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## *Culture and Negotiations: The Russian Way*

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# 1 Introduction

The increasing amount of cooperation and business transactions occurring across national borders makes the understanding of cultural differences a crucial issue while doing business globally. Multicultural corporations have become very common and in order to be successful in a global market place the cultural issues must be taken into consideration daily. When entering a new market, one should always first consider the cultural differences. Understanding them is necessary in order to succeed in global markets and the failure to do so can easily destroy any attempts to enter a new market area. Knowledge of cultural issues can also give a great competitive advantage over competitors.

Due to rapid growth Russia has become the most important trading partner for Finland (Ulkoasiainministeriö). Even though the two countries are geographically close the cultures could not be further apart. There are many peculiarities one should know when doing business with Russians. It is widely acknowledged that cross-cultural differences have effects on international negotiation (Metcalf et al, 2006). The effectiveness of business negotiations is a growing trend on which global companies rely on for their growth and survival (Reynolds et al. 2003). According to Lewis (1996, 235) the fact that Russians are not easy people to negotiate with, the mutual goal of win-win situation will only be achieved through adaptation to current Russian mentality and world attitudes. This makes the knowledge of Russian culture even more important.

This bachelor's thesis will examine the Russian culture and take a further look at the negotiations between Russians and Finnish.

## **1.1 Literature review**

The paper is composed of six sections, of which the second one will concentrate on cultural issues, the third on negotiation and the fourth will serve as an introduction to the negotiation characteristics of the two countries. The fifth, will discuss the results of the interviews and the last one contains the conclusions.

Several authors have done research on cultural issues from different points of views. Perhaps one of the most cited and well-known research is done by Geert Hofstede. His study on cultural dimensions has been utilized in many studies performed later on. One should though keep in mind that Hofstede's work, *Culture's Consequences*, was done nearly 30 years ago and it was based on only one company. One of the more recent studies on societal- and organizational culture is done by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research program (GLOBE). Their work *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, is one of the most extensive researches on cultural issues because it is done by 170 scholars and it covers 62 societies. Other well-known author on cultural issues and communication context is Edward T. Hall. He divides the context of culture on high-context and low-context.

More practical research about country specific cultural issues and negotiations has been done by Lewis. He has also examined the Finnish culture quite extensively. Other information about country specific details can be found from research done by Morrison and Conaway and also Mole. Some useful and also more practical information on Russian business culture offers "Tak ili kak? Venäläistä tapakulttuuria suomalaisille" (Russian customs to Finnish) by Haapaniemi et al. (2003) and "Venäjän liiketoiminnan perusopas" (The basic guidebook for Russian business) by Suomalais- Venäläinen kauppakamari, (2007) (Finnish-Russian chamber of commerce).

The amount of literature and the attention gained from researchers on international business negotiations is increasing as the subject is seen more important. (Reynolds et al. 2003). The issues that recent literature on international business negotiations has

discussed can be divided in five main areas: environmental and organisational conditions; cultural influences; characteristics of the individual negotiators; the negotiation situation itself; and the outcome of the negotiation (Reynolds et al., 2002: ref. Calantone et al., 1998; Simintras and Thomas, 1998; Tung, 1988; Weiss, 1993). Reynolds et al. (2002) found in their studies that “almost all articles written on international business negotiations from 1990 to 2000 look at cross-cultural issues” and the most often used theories about cultural factors are earlier mentioned Hofstede’s five dimensions and Hall’s preferred context of communication.

## ***1.2 Research problem, sub problems and the objectives of the study***

The research concentrates on negotiations and cultural issues. The aim of this study is to gain better understanding of the quaintness of Russian culture and the effect of cultural issues on negotiations with Russians. The objectives of this study are firstly, establishing the issues a foreigner should know when doing business and negotiating with Russians. Secondly, how negotiation culture differs from Finnish and what are the key issues to take into consideration when preparing to negotiate with Russians.

The research problem of this paper is the following:

How do cultural issues influence negotiations between Russians and Finnish?

Sub problems:

What are the main characters of Russian culture that one should take into consideration when doing business and negotiating with Russians?

Can cultural issues have an affect to the outcome of a negotiation process in Russia?

### 1.3 Theoretical framework

In the figure 1. below, the theoretical framework of this study is presented. The two most essential parts of this study are negotiations and culture. The framework is constituted simplicity in mind. It is assumed that cultural issues have an effect on every stage of the negotiation process, from the beginning to the outcome of the negotiations. Cultural differences should be taken into consideration through out the process from the preparation to the end of the relationship. It is assumed also that cultural issues are mainly shown through the communication context. This thesis concentrates only on the negotiation process itself and cultural issues related to it, leaving out all the other aspects of the relationship.

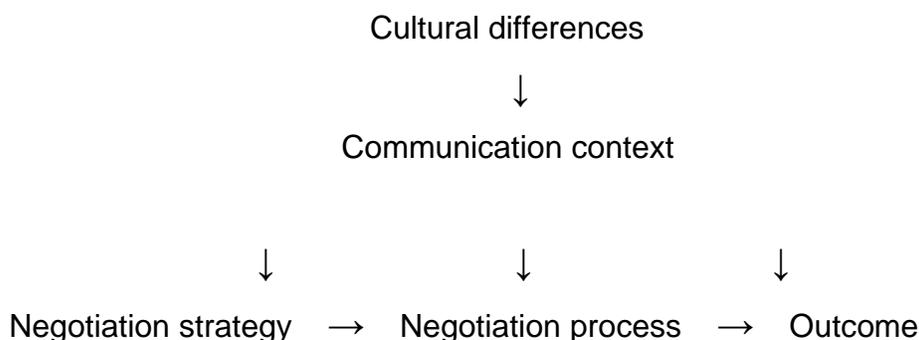


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the study

### 1.4 Delimitations

The research discusses Russian culture, its quaintness and negotiations between Russians and Finnish. The point of view is Finnish and all the interviewees are Finnish. The discussion about negotiations does not go deeply into the details of the negotiation process, but focuses more on cross-cultural issues that have an effect on the negotiations and the outcome of the negotiations. The negotiation process is briefly explained in chapter 3.1 but is not concentrated on later in this thesis. The focus is on

business-to-business negotiations only. The characteristics of the Finnish culture are not explained thoroughly and the focus is kept on Russian culture.

