



**Michael Rorke,
Executive Director,
Radcrete Pacific**

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Radcrete Pacific distributes specialised water-proofing products to more than 70 countries. The company entered the Oman market in 2008 with a project to waterproof a major desalination plant. With projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and with plans to enter the UAE, Oman is part of Radcrete's growing business portfolio in the Middle East.

Michael Rorke's key advice: 'Make sure you push your potential local partner to do as much study as possible on your product and the market before you arrive.'

'The key is to find the right local distributor. If you get the wrong one, nothing will happen and it can set you back a year or more.'

'Austrade does a good job in searching out potential partners for your business.'

'Once they get a list of half a dozen or so potential partners, people are inclined to get on a plane straight away and go and meet them all. When they get there the potential partner might not know anything about them.'

'I deliberately wait two months before leaving. In that time I do a lot of research on the potential partner and I push them to do market research, so by the time I get there they know the product and where it might fit in to the market.'

'Before the partner search, I also ask Austrade to provide general market research and feedback.'

'The major attraction about Oman is that it is small; nevertheless there is a lot of infrastructure work happening. There is less competition than in a place like Dubai.'

'Oman is going down a slightly different path to the UAE. It's not going at such a breakneck speed. They're trying to preserve their culture and have a bit more of an open society.'

‘It’s a bit quieter and a bit slower and they’re not trying to make another New York in the Middle East.

‘In our work, proper training is vital because if our distributor – who also does the application – makes a mistake, it means we have a lot of ground to make up.

‘In terms of follow-up, we are in email contact two or three times a week and we ring every two or three weeks. As a broader strategy, I get editorial published in construction industry magazines in the Gulf.

‘I also have a goal of visiting three times a year.

‘I don’t think personal relationships are necessarily more important in Oman or the Middle East than anywhere else I do business. It is always important, wherever you are, to have good relations with your clients and your partners.

‘Knowing the local culture is important, but in my view it is not an overriding factor. Like anywhere in the world, you need to respect who you are dealing with and treat them as a normal human being. In practice I find that I deal a lot with other expatriates such as other Australians, the British, Indians or the Lebanese because they occupy the management roles.’