



# Doing Business in Russia

- Official name – **Russian Federation**
- **Russian** is the **official language**, with other co-official languages in various regions
- **Moscow** is the capital and also the largest city
- The population is estimated at **143 million people**

In 2009, Hillary Clinton made a well-intended gift to the Russian foreign minister of that time - Sergei Lavrov. It represented a mock "reset" button, symbolising US hopes to revitalise the relationship between US and the Russian Federation. However, the word she chose to translate in Russian is "*peregruzka*", which means "overload" or "overcharge". An intercultural Freudian slip?

## Greetings

- For **greetings** – shake hands firmly and **maintain direct eye contact**. Avoid shaking hands and giving things across a threshold a house or room. It is best to cross the threshold completely before shaking a host's hand when arriving and leaving.
- **Always remove gloves** when shaking hands, it is considered rude not to.
- **Never use first names unless invited to do so**, as it is important to respect authority and formality. You can use '*Gospodin*' (Mr.) or '*Gospozha*' (Mrs.) plus their surname. However, if you know the person's full name, it would be more appreciated if you use a combination of name and patronymic. The patronymic is the father's name with the ending '*-ich/ич*' for men and '*-vna/вна*' for women, for example: *Ivan Nikolaevich* or *Anna Arkad'evna*.
- **There are also two modes of addressing** – using the formal form of 'you' – '*вы/вы*' and the informal one '*ты/ты*'



## Business Mentality

- In Russia the **type of business** you are dealing with can usually range from a new-style entrepreneur to an old-school Soviet bureaucrat.
- It is difficult to do business in Russia without the help from a **local "connection"**. To help with this, small gifts are often a good idea when doing business in Russia. Presents symbolising the stature of your company and the importance of the impending business deal, preferably an item characteristic of your local area or one that displays the company logo.
- **Patience** is important with Russians, negotiations can often be slow. As the Russian proverb states, do not 'hurry to reply', but 'hurry to listen'.
- **Avoid hard selling techniques** and any sort of conflict or confrontation.
- **Russians don't usually make an immediate decision in a meeting**; usually a certain amount of deliberation is done in private afterwards.

## The Art of Conversation

- Russians appreciate an interest from foreigners in the Russian language, so an attempt to learn or at least partially speak with them in their language is a good idea.
- Many Russians speak English as it is often taught at school.
- Russians tend not to speak too loudly in public.
- A good topic of conversation is usually the changes taking place in Russia – feel welcome to express your views, do not remain just a listener. Bringing up the subject of Russian culture and history will be an appreciated gesture. Russians are very affectionate towards children, so if you are a parent, do not hesitate to show photographs of your children.
- Avoid topics such as your complaints about Russia, the Holocaust, Czarism and monarchy, conflicts with ethnic minorities and comparing Russia to other developing countries.

## Business meetings and meals

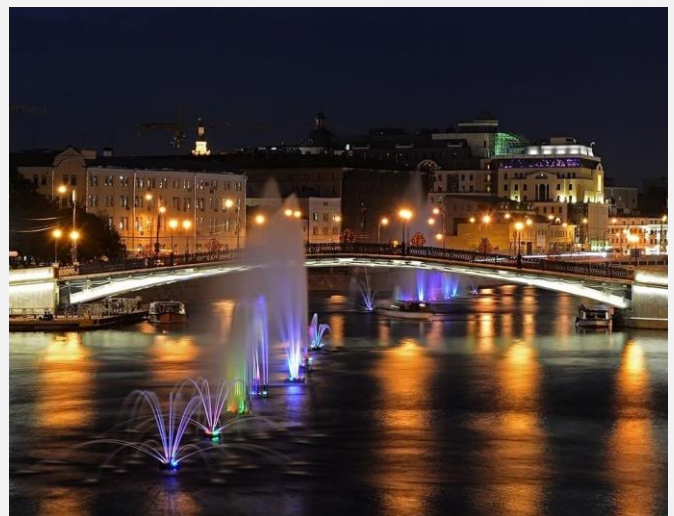
- Dress in formal, more conservative office clothes – for both men and women.
- There is a keen appreciation of punctuality, be on time if not early if you are meeting with Russians. However, don't necessarily expect your Russian counterpart to be on time, this may be just an attempt to test your patience.
- The act of handing out business cards is quite a common and important action in Russia.
- On your business cards, always print one side in your language and the other in Russian.
- At dinner in Russia, people don't usually do something before the host does, for example beginning to eat or getting up from the dinner table.
- It is often appropriate to bring a small gift when attending a family's home for dinner.
- Drinking and toasting at gatherings is an important and common act. Going out for a drink when invited is highly recommended as it shows interest in strengthening the relationship and promoting good will.

## Body Language

- Maintain eye contact.
- Never show the soles of your shoes as it is considered rude and they are considered dirty, do not let them come in contact with a seat.
- Don't stand around with your hands in your pockets. Do not sit with the legs apart or with one ankle resting upon the knee.

## Other Fun Facts

- Russia is so large it spans nine time zones.
- First country to launch a man into space: Yuri Gagarin.
- Moscow is officially the biggest city in Europe.
- Red is a prominent colour in Russian culture and history. The Russian word for red, 'krasnyi', was in the past also used to describe something beautiful. Red was the colour the Soviet Union flag and is still a feature today the current Russian Federation flag.
- If you decide to give flowers as a present, make sure the number of flowers is odd (not 13 though, as it is unlucky). An even number of flowers is associated with funerals.
- Russia covers half the northern hemisphere and has 12 seas.



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