### ***1.5 Method of research***

Research is done using qualitative method. At first using articles, databases and books extensive research on previous studies is performed. Information is trawled carefully and only the most relevant and important pieces are selected to be used in this bachelor's thesis. Data is collected using interviews. Four persons who are doing business and negotiating with Russians in regular base are interviewed. In order to get as valid information as possible and also different points of views on the matter, all the interviewees are from different areas of business.

Interviews are selected as the method of research because the cultural issues, especially in Russia, are evolving constantly. The only way to get up to date information is through interviewing persons who work and negotiate with Russians on day-to-day basis. Information searched from previous studies is used as a base to the paper but to gain more recent information, interviews are selected as one source. The objective of interviews is to find answers to the research- and the sub questions.

### ***1.6 The structure of the research***

This first chapter explains the basic information of the study. The second chapter concentrates on cultural issues. Firstly, it takes a look on Russian history as determinant of culture. Secondly, Hofstede's five dimensions of culture are used as an introduction to the Russian culture and on how the to cultures differ from each other. In the third chapter focus is turned from culture to negotiations. First the stages of negotiation are explained. Then the focus is moved on to the communication context and different kinds

of approaches on reaching a conclusion in negotiations. Last a brief look is taken on concession making.

The fourth chapter is used as an introduction to the negotiation cultures of Finland and Russia. Fifth chapter will concentrate on empirical findings. Firstly, the data collection is explained. Secondly, the information gained from the interviews is examined and conclusions are made the theory presented in chapter three in mind. Thirdly, other results seen important to the issues discussed in this thesis are presented. Lastly, conclusions are made in chapter six.

## **1.7 Definitions of key concepts**

### *Culture*

*“Culture is defined as collective programming of the mind; it manifests itself not only in values, but in more superficial ways: in symbols, heroes, and, rituals” (Hofstede, 2001).*

### *Negotiation*

*“Negotiation is a process in which two or more entities come together to discuss common and conflicting interests in order to reach an agreement of mutual benefit” (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998: ref. Harris and Moran, 1987)*

## **2 Russian culture**

Russian culture differs highly from the Western one. Despite of the close geographical location of Finland and Russia the two countries and cultures are far apart from each other. In order to fully understand Russian business and organizational culture, one should have the basic knowledge of Russian history, as the country has gone through cataclysmic changes in the past that has shaped its culture and people. The Russian culture is still constantly evolving. A foreigner planning to enter the Russian business market should first take the time to get to know the peculiarities of Russian culture in order to be successful. Cultural differences and failure to understand them can make or break attempts to enter a new business area. Carefully studying the habits and customs of a new business partner's culture beforehand can give a great competitive advantage and lacking such knowledge may easily destroy any attempts to enter a new market.

### ***2.1 History as determinant of culture***

A brief historical review is at place in order to understand the Russian business culture. Episodic and traumatic changes are typical for Russian history that consist relatively peaceful periods that ends with a crisis (Mole, 2004, 321; Gilbert and Cartwright, 2008). The times of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics lasted from 1917 through 1991. Although this particular period of time that the market was closed has shaped the Russian culture massively, the basics of Russian character were visible hundreds of years before. Today's conditions in Russia are a result of a long history of authoritarianism (Taylor et al., 1997). Russia has been Orthodox for 1000 years and Communist only 70. Typical characteristics of Orthodox way of thinking are for example autocracy and collectivism, putting the benefit of society before the good of the individual (Tiri, SVKK, 2007, 118). Some of the Russian behaviour in the Soviet period described by Lewis (1996, 230), for example as exaggerated collectivism, suspicion to foreigners, pessimism, apathy, corruption, lack of continued endeavour and inward

withdrawal, have been around before the Bolshevik regime. Tsarist rule also contained similarities that have had an affected to this kind of behaviour.

During the days of the Soviet Union one of the only valuable things that the state could not control was the information of individuals. The attitude of today's Russians continues to value private information and it is not easily given up (Coyle and Platonov, 1998). The lack of adequate information is one of the major facts that hinder the Western companies' attempts to enter the Russian market. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of communism and the centrally planned economy happened only 18 years ago. There has not been enough time for the Russian market to reach the Western standards, though the past 18 years have shaken Russia with big changes unleashing the entrepreneurial energy of Russian people (Kets de Vries et al. 2004).

The transformation of the Russian economy towards market economy, launched by Russians first president Boris Yeltsin, has not been effective especially during the first years after the end of centrally planned economy in 1991. Both the results in the institutional and individual levels have been somewhat disappointing. There are some issues that the Russian government clearly failed to take into consideration when launching the reform. Firstly, the Russian government failed to address "the need for radical restructuring of the large state enterprises" (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence, 1996). Secondly, they did not take into consideration the absence of private financial institutions or distribution and marketing institutions in the old Russian economy. And finally, they failed to recognise the lack of experience and training of Russian managers and the lack of needed management skills in a market economy (Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence, 1996).

In addition to the problems explained above about moving towards to functioning market economy corruption, business related crime and favouritism grow to be a big problem during Yeltsin's term of office (Morrison and Conaway, 2006, 417; Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence, 1996). The ethical business practises had only a little place in the past and it has not really changed during the years.

## **2.2 Hofstede's cultural dimensions**

One of the most often used theories to explain cultural differences and tendencies is Hofstede's five cultural dimensions. This theory can be used as an introduction to the Russian culture and the differences between Russian and Finland's cultures. The five dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001, xix & xx). Neither the model, nor its results are perfect. It has faced some critique, but can give a basic insight to the peculiarities of Russian culture. The differences on the scores of the five cultural dimensions in more recent studies may suggest that there are still extensive changes taking place in Russia (Gilbert and Cartwright, 2008). Trompenars and Hampden-Turner (1998) critiqued Hofstede's model of mutually exclusive categories, one cultural category excluding its opposite. The GLOBE Study (2004) on the other hand has found that Hofstede's cultural dimensions "do not differentiate cultural practices from cultural values". Despite this critique Hofstede's five cultural dimensions can be used as a good starting point to understanding Russian culture and comparing it to Finland.

