

Cross-Cultural Communication

Is It a Bribe, or Not? Challenges in Communicating with Russian Officials

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This column deals with cross-cultural issues. Topics covered include teaching culture through language, cross-cultural communication in both business and academic settings as well as current trends in research. Any suggestions are welcome; please contact Elena Denisova-Schmidt (elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch).

On 4 March 2013, the Russian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs published a set of recommendations for Russian officials. The recommendations are about corruption, or more specifically, what might be interpreted as a bribe, and what one should do to avoid doubtful situations.

Definition of bribery:
In addition to money, commercial papers and property, some services might be interpreted as a bribe. These include paid vacations, renovating a home, or building a dacha.

Limits of bribery:
If any persons associated with an official (such as family members or friends) accept gifts or receive benefits with the official's knowledge, and the gift-giver receives preferential treatment in a certain manner that might be interpreted as a bribe.

Signs of corruption:
Russian officials must learn to behave without any hints of possible bribery, i.e., without acting coercive.

Certain phrases:
Russian officials must try to avoid the following phrases:

по-русски	по-английски
Вопрос решить трудно, но можно	The question is difficult, but it is possible to solve
Спасибо на хлеб не намажешь	'Thank you' cannot be spread on bread
Договоримся	We will agree
Нужны более веские аргументы	One needs more compelling arguments
Нужно обсудить параметры	One should discuss all parameters
Ну, что делать будем?	Well, what shall we do?

Certain topics of conversation:
- Conversations with a decision maker about a family member's job search.
- The official's desire to obtain certain goods or services.
- The official's dream of spending a holiday at a particular location or to place his or her own children in a particular educational institution.
- Requests to support a particular sport club or a specific charitable organization.

One should not regularly accept any gifts or vouchers with a value of 3000 RUB (~ 90 USD). Gifts over 3000 RUB are considered a bribe in Russia.

http://www.rosmintrud.ru/docs/mintrud/employment/15

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