

Scaling with Intent:

Why Legitimacy in EdTech Is Earned, Not Exported



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Foreword

Over the past several years, I have worked with EdTech companies of very different sizes and stages, from established platforms expanding beyond their home markets to fast-growing startups preparing for their first international move. The geographies have varied too: companies entering the Gulf states, Latin America, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe. No two engagements ever looked the same, much as the underlying patterns are remarkably consistent.

Our observation is that most companies tackle international expansion from a position of domestic success. That success is real, and it matters. What it does not do is prepare companies for how the education industry operates in another country. We are not referring to surface-level differences (which are easy to anticipate) but to the structural ones: how procurement decisions are made and by whom, how trust is built in brand new markets, what counts as evidence of impact in a context where potential clients are not familiar with an international brand, what the specific expectations of the key agents in the value chain are, and how long the entire process eventually takes.

The companies I have seen scale internationally are not the ones with the largest teams or the biggest budgets. They tend to be the ones who understood, early on, that international growth in education cannot be exported. Indeed, growth has to be earned. Earned through the way you show up in a new market, the relationships you build with the people who help you reach your target audience, the differential value proposition that you bring to the local education context, and the institutional trust you accumulate over time. This process is slower than most leadership teams expect. It is also more sustainable and durable than any shortcut or quick fix.

This report attempts to capture what we have learned from working alongside companies as they navigate internationalization. It does not offer a universal playbook, simply because no such thing exists. Instead, it offers a set of questions, observations, and patterns that we believe can help EdTech leaders approach international expansion with greater clarity, while avoiding some critical mistakes.

Josep Maria Mas

**VP OF CONSULTING AND PARTNER
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International expansion is rarely held back by ambition. It is held back by readiness.

The case for growing beyond a single geography has never been more pressing. In the United States, domestic funding cycles have tightened considerably. The average U.S. district manages more than 2,000 EdTech tools, and the threshold for new adoption continues to rise. Federal education budgets face sustained uncertainty. Meanwhile, education systems across Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and parts of the Middle East are investing in digital infrastructure, teacher development, and AI-enabled learning at a scale that did not exist five years ago.

Across other regions, companies are similarly pursuing international expansion to offset the constraints of stagnant domestic markets, reduce concentration risk, and capture demand early in countries where digital transformation is accelerating. For some time, South Korean companies have been targeting Southeast Asian markets such as Vietnam and Indonesia, while Singaporean firms are making inroads throughout Southeast Asia and even in the Middle East. At the same time, many companies in North America and Asia continue to monitor China closely, anticipating a potential resurgence of the private sector.

Most companies that pursue international growth understand this opportunity. What they tend to underestimate is what it takes to convert opportunity into traction. Education systems differ from one another in the specifics that matter most: who makes procurement decisions and at what level, what counts as evidence of impact, how teachers experience technology in practice, and whether a foreign company can earn trust quickly enough to sustain a commercial relationship. A strong domestic track record does not resolve any of these questions. In many cases, it creates assumptions that obscure them.

The companies that scale internationally in education are not the ones that export their domestic model into new geographies. They are the ones who learn how to earn legitimacy inside the system they enter. That legitimacy is built through contextual adaptation, deliberate market sequencing, and the discipline to invest in understanding a system before expecting returns.

This report examines what earning legitimacy requires in practice. It is structured around the strategic questions that most often determine whether expansion produces durable growth or merely expensive experimentation: How to evaluate which markets to enter, what meaningful localization actually demands, how to navigate routes to market, and what traction looks like as legitimacy begins to compound. The observations draw on recurring patterns among companies navigating this transition and on conversations with EdTech leaders and operators across diverse education systems.