First of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions, power distance represents inequality in the distribution of power. How less powerful members expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Different societies handle human inequality differently and power distances can be seen to be societally determined to a considerable extent. (Hofstede, 2001, 79) Russia's rating on power distance on Hofstede's five cultural dimensions is very high (Geert Hofstede). Puffer and Shekshnia (1996) claim that throughout the Russian history people have obeyed authority without questioning it.

Russia can be classified as rating very high also in the second dimension of national culture, uncertainty avoidance (Geert Hofstede). Uncertainty avoidance can be described as the degree on which people feel either comfortable or uncomfortable in an unstructured situation. And the extent on which society tries to control the uncontrollable. (Hofstede, 2001, 145) The Communist Russia represented the extreme situation of high uncertainty avoidance (Puffer and Shekshnia, 1996).

Opposite of Hofstede's dimension of individualism is collectivism. Puffer and Shekshnia (1996) claim that many features of Russian society reflect a highly collectivistic nature, thus leading to a level of individualism. In collectivistic countries people much rather act in groups than as individuals. According to Hofstede (2001, 209), individualism and collectivism "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society".

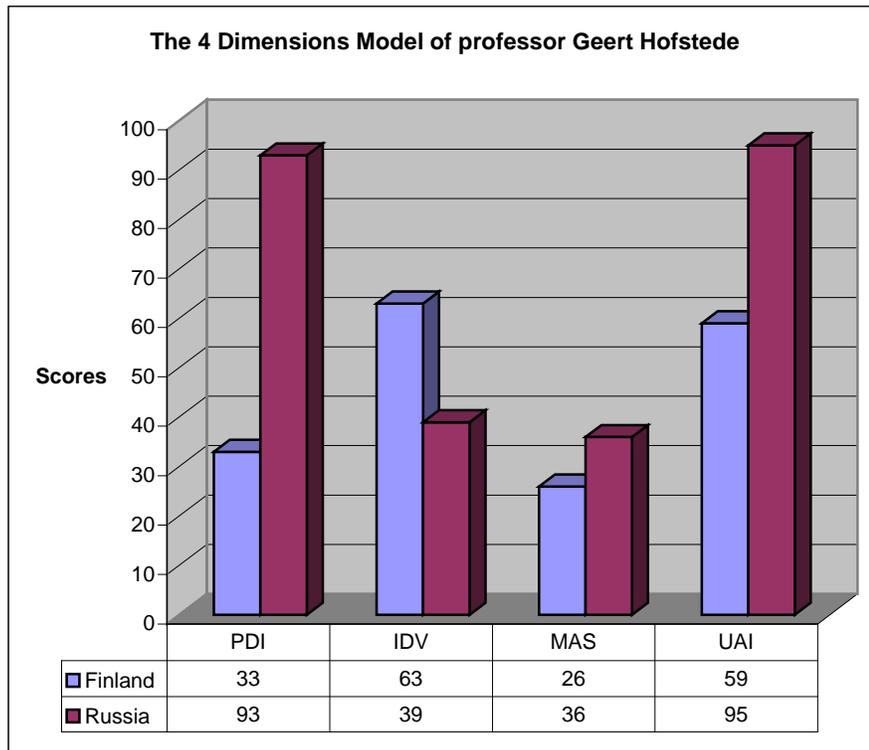
Distribution of emotional roles between the genders represents Hofstede's dimension of masculinity and its opposite femininity (Hofstede, 2001, 279). Rating on masculinity in Russia is rather low. Russians have traditionally emphasized feminine values such as close personal relationships and solidarity, rather than masculine tough values. The Russian history is full of crisis but through feminine values such as collaboration and supporting each another they have overcome the hard times (Puffer and Shekshnia, 1996).

The fifth dimension is long-term orientation. Russia can be rated low on this dimension as Russians focus rather on present and past than to the future. During the times of Soviet Union state guaranteed employment and the people did not have a need to plan for the future because their primary needs were taken care of. (Puffer and Shekshnia, 1996)

### **2.2.1 Comparison of Russia and Finland**

As one can see from the diagram crafted from the values from Hofstede's home page below (Geert Hofstede), the dimension of culture in Russia and in Finland are very different. Only similarity can be seen in masculinity as both of the countries scored rather low on it. This presents quite well the big differences in these two cultures.

Figure 2.



(Geert Hofstede)

According to Hofstede's home page Russian values are only estimates. Russia was not a part of Hofstede's original IMB survey between 1967 and 1973, but studies performed later on e.g. in the late 1980s a study among Russian engineers, give an idea of the scores (Hofstede, 2001, 41 & 104).

### 3 Negotiations

Negotiations share some universal characteristics irrespective of the field of business or the nationalities of the negotiators. Negotiators always have at least partly conflicting interests and two or more parties involved. The parties share a common need for an agreement. The outcome is initially undefined and both parties' expect gain from an agreement. Negotiations are an expedient of communication between parties' and also a control and decision-making structure on both sides by which the negotiators are linked to their superiors. (Hofstede, 2001, 435)

Literature on cross-cultural negotiations emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural differences and effects they have on international negotiation (Metcalf et al., 2006). According to Hendon (2007), cultural differences may lead to different perspectives on information sharing. Individuals who have the same cultural background usually display common patterns on reacting and thinking. As a result one might say that each culture has its own negotiation style, and that behaviour in negotiations usually is similar among people who share the same cultural background (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998). Also Hofstede (2001, 435) shares this belief and claims that negotiators behave according to their own national mental programs. Negotiation itself can be seen as a universal phenomenon but "rhythms and movements" are specific to the culture of each participant (Hall in Adair and Brett, 2005). Differences in cultural backgrounds can easily lead to misunderstandings. One might say that one of the most important issues on cross-cultural negotiations is not only understanding but also respecting the opponent's cultural background.

Negotiations are seen as one of the most important business functions. Global companies rely increasingly on negotiations for creating and maintaining prosperous relationships (Reynolds et al., 2003). Understanding the complicated arena of cross-cultural negotiation is both the most important and also the most difficult task for managers (Simintiras and Thomas, 1998).

In order to be able to get a more detailed look into how cultural factors effect the negotiations between Russians and Finnish one should understand the process of negotiations. What are negotiations and how do they work.

