it is predictable and stable.

'It is a competitive market for ABB. Deregulation in Australia means more Australian companies are approaching the Omanis. This means we need to maintain good customer relations.

'Communication is important to maintaining relations. It is also important to make personal visits. Part of the process is to show your bona fides, so we go to Oman and have also invited them to Australia.

'Time in front of the customer is important.

'We have come to understand their culture and their values through experience. You build up an understanding of their faith. You have to remember things like not showing the soles of your shoes to someone (because it is a sign of disrespect) and not eating with your left hand.

'It is important to respect, for example, the Ramadan period. You can't go out in public eating or drinking while the locals are fasting.

'Language has not been a barrier for us because the locals speak excellent English.

'I deal with people from all over the world and, while culturally they are all different, when you boil it down they are essentially the same. People want to be treated fairly and for people to do what they say they'll do.

'One of the attractions about Oman for us is its proximity to other parts of the Middle East, at the bottom of the Arabian Gulf. We can do fully-loaded cargoes to Oman as well as part-loaded. As well, our product (barley and wheat) is well suited to the market.

'We don't use a local agent. We keep in communication with our clients by email and by phone and that works fine.'