

“Is A Local Language Really Important Overseas?” A Reader’s Comment

“In fact I am familiar with Russia and I did work there without speaking the language...so you can imagine how good I am! :-)... Jokes aside, the language can be important but, believe me, it is not the main issue in these countries. The environment, the cultural change, the isolation from the rest of the world are the main issues....The main issue is to what extent one would adjust himself to live there, how one will fit into the environment and will be able to survive... If one survives the first month, then he/she will go along well. But more importantly, these countries are desperately in need of skills and that is what we bring, Steve, not the language, not to mention that the language can always be learnt. And besides, there is another level of staff for the office work.



When I worked in Moscow I solved the language issue just recruiting English-speaking staff, at least some of them, who could eventually translate to the other members of staff. But I also managed to give facility maintenance instructions just using my hands and very few words :-)...

In conclusion, my advice is not to focus on the language skills. Firstly, you need people who are willing to move there, and there are not that many. Secondly, you need people with experience and the right skills, training skills in the first place, and there are even fewer people like that....

Most importantly, you need managers not translators :-)"