Three things that distinguish EdTech companies scaling with intent

1. **They choose markets they can earn the right to compete in**, instead of chasing TAM. Geography fit, regulatory readiness, and partner availability are weighed before the commercial opportunity.
2. **They localise the operating model, not just the product**, so the company functions inside the new system rather than against it. Decisions, hiring, evidence and partnership posture all shift; the brand, less so.
3. **They invest in legitimacy before scale**, treating early reputation as a compounding asset rather than a marketing line. Pilots are designed to produce defensible evidence, not testimonials, and partners are chosen for what they unlock institutionally, not transactionally.

SECTION 01

The Pressure to Expand Is Real. The Preparation Usually Isn't.

Five years ago, international expansion was a growth option. For many North American EdTech companies, it is becoming a financial necessity.

The domestic funding environment has shifted structurally. Global EdTech venture capital has contracted sharply from its pandemic-era peak, and the contraction has hit North America harder than other regions. In 2025, Europe overtook North America for the first time as the leading destination for EdTech investment by value.¹ The U.S. K-12 market, while still the largest in the world, is showing signs of saturation and scrutiny that are difficult to ignore.

The bar of entry to schools for tech tools and apps is naturally going up.

Richard Culatta, CEO of ISTE and ASCD²

At the same time, federal education budgets in the U.S. face sustained pressure. The FY2026 budget preserved most K-12 programs at flat funding levels,³ but in an inflationary environment, flat funding is effectively a cut. Title IV-A, the flexible block grant most commonly used for EdTech procurement, was retained but not increased. For companies whose revenue depends heavily on U.S. district spending, the runway is narrowing.

These domestic pressures are pushing more companies to look internationally. The urgency is clear. What is less well understood, however, is how much the international operating environment itself has changed. And equally (if not more) important, how different attractive markets are from the United States. Three shifts in particular are reshaping what it takes to earn legitimacy in a new education market.

¹ HoloniQ, *Global EdTech Capital Market Report*, 2025.
www.holoniq.com/notes/global-edtech-capital-market-report-2025

² R. Culatta, keynote remarks, ISTE/ASCD Annual Conference, June 2025.
www.iste.org/news

³ U.S. Department of Education, *FY2026 Budget Summary*, March 2025.
www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget26/summary

Evidence is becoming the price of entry, but the bar varies by market

Buyers in new markets, particularly government and institutional players, are under growing pressure to move beyond feature lists and engagement metrics toward proof of learning impact. This shift is real, but uneven.

In parts of the Middle East, national EdTech strategies and sovereign procurement processes are increasingly incorporating outcome-based criteria, driven by governments with both the resources and the policy ambition to demand them.

Across Asia-Pacific, the direction of travel is similar, but the terrain is more varied. Sophisticated markets such as Singapore and Australia have the institutional frameworks to rigorously evaluate evidence. Much of Southeast Asia, however, is still building that capacity: recent research across the region found few standardized approaches to impact evaluation, and multilateral bodies such as the Asian Development Bank continue to identify the lack of outcome diagnostics as a core challenge rather than a solved problem.

This means the evidence strategy needs to be calibrated to each target market — built into the expansion plan from the outset, but designed with an honest understanding of where each system currently is, not just where it is heading.

AI governance is creating new complexity

The regulatory environment around AI in education is evolving at different speeds in different regions. Data sovereignty requirements, transparency obligations, and safety standards vary significantly from one market to the next. A product built for U.S. compliance assumptions may need substantial adaptation to meet requirements in the Gulf states, the EU, or Southeast Asia. Companies that design with governance in mind from the outset are better positioned than those that treat compliance as a market-by-market afterthought.

New markets bring new, and often unfamiliar, competitors

Well-resourced school systems in several regions are now choosing to build their own technology rather than license it. Content providers are becoming technology-enabled, while EdTech companies are exploring content partnerships. The competitive environment a company faces when entering a new market may bear little resemblance to the one it competes in at home. Besides, it is easy to overlook domestic players who can underprice higher-cost external solutions while offering clear advantages such as speed-to-market, responsiveness, or intercultural intelligence.

