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Magazine on Indo-German Economic Relations

INDIA

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Expatriate life

How networks help settling down quickly

By Martin Fuchs,
Managing Director of the German
Centre Delhi in Gurgaon

For being able to start a successful business in India, it is not only important to set up a company and to find an office and the right staff, but also to understand the business culture and how to market services or products. This is especially true if a company hires not only local employees but also sends somebody over from Germany. Then the German expatriate has to settle down and get used to the new surrounding quickly, so he or she can concentrate on the main goal: to do business.

India is one of the most important growth markets of the world. The huge interest is also shown by the growing number of international firms. More than 1,800 German companies are already doing business in India, more than 150 are located in the National Capital Region in and around Delhi.

Where to buy a washing machine?

Finding your way in daily Indian life can be quite challenging for foreigners. In particular, when you don't have neither the time nor the social networks - starting from finding a flat, a driver, or simply buying a washing machine.

Edmund Schäffer, Managing Director of Liquid Campaign Private Limited, an independent, international full service advertising agency, who just moved into the German Centre, experienced this by himself: "The support we got from the German Centre in the first few weeks in India was great. When we wanted to buy a washing machine, we got tips where to buy and how much one would cost as you can't compare the one you are used to in Germany with the products in India. Our maid and driver were recommended to us by the German Centre and luckily they told us where to buy our favourite baking goodies: German rolls and pretzels. For my wife and me that was a great help to quickly get settled. I am sure we saved a lot of trouble and running around."



Efficient networking helps getting the right contacts, professionally and socially.

Centre of good contacts

In order to support small- and medium-sized German companies venturing into India, the German Centre Delhi. Gurgaon was opened in 2008. As an interface, the German Centre offers not only office space and business services, but also access to relevant networks, information and experiences.

More than 30 companies, many of them from the small and medium-sized sector, are located under its roof. The demand of renting office space in the German Centre is continuously rising. Liftket India Private Limited is one of the new start-ups in the German Centre.

Michael Freigang, General Manager, who set up his office in March 2011, says: "For me - being a one-man-show in India - the German Centre is the perfect interface. If I have a question, I can go around the corner and ask the management or one of the service providers for support. I quickly got helpful contacts for starting my business and just in the beginning they helped me with so many small things: copying my documents, telling me where to find a good apartment or a trustworthy driver."

Getting around: "Namaste" or "Guten Tag"

Apart from providing a smooth market entry of German companies by supporting in every practical aspect of how to get started, one of the German Centre's objectives is to facilitate the mutual understanding between the two (business) cultures.

As one key to a new culture is its language, the German Centre started to offer German and Hindi language classes. The courses enjoy great popularity, as the language and vocabulary learned can be put into action immediately. First successful outcomes crop out quickly.

"Learning Hindi helped me a lot to better understand my Indian colleagues as I am the only German at our department. And since I can understand a bit more Hindi, I don't have the feeling to be an outcast anymore. On the other hand, my Indian colleagues appreciate my effort and when I am trying to say something in Hindi, they clap me on my shoulder or shake my hands. I still need a long time to make up a whole sentence. I think that learning Hindi got me a much better acceptance among my colleagues", says

Photos: German Centre Delhi, Gurgaon



The German Centre Delhi in Gurgaon offers office solutions for the market entry of German companies in India.

Tilman Stock, Financial Controller at Heidelberg Cement India Limited, a company located in Gurgaon and close to the German Centre, who is taking part in the languages classes.

The same can be said, when you learn German as Supriya Dhir, Tenant Relations Manager at the German Centre Delhi.Gurgaon, points out. "We just started the German language class, but we all think it's a nice opportunity to get familiar with the German language and with our own workplace. As we are all short of time it is very comfortable to have that class nearby to our office." The participants of the classes are pleased about being able to have basic conversations in each other's language.

In the meantime some positive side effects have been reported by the Germans learning Hindi. They have been amazed and proud about getting much better prices in the open markets of Delhi since they are now able to bargain in Hindi.

Making contacts means making business

Besides business talks or special events like watching the cricket world cup

final together, which is comparable to the football world cup for most of the European countries, the German Centre has furthermore newly introduced a very German tradition to India recently, the so called "Dance into May", which is celebrated around Europe on the last day of April.

In order to say 'good bye' to wintertime and to welcome the pleasant spring season, people dance around a decorated wooden pole while enjoying some typical German food and cold German beer. Around 200 guests from all around Delhi and Gurgaon joined the event, entertained by the party music of a great live band.

Different cultures connect

"I didn't expect the event to be so big! I had invited an Indian client of ours, who was anxious to know about the tradition of this event and who later told me that he had really enjoyed the evening. I was quite surprised when I also became the "King of May", and received two tickets to the great Indian show "Kingdom of Dreams". I really liked the idea to use bare-shell offices for the food stalls and decorate them with flower petals, which gave



Dancing into May 2011

it a whole spring atmosphere. With this event, the German Centre established itself as a worthy event location and a good interface between Indian and German people", says Joseph von Fürstenberg, General Manager of BPW Trailer Systems India Private Limited, a subsidiary of Bergische Achsen KG and since over two years a tenant of the German Centre – and now also 'King of May 2011', a title you have to earn on the dance floor as you will receive it when you prove to be the best dancing man of the evening.

Apart from making new interesting business contacts, also new friendship relations were established in this casual atmosphere. Now everybody who joined the event knows, what the tradition of dancing into May is about, and the community around the German Centre has been strengthened and grown even bigger.

Since its opening in 2008, the German Centre Delhi.Gurgaon supports small and medium-sized German companies venturing into the Indian market. The combination of offices, conference rooms and services enables companies to quickly establish themselves in this exciting growth market.

Information for Success



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