### ***3.1 Stages of negotiation***

Adair and Brett (2005) recognises four key stages that transactional negotiations usually go through. These four stages are: relational positioning, identifying the problem, generating solutions and reaching agreement. This model offers a tool to identify difference in behaviour at the different stages of negotiation and also a more detailed analysis of the evolution of negotiations (Adair and Brett, 2005).

The first stage of negotiation, relational positioning, is the most competitive one. It could be described as the stage of information searching and by relational posturing. Negotiators begin the negotiation process by testing on other party's motives, whether they are going to be cooperative or competitive. This is done before revealing information about negotiators own interests and positions because revealing information too soon could make them vulnerable if the other party is competitive. This early stage is more about influence, power and positioning than information exchange. The negotiators lack detailed information about other party's interests, needs and positions so making rational arguments is impossible at this stage of negotiations. (Adair and Brett, 2005)

In the second stage, identifying the problem, the attention is turned to the issue at hand. The second stage can be characterized by detailed discussion of the issues and reciprocal information exchange. At this second stage the negotiators begin to search for an agreement and building trust among each other. (Adair and Brett, 2005)

At the third stage of negotiations, generating solutions, the negotiators should have a sense whether an agreement is possible and what are the other side's priorities and

preferences. At this stage the negotiators begin to make offers combining their own interest and the information gathered about the other party's priorities and interest. The third stage could be described as more competitive one when parties are trying to influence the outcome. Structural sequences of rational influence and offers characterize this stage of negotiations. (Adair and Brett, 2005)

At the fourth stage, reaching an agreement, the parties move towards a final decision: agreement or no agreement. The focus is still on getting a good deal though at this stage negotiators make more concessions. Offers and counteroffers are made by both sides in reciprocal sequences in order to reach agreement. (Adair and Brett, 2005)

### **3.2 *The communication context***

The context of communication is a crucial dimension of culture that has a particular relevance for negotiation situations (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998: ref. Hall, 1976). According to the role of context in communication, cultures can be divided in a high- to a low-context continuum (Hall, 1976, 91).

In high-context communication most of the information is delivered indirectly in the physical context or internalised in the person (Hall, 1976, 91). Precise verbal expressions contain less information (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998). In high-context communication less is required in order to release the message (Hall, 1976, 115). High-context communication can be considered to be more implicit and flexible and low-context communication explicit (Adair & Brett, 2005). Low-context communication is the opposite of high-context communication. In low-context communication most of the information is expressed directly and explicitly (Hall, 1967, 91).

Hall's theory of low- and high-context communication can be used to predict the culture specific aspects of the negotiation model explained above (Adair & Brett, 2005). The context of communication has a significant affect to the negotiation process. The parties

involved need to have a clear understanding on the opposite sides preferences and objectives. If the message is not understood and the ambitions of the other party are unclear one cannot gain the best possible outcome.

Russia is placed as a high-context culture (Adair et al. 2004). In high-context cultures negotiators use more diverse and fluid strategic sequences (Adair & Brett, 2005). Most of the Western cultures are described as low-context cultures (Adair & Brett, 2005). Direct communication, a typical feature to low-context cultures, is emphasized also in Finland. In Finland low context does not apply in that sense that one must be able to interpret the silence. According to Adair and Brett, secondary-level inferential skills are required when gleaning information from high-context communication. These skills are seen less important in low-context communication. In aggravated sense high-context communication can be seen as superior and obtaining it as an advantage. In low-context cultures no special inferential skills are needed to understand meaning behind communication (Adair & Brett, 2005).

### ***3.3 Approaches for reaching the conclusion in negotiation***

A significant impact on creating high joint gains is what negotiators do in the first half of the negotiation process (Adair & Brett, 2005). A simple five-fold typology, commonly referred as the dual concerns model, classifies the possible approaches of reaching the conclusion of negotiation (Pruitt and Rubin in Fraser and Zarkada-Fraser, 2002). This model divides negotiating approaches to five basic categories: contending, yielding, integrating, inactive and compromising. Each category describes the degree of concern shown about the other party's and own outcomes. (Fraser and Zarkada-Fraser, 2002)

Negotiators described as contending rarely show interest on the other party's concerns and mainly focus on their own outcome. The opposite, yielding negotiators, have a little concern for their own outcomes but strive for the opposite party. When negotiators are highly concerned about both, the other party's and their own outcomes, they are

described as integrating (often referred also as seeking win-win situation). When negotiators act the opposite, show little concern on either party, they are described as inactive. When negotiators distribute moderate efforts to pursue their own and the other party's outcomes they are called compromising. (Fraser and Zarkada-Fraser, 2002)

Each approach can be appropriate or inappropriate depending on a situation. Fraser and Zarkada-Fraser (2002) found in their studies of comparison of approaches to negotiation and level of cultural awareness of international business managers in Russia, Greece and the UK that the integrating approach was the most popular in all countries studied. The approaches least likely to be used in all countries were contending and yielding. They also found that the chosen approach is primarily related to organisational or individual personality variables.

### ***3.4 Concession making***

"The heart of negotiation is the concession process" (Hendon, 2007). Concessions are made in order to get what is really wanted (Hendon, 2007) and they can be made in any part of negotiations (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998). It is possible for both parties' to gain additional advantage when concession trading takes place. Concessions should only be made if similar or bigger concessions are received. They should also always be conditional. This is important in order the concessions not to be perceived as a sign of weakness. (Holmes & Glaser, 1991, 18, 61)

A strict strategy without any concessions seldom leads to any conclusion to the negotiations, at least not a good one to both parties'. Concession making is considered as the manoeuvring behaviour of the negotiations (Simintiras & Thomas, 1998: ref. Rinehart & Page, 1992).

## **4 Introduction to the negotiation cultures**

The following part of the thesis will serve as a brief introduction to Russian and Finnish negotiation cultures. More detailed look on aspects of the negotiation culture in Russia will be discussed later on in the empirical part of this thesis.