What this means in practice

None of this makes international expansion less attractive. It makes the old playbook less reliable. What once passed as a credible market entry — translating a product, attending a conference, finding a distributor — is increasingly insufficient in markets where buyers are more demanding, regulators are more active, and local competitors are more capable. The difference today is that the variables are harder to read from a distance. Internationalization audits, market-readiness assessments, and structured entry frameworks are used precisely because the cost of misreading a market has grown, especially for companies that expect to move beyond an initial foothold.

In practice, this means that the timeline and investment required to establish credibility in a new market are larger than most companies budget for. EdTech leaders who treat international expansion as an incremental addition to the domestic plan, funded from the margins and expected to produce short-term results, are likely to be disappointed. The companies that navigate this well are the ones that recognize international expansion as a distinct strategic commitment with its own logic, resource requirements, and definitions of success.

SECTION 02

Export Thinking vs. Operating Thinking

The most common failure mode in EdTech internationalization has little to do with product quality or market size. It starts with assumptions.

Many of the companies exploring international growth have already had some exposure. They attended a regional conference, signed a distribution agreement, or attracted random inbound clients. Activity happened; traction did not. The pattern is remarkably consistent: scattered efforts across multiple geographies, no structured basis for deciding which markets deserved real investment, and a growing gap between the board's expectations and the revenue line.

The underlying issue is almost always the same. The company approached expansion as a geographic extension of its domestic model. The intent was genuine. But the operating assumptions about how decisions get made, how trust is built, and how adoption is sustained did not hold up within a different education system. The domestic model was exported. Legitimacy was not earned.

The following observations reflect what we have seen repeatedly across markets and company profiles.

Complexity

Complexity intensifies when crossing borders. Consider decision-making alone. In the United States, procurement has been shifting between district-level and building-level decision-making over the past several years. In the Gulf states, ministries of education often drive adoption from the top, with entirely different timelines and relationship structures. In Latin America and Southeast Asia, the mix of public, private, and donor-funded procurement creates a landscape in which a single country may require three distinct go-to-market approaches. Even within a single region, the variation can be striking. Dubai operates a highly developed, competitive education market with intense scrutiny on proof of concept. A neighboring emirate may function entirely differently.

It has never been easier to build education technology, but it has never been more complicated to actually sell it.

Pablo Langa, Founder and Managing Partner, EDT&Partners

Decision-making

Beyond decision-making, there is a gap that catches many companies off guard: the distance between those who procure technology and those who use it. In most education systems, the people choosing which tools to adopt and the educators experiencing those tools in classrooms are not the same people, and their priorities frequently diverge. In private schools, a third party enters the picture: parents, when bearing the cost, may play a role in the adoption decision alongside those who prescribe it and those who experience it.

The diversity of decision-making is so high that if you're surprised, then you're not paying attention. But it doesn't mean it's less difficult.

Matt Given, CEO of Seesaw

Product and positioning pitfalls

One of the most persistent mistakes we observe is assuming that a product that sells at home will translate directly to the international market. Companies frequently underestimate how much **local context** shapes what buyers and end users actually need. Curriculum alignment, language, and pedagogical expectations vary significantly, yet many organizations resist adapting their product until market signals become impossible to ignore — holding to the assumption that early sales in their existing format should fund localization, rather than treating localization as a precondition for serious traction in local markets.

Pricing compounds the problem. Cost structures that are viable in the United States, where institutional budgets and parental spending power are comparatively high, can render a product uncompetitive or inaccessible elsewhere. This extends to **ancillary costs** that are easy to overlook: complex STEM programs requiring imported class sets or human proctoring services priced at U.S. labor rates can quietly render a proposition unworkable in the field.

User capability is a further variable that tends to be underweighted. In many markets, teachers do not yet have the experience or training to extract full value from sophisticated tools, and a product that assumes a certain baseline of digital fluency may simply fail to land regardless of its quality.

