

Focus on Russia

The most popular training in Russia today is for “transferable” skills, namely time management, teambuilding, leadership, sales, and communication strategies **BY SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA**



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The training industry began its development in Russia 15 years ago. Today, international companies are increasing investment in Russia, making the country a growth market for training.

Foreigners brought modern models of short-term and lifelong education to Russia, and these models were received enthusiastically. Currently, there are numerous types of training programs in Russia in almost every industry. The most popular training in Russia today is for “transferable” skills, namely time management, teambuilding, leadership, sales, and communication strategies.

Education is highly valued in Russia. Russians generally like studying and are true knowledge seekers. This refers, traditionally, to formal university education but also transfers naturally to short-term training programs. Russians believe any type of education will be of use in the future, and not surprisingly, a Russian’s CV is likely to list many different courses.

When training in Russia, it’s important to keep in mind:

- **The age of the trainers relative to the age(s) of the trainees.** Traditionally, a younger trainer will be met with skepticism. His or her knowledge and professionalism may be challenged. Prior to delivering a program to Russians, make an effort to learn the age group of the trainees to prepare for any potential age-related resistance. Providing the qualifications and expertise of the trainer can help establish credibility.
- **The learning environment.** Human resources departments in Russia often combine training with leisure time. The multi-tasking culture of Russia means your trainees are likely to want to do several things at once. So, if possible, consider delivering the training off-site at a resort or vacation spot.
- **The trainer’s personality and charisma.** A Russian audience will be more receptive to a trainer with a worldly perspective and approach than a trainer with single-minded focus toward the training subject matter only.

• **Russians’ attitude toward foreigners.** On one hand, Russians admire everything non-Russian, creating a boom for foreign trainers, experts, and speakers. Historically, foreigners have been able to leverage this fascination to charge higher fees than their Russian counterparts could in Russia. On the other hand, a suspicion toward foreigners is a typical Russian trait. Russian trainees often subconsciously distrust foreigners and are skeptical that a non-Russian would be able to teach a Russian anything that would be useful for working in Russia. Additionally, patriotism is highly valued in Russia. When expressing views critical of Russian business models and practices, be careful not to offend the trainees’ national pride.

• **The interaction level of the training.** Russians generally prefer interactive training with frequent interruptions of the speaker. Make the sessions as interactive as possible. If you deliver training to

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Russians outside of Russia, do not forget to include some tourist activities in the schedule, and do not be offended if they demonstrate more interest in the sightseeing than the training. Rather, embrace their enthusiasm toward a new culture and, if possible, combine the lecture with a walk. Handouts for post-training work may be expected, but distance learning is likely to be distrusted.

While training Russians may be challenging, making minor adjustments to your teaching techniques to their culture likely will result in a great training outcome and personal satisfaction from your interaction. **t**

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