### ***4.1 Finnish negotiation culture***

Finns show a strong orientation towards building a relationship (Metcalf et al. 2006). They can be expected to be tough negotiators because of Finland's highly competitive business culture (Morrison & Conaway, 2006, 165). Finns prefer the win-win results for the negotiations (Metcalf et al. 2006) so the integrating approach for reaching the conclusions of negotiations can be assumed to be common in Finland. Finns can sometimes be quite pessimistic. Another typical feature for Finns is realism. The worst-case scenarios get as much attention as the best-case scenarios. (Lewis, 2005, 140)

Finns are not too keen on small talk and are often very comfortable being quiet. It is very typical to remain silent for extended periods of time, which sometimes may confuse foreign negotiators (Morrison & Conaway, 2006, 165). At negotiations Finns believe in saying only what is absolutely necessary (Lewis, 2005, 82). The communication style is very frank but polite and friendly. Finns do not interrupt each other while speaking and who makes the comment is not seen as important as what is said. (Lewis, 2005, 139) Finns should be discussed directly to and underline the issues (Metcalf et al. 2006).

Finns can be described as highly informal (Metcalf et al. 2006). First names are used quickly and one does not have to worry too much about protocol or hierarchy (Lewis, 2005, 140). It is not appropriate to be late in Finland. Business negotiations begin usually right away and wasting time is to be avoided. Negotiations begin by discussing the details of the project and no time is wasted on small talk. Finns usually favour a top-down approach to agreement building. Before the formal negotiation process begins one

may lay out the general principles and themes behind the negotiations when negotiating with Finns. (Metcalf et al. 2006) In Finland persuading and “hard selling” is not appreciated (Lewis, 2005, 139).

## **4.2 Russian negotiation culture**

Anyone who is seeking to understand modern Russians and planning to enter the market and negotiate with them should comprehend the national culture and characteristics. Russia has a history of placing itself on a special status in the world. It is a common assumption among Russians that foreign things do not work in Russia. (Kets de Vries et al. 2004) Puffer and McCarthy (2001) described Russian market brutally to be a hostile maze and specified its characters, for example as unstable government, over regulation, an undeveloped legal system and a pervasive mafia. Although this is a drastic opinion there are still characteristics visible in Russian organizations that reflect the ones that were relevant e.g. in the centrally controlled economy. (Barnes et al. 1997) For example Russians may be suspicious towards anything that is considered easy since everything in the Soviet Union days was complex (Lewis, 1996, 235).

There are some matters found in earlier studies that suggest facts on how Russians and Finns differ in negotiation behaviour that might create discomfort. Russia is considered to be a high-context and high power country (Adair et al. 2004). Russian negotiators frequently use informational persuasion and power-based influence (Adair et al. 2004) that is not appreciated in Finland. Russians also focus on positioning and power on the expense of information sharing. Direct or general information is not shared openly and information exchange is primarily indirect. (Adair et al. 2004) This does not suit with a Finnish mentality.

Russia is a collectivistic culture and because of it relationships are seen more important than rules (Kets de Vries et al. 2004). When negotiations are apparent to reach impasse personal relationships between the negotiators can save the day and achieve miracles (Lewis, 1996, 235). In order to gain trust, what is seen extremely important in Russia,

negotiations should be carried out without changing the personnel in the middle of the process (Tiri, SVKK, 2007, 114). Russian delivery style can be quite theatrical and emotional (Lewis, 1996, 234), very contrary to the Finnish unemotional style of communication (Morrison & Conaway, 2006, 165). Russians also think that one should react fast to every situation and consider that Finns have got a slow reaction ability (Haapaniemi et al. 2003, 212).

Russians have been described as being great sitters during negotiations. Russians prefer to display patience, out-sit the other negotiator and wait for the other party to make a concession. Compromising is sometimes seen as a sign of weakness in Russia. (Lewis, 1996, 234; Morrison & Conaway, 2006, 421) This sit it out tactic is abandoned only if the other party shows great firmness and persistent resistance. Common tendency is to push forward strenuously when the other side seems to retreat. (Lewis, 1996, 234)

Russians plan several moves ahead when they negotiate. Suddenly introduced new ideas or changes cause discomfort to them, as they always have to seek consensus from higher levels of organization. (Lewis, 1996, 234) In order to reflect the position given, Russians like to ask the other party to speak first (Lewis, 1996, 235). Most often-used negotiation tactics in Russia are the delaying of the negotiation process and preventing any possibilities to contact the head negotiator. In Russia there are often negotiation situations where Russians aim to maximising their own profit in as short period of time as possible. Russians also always have their own benefit covered and a way out guaranteed from a difficult situation. (Tiri, SVKK, 2007, 114)

## **5 Empirical findings**

The object of the empirical part is to compare the findings of the interviews to the theory explained before. Firstly, it is gone through how the material was collected and after that the focus moves on to the findings.

### ***5.1 Data collection***

In this thesis the standardized, open-ended interview was decided to be used as a method of interviewing. In standardized interview questions are prepared beforehand and the interviewees are given a freedom to answer with their own words. (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000, 86) The objective was to gain as versatile information as possible. The interviews were not bound strictly to the questions prepared beforehand. In order to get new ideas on the subject the interviewees were given an opportunity to tell freely about their opinions on the subject and broaden their answers outside of the questions.

Four people from different areas of business were selected to be interviewed. All the selected persons agreed to the request to be interviewed. The goal behind the selection was to gain as versatile and valid information as possible. All of the selected interviewees differed on age, background and work experience. Two of the interviewees can be considered as veterans on the field of negotiating and working in Russia. They were selected because of the strong expertise and experience they have collected on the subject during their life. In the appendix 1 the interview questions can be found. The names or the organisations of the interviewees are not mentioned due to confidence issues. The interviews were carried out via e-mails, phone conversations and personal meetings. The interviews conducted by phone or personal meeting were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. In order to understand the suitability of interviewees a short description of each of them can be found below.

### **5.1.1 Interviewees**

Interviewee A has been working with Russians since 2003. At the beginning his work included monthly trips to Russia. From the beginning of 2008 he has been staying there more permanently. He is a younger professional in the field of negotiating. Currently he spends most of his time in Russia.

Interviewee B has got a significant amount of experience in working with Russians and negotiating with them. He has been working in Russia from the end of 1970's. He has mostly been working as a salesman of technical instruments.