Errors of product and positioning are often compounded by how companies choose to go to market. A particularly common failure is **treating international expansion as a replication of the domestic model** — using the same sales motions, without accounting for the sociocultural dynamics, institutional hierarchies, and language barriers that shape how buying decisions are actually made in each system.

Equally damaging is the scattergun approach: **pursuing multiple market segments simultaneously** in an attempt to generate early revenue, which tends to produce shallow relationships and no defensible position anywhere.

Channel management is another area where companies routinely fall short. Distributors and sales representatives are brought on board and then left largely unsupported — without structured playbooks, product training, or the ongoing enablement needed to represent the product credibly. The assumption that a channel partner will independently carry a product into a new market has consistently proven optimistic.

Finally, there is the question of **outcomes**. Parents and institutional buyers in many markets are outcome-driven in a very direct sense — a parent being asked to pay for (or considering subscribing to) a five-dollar app wants to know it will help their child perform better in measurable ways. When the outcomes a product delivers do not match the outcomes a market expects, the mismatch is rarely bridged by marketing alone.

The shift that matters is from exporting to operating.

Taken together, these patterns point to the same underlying error: underestimating the extent of active, sustained, and locally informed effort required for international market-building.

Exporting focuses on distributing an existing model. Operating requires understanding how the system functions, how value is experienced in classrooms, and how credibility is established locally. That distinction sounds conceptual. In practice, it determines everything: which markets to enter, how to price the product, who to partner with, and how long to commit before expecting returns.

For EdTech leaders, this means that the first question to ask before committing to a new market is not *"How big is the opportunity?"* It is *"Do we understand this market well enough to earn a place in it?"* Companies that can answer this question honestly and are willing to invest in the answer tend to build something durable.

SECTION 03

What Legitimacy Actually Requires

Once the mindset shift is clear, three interconnected strategic decisions shape whether expansion gains traction or fragments into scattered activity.

Choosing Where You Can Earn the Right to Compete

International growth frequently begins with scattered signals: inbound interest from some schools, early pilots in unexpected regions, and organic adoption by individual schools or teachers. These signals can feel like demand. More often than not, they are merely noise.

The challenge at this stage is rarely a lack of opportunity. A company may have pockets of activity developing in six or seven countries without a clear basis for deciding which ones deserve real investment. Market size is the most common filter, yet it is the least reliable. A large addressable market means very little if the procurement structures are impenetrable, the regulatory environment is hostile to foreign providers, or the system's definition of quality does not align with what the product delivers.

Effective prioritization requires going deeper: understanding how decisions are made within a given system, what role the government plays in adoption, whether there are institutional partners who can accelerate credibility, and whether the company's business model can actually function in that context.

This last point deserves particular attention. Most EdTech companies that have reached the scale at which international expansion makes sense have built their revenue on B2B SaaS sales. The sales process is familiar and can be summarised as follows: identify the buyer, run a demo, close the deal, and renew annually. Government and donor-funded procurement, which drives a significant share of EdTech adoption across Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Asia-Pacific, operates on an entirely different logic. Timelines stretch to eighteen months or longer. Decision-making involves multiple ministries or agencies. Contract structures may require local incorporation, in-country data hosting, or partnership with an approved local entity. Pricing that works on a per-seat, annual basis may be incompatible with systems in which budgets are allocated at the national level in multi-year cycles.

Most EdTech teams encounter this reality for the first time when they enter a new market, and the learning curve can be disorienting and expensive. Even companies with domestic B2G experience find the transition challenging.

Our business model is fairly unique. Our product is not something you buy off the shelf. We're B2B and B2G. That presents challenges in markets unfamiliar with our business model.

Jason Turner, Chief Operating Officer at MetaMetrics

In donor-funded markets, the sequence often needs to be reversed entirely. Rather than identifying a country, building a pitch, and then seeking funding, companies that gain traction in these environments tend to start with the funders: understanding which development agencies, multilaterals, or government programs are actively investing in digital learning, and then co-designing initiatives that align with those priorities. Approaching a country with an unfunded concept, however compelling, rarely generates the traction or pace that leadership expects.

