



Business Lunch: 29th May 2008

International Mobility Group: Meeting India

Event Report





Introduction

Modern India: A country with tremendous business opportunities – a country with enormous spending power and a stable and continuously growing economy that provides huge numbers of human resources. Yet, at the same time a place where bureaucracy, corruption, and unwritten laws determining the cultural and regional diversity confront foreign investors with sometimes aggravating pitfalls.

The International Mobility Group (IMG) business lunch has been called into existence as a forum to share experiences and to network. At present access to valid information on India is still limited. Most of the data available is remarkably weak, unpragmatic, and insubstantial. As a result many debatable decisions are made, others are delayed due to the lack of a reliable stream of information and fear of the unknown.

This meeting is one of two initial IMG business lunches prior to the conference **Blending Shiva and Tata with high speed Internet** organised by Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) in October 2008. Similar to the business lunches the conference will strive to explore India, its economy and its culture, helping companies and investors to develop sustainable action plans and strategies to conquer the country's market place.



Executive Summary

"Particularly in terms of business", Dirk Bakker, Managing Director of Inex and chairman of the Netherlands India Business Association in New Delhi begins to explain, "India is quite unique." For more than a decade now Dutch national Bakker has done business in India. To shed first light on 'Incredible India', Dirk Bakker has been invited by Nannette Ripmeester, managing director of ELM, to give an introductory presentation. One facet of the Indian uniqueness might be the country's perceived polarisation. "The view on India is not in balance", attests Satish Heoblal, representing i-knowledge Nederland at the IMG lunch. And indeed, next to the annual GDP of currently 8%, also the salaries are on the rise, while at the same time the gap between the wealthy and the poor grows wider. Accordingly, each potential investor will have to ask himself: What is India to me? A threat, or rather an ideal future market?

"The Answer on how to deal with India lies in understanding the social and cultural particularities of the country and its regions. If you underestimate them – both in terms of living there as well as in terms of business – you'll fail!" Frustration of the foreign investor can derive from a variety of sources: First and foremost, Bakker names bureaucracy, corruption, inefficiency, and unreliability as typical obstacles. Each of these points is related to the Indian understanding of commerce and trade. In an absence of international business standards, competitive strategies are currently widely unfamiliar. "Therefore," Bakker stats, "working in India is working with India."

Furthermore, particularly the Westerner doing business in India will experience absence of loyalty, and a short-term mentality in an environment that provides only limited legal protection (copyright issues etc.). Again Bakker advises: *"Do your social homework!"* In other words, the safest way to conduct business efficiently is to build a reliable social network that facilitates social checks on possible associates. Hence, it is vital to adopt a person-to-person approach: *"You cannot delegate actions in India – you have to be present personally!"*

Not only the potential investor but also the country by itself faces huge future challenges, among which the management of pollution, the improvement of infrastructure, population growth, energy and power-supply, water management, education, and healthcare.

As Dirk Bakker's presentation and the lively subsequent discussion illustrated, the need for trustworthy and accurate information on India persists. We need to combine efforts to develop some guidelines along which to successfully do business in India.



Actions

- ❑ Get involved in the Indian culture. Learn to appreciate and respect it in order to understand it better.
- ❑ Think creatively – don't be afraid to consider, new and unconventional solutions.
- ❑ Find out about communication in India. Train, for instance, how to read people's body language and how to interpret the Indian 'double talk'.
- ❑ You can easily lose your perspective, when conducting business in India. Add value, and yet, stay focussed.
- ❑ Establish a strong network of reliable partners and contacts associated with India.
- ❑ Help increasing, improving, and streamlining the information flow on India.
- ❑ Be patient!



Upcoming Events

'Key success factors to outsourcing in India'

Business lunch

Date: Thursday 24 July 2008

Location: Expertise in Labour Mobility Head offices, Rotterdam

Admittance: 100 Euro (ex. 19 Euro VAT)

Melanie Martinelli, one of ELM's cultural trainers in Bangalore and member of the organisation's panel of global experts, has agreed to stage her view on mastering cultural challenges in India. During a business lunch Ms Martinelli will deliver an introductory talk to start off the discussion and give practical advice on how companies and investors can tackle cultural differences successfully.

'Blending Shiva and Tata with high speed Internet'

International conference

Date: Tuesday 28 October 2008

Location: Rotterdam

Admittance: 225 Euro

The conference will start in the morning with a plenary session, providing an introduction to India's cultural diversity. The programme continues with expert lectures held by three experienced guest speakers. The lectures will deal with various issues with regard to business in India, including the management of cultural differences, successful offshore collaboration and the current trends in global mobility. More practical insights and marketable knowledge can be gained during the workshops held throughout the afternoon.



Thanks

Expertise in Labour Mobility wishes to thank the following representatives for their valuable contribution:

Arsha Ansari Gilani	i-knowledge Nederland
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