Interviewee C is of Ingrian extraction and has now lived in Finland for 18 years. Before his retirement he worked in different kind of positions on aggregate of 51 years in Soviet Union, Russia, Finland, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. He has an impressive work history and a versatile education behind him. Now after his retirement he has still been working part time for a Finnish company as a negotiator and interpreter.

Interviewee D did not want any information about him or his company to be revealed in this thesis. But in terms of suitability for this thesis one must say that the line of business of this interviewee was totally different from any other persons' interviewed for this thesis.

The following part of this thesis is based on the information gathered from the interviews. Firstly, the information gained from the interviews is examined and conclusions are made the theory presented in chapter three in mind. Secondly, other results seen important to the issues discussed in this thesis are presented.

## **5.2 The communication context**

As earlier mentioned, Russia is considered to be a high context country. In high context cultures the information delivery is indirect and precise verbal expressions contain less information. As most of the interviewees had noticed, the information share in Russia is not as direct as in Finland. Information has to be understood usually from between the lines.

One cannot fail to notice the social nature of Russians and the verbal talent they possess. Russians can present their opinions very verbosely and fluently. The extrovert nature of Russians can be seen in every day life very clearly. Russians love to talk on the phone for hours and seldom want to go anywhere alone. (Interviewee B) Russians also like to talk a lot themselves during negotiations. It is important for negotiator to be able to listen what is said. A typical feature for Russian culture is that information is shared more openly only among friends. (Interviewee C) Especially financial information is seen personal (Snaveley et al., 1998).

Verbal communication has always been more valued and more developed than written communication in Russia. Some of the emotions they show may be calculated and planned beforehand. When negotiating with Russians “crises” and “breaks in the communication” are often planned to reach strategic purposes. A normal custom to Russians that often Finns consider unpleasant is that Russians may start a sentence with a phrase “we have a problem”. Russians (excluding the head of the organization, who is omniscient) are more willing to express their ignorance than Finns. (Interviewee A)

Quite often the issues agreed and mutually considered beneficial may change during the night. As Russians may explain it, “every day more information is revealed that influences the issue”. This sort of tendency towards change from time to time can be considered unpleasant. (Interviewee A)

One has to remember that Russia is enormous country. What is common in the big cities e.g. Moscow and St. Petersburg cannot be compared to smaller cities or the other parts of the country. Communication can be seen generally to be more open. There can be impulsiveness and unpredictability and the conversation can stray to any subject. The level of formality can be smaller than in a target-oriented negotiations in the Western countries. (Interviewee D)

According to Adair et al. Russians are not likely to discuss priorities and preferences. From the interviews one can make the same conclusion. Adair et al. also shares the finding that Russians are likely to share information indirectly through offers and use informational persuasion. Russians were found also to be less likely to exchange information about the product or ask questions during the negotiations (Adair et al., 2004). Financial information is also considered personal and Russians prefer to wait until the friendship is developed before revealing these kinds of facts. One reason for this might be the unfavourable tax system in Russia. (Snively, et al., 1998) It is important that the papers look right in Russia. The real situation might be something different. (Interviewee D)

### ***5.3 Negotiation tactics and approaches to reach conclusion***

All the interviewees recognised that the general director possesses a lot more power in Russia than a managing director in Finland. Also the literature emphasises the high amount of power the leader possesses in Russian companies (Kets de Vries et al. 2004). The general director makes all the decisions, and holds also a legal responsibility of the decisions made and actions taken. When negotiating in Russia if the highest management of the company is not present there is no chance that the negotiations could be on a serious base and decisions could be made. The general director is always present when important decisions are made or discussed. (Interviewees B & D)

Interviewee B had many times run into a fact that Russians ask first who is in charge. Who is the one to negotiate with and if the person is not present Russians refused to

negotiate at all. This is an important fact to recognise. Hierarchy is in this way important in Russia. When talking about important things the word is always given to the general director (Interviewee B). In this way negotiating culture in Russia is very manager focused. Interviewees also recognised the fact that bringing the right people with to negotiate with Russians is important. There has to be present someone from the highest management of the company (Interviewee B). Adair et al. (2004) found in their research that Russians were too focused on power. The importance of power (using power strategies) and hierarchy came very obvious from the interviews also.

Interviewee C emphasised that Russian trading works differently from Finnish or European one due to the fact that more is done when personal gain is derived. Much is promised but little is done if the person does not gain from it personally. One's own benefit is more important than organizations and if that is seen it helps the negotiations to progress. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee C sees that the Russian style at the negotiations is to make a lot of changes later on in the process, even though that at the beginning both parties' have had a clear mutual target. He thinks also that Russians always emphasise their own contribution, even when one can see that everything is not okay. Decision-making is often quite difficult. The only person entitled to make any decision is the highest manager of the company as mentioned earlier. If he is not present hardly any new decisions or concessions can be made.

Earlier mentioned, "crises", "breaks in the communication" and emotional outbursts, are often planned beforehand and a part of the negotiation strategy. (Interviewee A) Russians are also good at reading the emotional state of their opponents. They may use this emotional intelligence to their own personal advantage. (Kets de Vries et al., 2004) Negotiation strategies of Finns according to Russians are often regarded more flimsy than Russians negotiation strategies. Finns are often considered to be blue-eyed and honest. (Interviewee A)

Russians can be very tough and creative negotiators. They negotiate with their own interest strongly and only in mind. It is common to take a brake from the negotiation situation when things heat up and after that try to approach the subject from a different angle. Russians can be very creative on negotiation situations. In a negotiation situation one must be well prepared in advance to every incident that might come. Well prepared to the fact that situations can turn upside down very fast. One must be able to make decisions straight away and know one's own limitations. It is important to have the flexibility and the power to make the decisions. The contract can disappear fast in Russia if one cannot reply immediately. (Interviewee D)

In Finland negotiations are conducted in order to make an offer but in Russia negotiations always aim to a contract. The contract is disclosed in early stages of negotiations and Russians want the signatures very quickly if the deal looks promising. It is important to understand that even though a commercial agreement is made with Russians it does not necessarily mean that business will be done. The contract is not binding and only after money transaction one can be certain that business will be done. (Interviewee B)

### **5.3.1 Concession making**

Russians do not make compromises and concessions willingly. They have certain conditions thought beforehand and they do not yield from those if not entirely necessary. Making compromises is very hard for Russians. If agreement is not reached the issue is moved to be discussed later on. Interviewee B expressed the matter as "one can negotiate with Russians if one has a pledge that Russians must redeem. If not, making compromises is difficult". (Interviewee B)

Russians set the targets before the negotiations and pursue them without making any concessions. If concessions are needed and the conclusion is not reached in the terms of Russians, negotiations are stalled and the issue moved to the next meeting. The approval to make any concessions or changes to the original plan has to always be got

from the head of the organisation. It is impossible for the most of the time to make concessions at the negotiation table if that particular person is not present. In Russia the idea, that winner takes it all and looser is left with nothing, is part of the culture. (Interviewee B) Interviewee C also mentioned that one cannot be sure during the negotiations that the cooperation is going to work.