A related question that often surfaces too late is whether to focus on public or private school systems. Outside of markets such as the United Kingdom and Australia, public school procurement in K-12 is rarely as sophisticated or as replicable as it appears from the outside. Decision cycles can be opaque, technology mandates can shift with administrations, and the institutional capacity to evaluate and integrate new tools varies widely. Private school systems, by contrast, often offer more predictable buying behavior, faster decision cycles, and a clearer path to commercial relationships. The choice between them is not a tactical detail but rather one of the first questions to answer honestly when selecting a market.

Internationalization is a sequencing exercise. Entering too many markets simultaneously dilutes focus and strains internal capacity. Concentrating effort where system fit and institutional alignment are strongest generates compounding legitimacy, making subsequent markets easier to enter. Strategic patience at this stage should not be mistaken for caution. It is the most consequential decision a company makes in the entire expansion process.

For leaders, market selection is the first real test of whether the shift from export thinking to operating thinking has actually taken hold. If the primary filter is still "*Where is the market biggest?*" rather than "*Where can we earn the right to compete?*", the export mindset is still driving the strategy.

Localization Is Where Export Thinking Breaks Most Visibly

Localization is frequently reduced to translation. In practice, it spans at least four dimensions, and the ones that get overlooked are usually the ones that determine whether a product takes hold.

Localization is not just language. It is culture, curriculum, classroom context, and accessibility. The real opportunity now is that AI can reduce the barriers to delivering that at scale.

Craig Shotland, CEO, Matific

Pedagogy and learning culture

A curriculum-aligned product may still land very differently across systems if underlying assumptions about teacher autonomy, assessment practice, and student engagement go unexamined. Case studies that resonated powerfully in one market may carry no weight in another, because the teaching culture and the definition of what "effective" looks like are fundamentally different. A company that presents U.S.-based evidence to a ministry buyer in the Gulf or Southeast Asia may find that the data is acknowledged but fails to build confidence, because the context is too distant from the realities of local classrooms.

Closely related is a messaging problem. Companies that have succeeded domestically tend to lead with what their product does: features, capabilities, or integrations. In new markets, particularly where government or institutional buyers are involved, the conversation needs to start with the problem the system is trying to solve: student outcomes, teacher capacity, workforce readiness, and compliance with national reform priorities. A feature-led pitch may get a polite reception. A problem-led conversation, grounded in the specific pressures facing that system, is what opens doors.

User expectations

How teachers interact with technology, how parents engage with schools, and the level of autonomy educators have in tool adoption vary enormously. A platform designed for bottom-up, teacher-led adoption will struggle in a system where purchasing decisions flow from the top down, and teachers implement what they are given. The reverse is equally true: a product designed for top-down deployment may fail in a market where individual teachers make their own technology choices.

Commercial logic

Pricing models, contract structures, and procurement cycles that work domestically may be entirely misaligned internationally. A per-seat SaaS model that scales naturally in U.S. districts may be unworkable in a system where budgets are allocated annually at the national level and procurement decisions take eighteen months. Companies that discover this mismatch after entering a market have already lost time and credibility.

Trust

The fourth, and often the most underestimated, is trust. Beyond regulatory compliance, trust in education is relational. It is built through local presence, institutional proof points, and sustained engagement over time. A company's domestic track record, however impressive, does not transfer across borders. It must be rebuilt from scratch in each new geography, often through partnerships and local relationships rather than direct sales efforts.

In some instances, companies prefer to fast-track localization by pursuing inorganic growth.

We were introduced to Little Thinking Minds, which ultimately became Seesaw's first acquisition outside the U.S. That was a massive step for us: it gave us an Arabic-first product, key connections with ministries of education, and a true foothold in the region.

