

Business etiquette, language and culture

Language

The official language is Kazakh, although Russian is the most widely-spoken and the first business language of Kazakhstan. It may therefore be advisable to arrange for any important documents to be translated into both Kazakh and Russian to ensure that you are fully prepared.

English is the second business language, and although the understanding and use of English is growing in Kazakhstan, it is behind many other areas of the world in terms of the frequency and ease of the use of English. When visiting prospective business partners, it is important to confirm in advance whether they speak English, and therefore, whether or not you will need an interpreter. It is advisable to have double-sided business cards with Russian on one side and English on the other.

(Source – UKTI)

Culture

Kazakhstan is a melting pot of Soviet, European and Asian customs. In meetings, the traditional term of address of Mr/Mrs/Miss followed by a surname is the usual way of addressing your host, unless you are advised to do otherwise. The culture is nominally Muslim; therefore there is an instilled traditional respect for the elderly or in general older people. Despite this, there is no ban on pork products or alcohol, which is widely consumed.

Meals are an important factor in business, often opening the door to other, more formal meetings with potential partners. It is customary to be served several dishes, and it is considered a great honour if you are offered the sheep's head. Meals often include large quantities of vodka and/or brandy, so be prepared to join in with several toasts and perhaps even some dancing!

It is a good idea to build up relationships and long-term partnerships that will generate the necessary mutual trust required to cement lasting business, as Kazakhstan is a market for those committed to staying there. Therefore, expect lengthy negotiations, which may seem to end abruptly and unexpectedly with a placed order or a proposed agreement.

(Source – UKTI)

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