#### ***5.4 General findings about Russian negotiation culture***

The interviewees agreed that the sex of the negotiators is not an important issue in Russia. Age and the title are considered more important. In Russia older generations prefer to negotiate with someone who is the same age as them. (Interviewee C) Interviewee A thought that the unofficial position in the company is more important than the title. One should always bring to the negotiation table only persons who have the power to make decisions or have an expertise on the matter discussed. The interviewee D argued that the titles and the formal position in the company have a big significance when negotiating in Russia. As a conclusion, there was some variety in the answers. But a conclusion can be made that there is a big importance on who is sent to negotiate with Russians. That person should always have the power to make decisions and concessions if needed and also the highest management must be present at some point of the negotiations.

In Russia the role of an interpreter is great in negotiations. Contracts are made both in Russian and in English. There is a big risk for misunderstandings especially when terminology is complex. Though, knowing the terminology is not enough, the interpreter must also understand the cultural background and interpret it on mind. Russians often “speak between the lines” and it is necessary to be able to read them. (Interviewee B)

### 5.4.1 The importance of trust and relationships

Three of the interviewees highlighted the great importance of trust and relationships in Russia. Also the literature strongly emphasises this fact (e.g. Kets de Vries et al. 2004, Snaveley et al. 1998 and Barnes et al. 1997) Russians have to trust the people they are doing business with. People always have to have faces so to say. It is important for them to feel that the person is not going anywhere and is very trustworthy. In Russia the determining issue often is, not the subject in hand, but the people behind it. The process for reaching a deal is always a process of building trust, the reason why negotiations are gone through. The highest management is present to build trust. Technical details can be discussed later on by the experts. If the trust and communication channels are not built the technical issues or a price usually cannot save the deal. In Russia doing “faceless” business is literally impossible. Personal relationships count. (Interviewee D) In Finland it is more common to concentrate on business issues solely in negotiations but in Russia discussions are made also about personal issues (Interviewee C).

Building a new partnership in Russia takes a lot of time. For an outsider it is hard to get in, so to say. Local contacts have a crucial importance when doing business in Russia. (Interviewee B) It is important for a Finn to have a local networks already built when starting to negotiate with Russians. Practically knowing someone important can make a difference in Russia. (Interviewee D) Good contacts can open doors that one might be knocking a long time without any. Local contacts are absolutely necessary according to interviewee C.

Interviewee B described the fact that when starting business actions in Russia one should have a Russian representative who makes the commercial agreement and is present during the negotiations. Russians know their own terms and how matters should be expressed that are hard to explain via interpreter. Bribery is somewhat common still in Russia and it is important to know how it is expressed. In these kinds of situations one has to have a Russian representative to deal with it. As Russians say, “we will be remembering your interest as well” (Interviewee B). In these kinds of situations it is

common to use a third party that both parties' know as help. Russian representative should be present so both parties' feel that they are taken into consideration in the right way. (Interviewee B)

#### **5.4.2 Differences between the young and the old generations**

There is a significant difference between the young and the old generation. Nowadays there are many young businessmen around Russia who have not lived their life in the Soviet Union. These young businessmen, around 35 years of age, who have been in school when the Soviet Union fell, have a total different way of doing business. The older businessmen have obsessions about doing business and subconscious fear of the old days. They think through the hardest because during the days of Soviet Union there was a huge amount of laws and regulations. Younger generation have never heard of these and are more active commercially. Older generation often look for problems and question that everything is okay. A fear for the old times is typical for people over 50 years old. (Interviewee B)

According to interviewee A there can be found tough negotiators among both generations. The organisational cultures have traditionally been strong. Older generation may possess more desire to show power and some of the younger can be very straightforwardly and concern money to be the only dominant quantity. (Interviewee A)

## 6 Conclusions

This final chapter summarizes the findings of the research problems presented in chapter 1.2. In this thesis the main problem was: how do cultural issues influence negotiations between Russians and Finnish? The sub problems were: what are the main characters of Russian culture that one should take into consideration when doing business and negotiating with Russians and can cultural issues have an affect to the outcome of a negotiation process in Russia?

Cultural issues have a big influence on cross-cultural negotiations. Understanding each other creates a base for a trusting relationship. Language barriers and using an interpreter may cause misunderstandings. Trust is one of the most important issues that all the interviewees and the literature highlighted. Trust can only be build if the parties' have a mutual understanding. Knowing the people behind the business is very important to Russians. Faceless business is not done. Relationships and local contacts were also very important according to the interviewees.

The most important matter that came up in the interviews about the characters of Russian culture that one should take into consideration when doing business and negotiating with Russians, where the importance of trust and relationships to Russians. Also a very important issue that the interviewees highlighted were sending the right people to Russia when starting the business negotiations. There should always be present someone from the higher management of the company. Someone who can make decisions and concessions. It also has to be someone from the higher management of the company because in Russia only the general manager has the power to make decisions. Russia is in this way a very hierarchical country. The highest management is there also to build trust between parties. The most important issue of all in Russia. When the trust is build other personnel can discuss the technical and other issues.

Relationships are also important in Russia. Knowing the right people can make doing business a lot more easier. When entering the Russian market one can succeed even without knowing anyone beforehand but having local relationships in advance helps a lot. The interviewees told many stories on how knowing the right people have opened doors that one might be knocking a long time if even ever entering.