Alex Cattani Diaz, International Director at Seesaw

Localization, in that case, went well beyond product adaptation. It was a structural commitment to operating inside the system. Legitimacy was not claimed through a translated interface. It was earned through an acquisition that embedded the company in the local ecosystem.

For leaders, the practical implication is direct: if the localization effort stops at the product interface, it has not gone far enough. Every dimension, from pedagogy to pricing to proof points, needs to be examined through the lens of the specific system the company is entering.

CASE STUDY

An example of successful market entry in Southeast Asia

A Western EdTech platform attempted to enter a Southeast Asian country to provide courses at scale to Senior High School, University, and Vocational students.

Initial research confirmed market need, institutions' pain points, willingness to pay, and helped size the opportunity. The company then identified and selected a local strategic partner with the necessary public- and private-sector connections. This partner conducted a product-market fit analysis, determined the cost of course adaptation (which they absorbed), and agreed to a commercial model with lower per-course revenue but high scalability potential. The platform and content were localized (including content disaggregation/customization to fit local curricula) and integrated into the local partner's platform or delivered via the original platform for specific audiences. The local partner secured government endorsement and managed all sales and marketing.

The final product maintained the original platform architecture but was rebuilt with a different pricing strategy, new content requirements, and a localized theory of technology adoption.

What this looked like in practice

Research first. Market need, willingness to pay, and institutional pain points were validated before the commercial bet was made.

A local partner with reach. Public- and private-sector connections in-country, conducting product-market fit work and absorbing course adaptation costs.

A different commercial model. Lower per-course revenue traded for scalability — and a pricing approach that aligned with how institutions actually buy in the market.

Content rebuilt, not translated. Disaggregated and customized to fit local curricula, then integrated into the partner's delivery surfaces.

Local credibility. The partner secured government endorsement and led sales and marketing — the foreign company stayed in the background where it belonged at this stage.

How You Enter Determines Whether You Earn Legitimacy or Just Establish Presence

There is no universal route to market in education. The right approach depends on how decisions are made locally and how much embedded knowledge is required to build trust.

What leaders often want is the best model. What they actually need is a clear-eyed assessment of trade-offs, made deliberately for each market rather than defaulted from domestic habits.

Channel partners can provide speed and market access, but at the cost of control and margins. They can also place the company one or two steps removed from schools and educators, making it harder to understand how the product is actually being experienced and whether adoption is real or nominal. Building a local team secures control and deep market knowledge, but it drains resources during the period when the market is still being built, and that period is almost always longer than expected. Acquisitions can deliver immediate access to an embedded footprint, including local relationships, language capability, and regulatory knowledge, but they introduce integration complexity and, if handled poorly, brand confusion.

A company might use distribution partnerships to build reach in one region, pursue an acquisition to gain depth in another, and invest in direct presence where the market justifies it. The logic should follow the market.

The procurement pathway itself can also be a strategic lever. In some markets, listing on a cloud marketplace can bypass months of complex public tendering. In others, partnering with an approved local entity is the only realistic path to government contracts. These are not operational details to resolve after the strategy is set. They shape what is possible in a given market and how quickly a company can move from conversation to contract.

SECTION 04

Seven Questions for EdTech Leaders Considering International Expansion

These are the questions that, in our experience, most reliably surface whether a company is genuinely ready to earn legitimacy in a new education market, or whether the export mindset is still driving the strategy.

The following questions are designed for leadership teams preparing to commit resources to international growth. They are not a diagnostic scorecard. They are the questions that, in our experience, most reliably surface whether a company is genuinely ready to earn legitimacy in a new education market, or whether the export mindset is still driving the strategy.

01 Are we prepared to change the business to fit the market, or are we expecting the market to accommodate the business?

A strong domestic product is a starting point. It is not a strategy. If the plan is to translate the product, hire a regional sales lead, and expect a pipeline within six months, the approach has not yet shifted. The companies that scale internationally invest in understanding how each system works before committing to how they will sell into it.