One should always prepare carefully when starting a business in Russia. Knowing one's own limitations and possibilities for concession making is important to decide before the negotiations. If one cannot make decisions at the negotiation table or have to check them from higher management the deal might be long gone when able to return to the subject in Russia.

Cultural issues may affect the outcome of the negotiations process in Russia. In Russia the people behind the business can be more important that the business itself when building a new business relationship. If the people are not seen trustworthy the technical issues or the price cannot usually save the future business relationship. Of course cultural differences among any nationalities can create misunderstandings that have an effect on the business negotiations. In Russia it is important to know some facts about the culture and customs, mentioned earlier in this thesis, before entering the market in order to succeed. If one does not have the knowledge the attempts to enter the market may fail. For example sending the wrong kind of personnel to Russia or demanding information that Russians do not share willingly with strangers may easily ruin the chances of doing business successfully in Russia.

### ***6.1 Suggestions for future research***

Based upon this research and literature review suggestions for future research are recommended next. For future research this subject seems very interesting and important. Cultural issues are constantly evolving and negotiations between different nationalities are becoming more and more important as the amount of cooperation and business transactions occurring across national borders is constantly rising. Because

negotiations are seen as one of the most important business functions continuing on this subject is seen important. The constantly changing business world and cultural issues and the companies' more and more international personnel keeps this subject relevant for future research.

For future research turning the situation other way around, doing research from Russian point of view, is also recommended. In previous literature this kind of viewpoint has not been researched and it is seen as important as the research done from the western point of view.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Haastattelukysymykset**

#### **1. Haastateltavan tausta**

Minkälainen on taustanne työskentelijänä/neuvottelijana Venäjällä?

#### **2. Neuvottelijat**

Kuinka monta neuvottelijaa on yleensä neuvottelutilanteessa?

Onko neuvotteluissa selkeä johtaja mikäli neuvottelijoita on useampi ja minkälaisia rooleja neuvotteluryhmässä on?

Onko neuvottelijan asemalla organisaatiossa, tittelillä, iällä tai sukupuolella merkitystä neuvoteltaessa venäläisten kanssa? Miten venäläiset kokevat nämä edellä mainitut seikat?

Oletteko huomanneet selkeitä toistuvuuksia venäläisten neuvottelijoiden ominaispiirteissä (titteli, sukupuoli, ikä, asema organisaatiossa jne.)?

Oletteko huomanneet eroavaisuuksia Venäjällä ns. uudessa ja vanhassa sukupolvessa? (Neuvostoliiton aikana työskentelynsä aloittaneet sekä nuoremmat.)

Onko neuvottelusuhde aina täysin liikesuhteeseen sidottu vai muuttuuko se henkilökohtaisemmaksi neuvottelujen edetessä ja suhteen kypsyessä?

Miten kuvailisitte venäläisiä kommunikoijina?

Minkälainen on kielitaidon rooli neuvotteluissa? Onko Venäjän osaaminen tarvittavaa?

Mikä on tulkin rooli neuvotteluissa ja onko tulkin kansalaisuudella tai muilla ominaispiirteillä merkitystä?

### **3. Kulttuurin erityispiirteet**

Oletteko huomanneet erityisiä seikkoja, jotka mielestänne suomalaisen neuvottelijan tulisi ehdottomasti ottaa huomioon neuvotellessa venäläisten kanssa?

Ottavatko mielestänne venäläiset huomioon kulttuurierot?

Minkälainen merkitys ruumiinkielellä, ilmeillä ja eleillä on neuvottelutilanteessa ja venäläisessä viestinnässä?

Näyttävätkö venäläiset tunteensa ja ilmaisevatko he tahtonsa sekä tavoitteensa helposti?

Miten venäläisten käsitys etiikasta liiketoiminnassa eroaa mielestänne suomalaisesta?

### **4. Neuvottelun vaiheet**

Vaikuttaako suhteen ikä neuvottelujen kulkuun? Vaatiiko tehokas neuvottelu venäläisten kanssa pitkäaikaisen ja luottamuksellisen suhteen syntymisen?

Onko kommunikaatio tyyliä ja muodollisuuden asteessa eroavaisuuksia neuvottelun eri vaiheissa?

Minkälainen neuvottelutyyli venäläisillä mielestänne on?

Miten venäläiset suhtautuvat äkillisiin muutoksiin ja uusiin ideoihin? Muuttavatko venäläiset helposti itse jo sovittuja suunnitelmia?

### **5. Konfliktit**

Miten venäläiset suhtautuvat konfliktitilanteisiin? Miten he pyrkivät ratkaisuun?

Mikä on luottamuksen asema venäläisten kanssa liiketoimintaa tehdessä ja neuvotellessa?

### **6. Tavoitteet ja taktiikat**

Oletteko huomanneet yhteneväisyyksiä venäläisten käyttämässä neuvottelutaktiikoissa? Minkälaisia taktiikoita olette huomanneet käytettävän?

Pyrkivätkö venäläiset mielellään kompromisseihin vai oletteko huomanneet oman edun ajamiseen pyrkivää käytöstä?

Ilmaisevatko venäläiset tavoitteensa selkeästi? Jakavatko he informaatiota avoimesti?

Miten venäläiset suhtautuvat mielestänne riskinottamiseen?

## **7. Päätöksenteko**

Kuka tekee päätökset Venäjällä? Ovatko neuvottelutilanteeseen osallistuvat henkilöt yleensä myös oikeutettuja päätöksentekoon vai täytyykö tuki hakea aina korkeammalta taholta?

Kuinka nopeaa tai hidasta päätöksenteko ja neuvottelujen eteneminen on venäläisten kanssa? Miten venäläiset suhtautuvat aikaan?

Kuinka sitovia neuvotteluissa tehdyt lupaukset ja sopimukset ovat?

## **8. Paikalliset kontaktit**

Minkälainen merkitys paikallisilla kontakteilla on venäläisten kanssa liiketoimintaa tehdessä?

## **9. Lait ja määräykset**

Minkälainen rooli laeilla ja määräyksillä on liiketoiminnassa Venäjällä? Onko suuria eroavaisuuksia Suomeen verrattaessa?

## **10. Liikelahjat**

Minkälainen on liikelahjojen rooli Venäjällä? Miten se eroaa suomalaisesta käytännöstä?