02 Have we chosen markets where we can earn the right to compete, where the prize is large enough to move the needle, and where we understand the operating complexity?

Market size is the least reliable filter. The more common mistake is underestimating complexity while overestimating the share a company can realistically capture. The right answer combines a defensible right to win with a prize meaningful enough to justify the effort.

03 Does our localization go beyond the product interface?

Translation is a necessary step. It is not localization. If the company has not examined how its pedagogy, outcomes-based pricing model, and value proposition (among other elements) need to adapt for each target market, the localization effort has not gone far enough.

04 Have we made a deliberate route-to-market decision for each target geography?

Channel partners, local teams, and acquisitions each involve distinct trade-offs. If the company is using the same route-to-market model across all regions, or if the route was chosen based on what was most familiar rather than on what the market requires, the decision was defaulted to rather than made.

05

Are we measuring traction through indicators that reflect legitimacy, not just the pipeline?

Pipeline volume is a domestic metric. In international education markets, the leading indicators of genuine traction are different: the depth of institutional relationships, whether educators are advocating for the product independently, and whether adoption is sustained beyond the initial procurement. If the board is evaluating international progress using the same dashboard as for domestic growth, the company may either lose patience with a market that is working or persist in one that is not.

06

Do we have the local knowledge and relationships required to earn credibility inside this system?

Education is relational. Understanding who matters in a given ecosystem, how to engage meaningfully, and how to avoid common mistakes requires knowledge that is difficult to build from a distance. Whether that knowledge comes from internal hires, strategic partners, or advisory relationships, the question is whether it exists before resources are committed.

07

Have we defined what success looks like over a realistic timeline, and do we have the organizational patience to reach it?

The domestic growth curve is not a reliable reference point for international timelines. In most education markets, the distance between first engagement and sustained adoption is longer than leadership teams anticipate. If the company has not aligned internally on what milestones justify continued investment — and over what horizon — the risk is not failure in the market, but premature abandonment of one that was beginning to work.

If the answers reveal gaps, that is not a reason to delay.

Most companies that struggle internationally did not pick the wrong market. They entered before they were ready. Closing those gaps is the work that makes international growth sustainable, rather than being just expensive experiments.

CLOSING*The difference between expansion and sustainable growth*

International expansion in education follows a different logic than domestic growth. The timelines are longer. The operating complexity is higher. The assumptions that made a company successful at home will, in most cases, need to be reexamined before they can serve it abroad.

This report has argued that the difference between companies that expand internationally and those that scale lies in a single shift: from exporting a domestic model to earning legitimacy inside each new system. That shift plays out across every dimension of the expansion process. It determines how markets are selected, how deeply localization goes, which route to market is chosen, and how traction is measured and communicated internally.

The companies that get this right tend to share a few characteristics. They resist the pull of scattered opportunity and choose their markets with discipline. They treat localization as a structural commitment, not a product adjustment. They match their route to market to the realities of each system rather than defaulting to the most familiar model. And they define success through adoption quality and institutional credibility rather than pipeline volume alone.

None of this requires a company to start from scratch. Domestic success provides a genuine foundation: a product that works, a team that knows how to build and sell, and the financial capacity to invest in growth. What it requires is the willingness to pair that foundation with genuine curiosity about how education works in the places the company intends to serve, and the patience to let credibility accumulate through engagement rather than force it through scale.

The questions in the previous section are a place to start. If the answers reveal gaps between where the company is and where it needs to be, that is not a reason to delay. It is a reason to invest in the preparation that makes the difference between expansion and sustainable growth.

About EDT&Partners

EDT&Partners is a global education and technology consulting firm transforming the education and knowledge ecosystem through purposeful technology, strategic expertise, and hands-on execution. With a presence in over 16 countries, the company partners with universities, schools, governments, publishers, and organizations worldwide to help them transform responsibly and unlock human potential in the AI era.

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