



levels are met and staff's compensation schemes keep them hungry to develop the business to the next level.

Marcus' visits to a country office typically take three days, packed with meetings to justify the expense of the journey. Modern technology allows video conferencing at a high quality, yet it cannot replace the important 'human' factor in business negotiations. Marcus prefers face-to-face discussions, because recognizing subtle expressions on someone's face often can make a difference between closing a deal and coming home empty handed.

Doing business in different European countries, Marcus faces differences in bureaucracy at almost every step. In Poland, for example, it seems that everything needs to be filled in several copies, stamped and signed. Notaries hold a licence to print money, because more or less everything related to running a limited company (called 'sp. z o.o.')

needs to be signed in the presence of a notary. For example, if you need a restaurant receipt as proof of expenses, you have to ask the waiter. After 10 minutes he might come back to you with a three-page document that needs to be filled in with the company's tax ID number, signed several times and finally stamped by the restaurant before it is accepted. In Germany, Marcus would just take his credit card receipt – that's all.

After a long day, it is time to check in at one of the business hotels. Business travellers in Łódź today have the choice between several international hotel chains like *Ibis* and *Radisson*. So, it is easy to forget how difficult it was when he started doing business in Poland back in 2001. Not only was the infrastructure much weaker, but with Poland still being outside the EU common market, it made any transaction across the border much more complicated.

Source: Based on personal communications with a business executive who prefers to remain anonymous.

This time, his first appointment is with a major supplier in the centre of Warsaw to review the business development: three hours of PowerPoint presentations, financial reports and marketing reviews. A quick lunch and two hours in the car to his company's Polish office in Łódź are followed by an internal meeting with business unit managers. It is the VP's job to make sure the right mind-set is present everywhere in the sales channel, service

While the driver negotiates through Warsaw's rush hour traffic, Marcus and his country manager discuss the latest developments at the Polish office. Since joining the EU, the level of professionalism has significantly increased at all levels of management in Poland, and English has become the norm. This was not the case when Marcus started doing business in Poland in 2001. Initially, he could communicate only with the Country Manager directly in English. For the first year, all employees were enrolled in English language training every Friday afternoon. The training has paid off, and Marcus can easily communicate directly with everyone in the office.

right one when leaving home at 4:30 a.m. is what he is carrying today. It's a challenge to grab the one for British pounds and one for Polish zloty, which needs one for Swedish kronor, one for Romanian leu, different wallets. In addition to the 'euro wallet', he of the EU's monetary union and still has to use five different wallets. Unfortunately, he cannot take advantage of the EU's monetary union and still has to use five different wallets. In addition to the 'euro wallet', he needs one for Swedish kronor, one for Romanian leu, one for British pounds and one for Polish zloty, which is what he is carrying today. It's a challenge to grab the right one when leaving home at 4:30 a.m.

With the boarding pass on his mobile phone, he can jump the queue at the gate. Early in the morning, *Lufthansa* departure times are quite reliable and the flight departs on time: two hours to read the morning news, to get an update on worldwide financials and to enjoy a cup of tea and an unspectacular sandwich. Arriving in Warsaw, there is border hassle. Since Poland joined the Schengen Agreement in 2003, there are no longer any passport controls. Business travellers try to avoid check-in luggage to save time, and 10 minutes later he is greeted by his local Country Manager. Unfortunately, he cannot take advantage of the EU's monetary union and still has to use five different wallets. In addition to the 'euro wallet', he needs one for Swedish kronor, one for Romanian leu, one for British pounds and one for Polish zloty, which is what he is carrying today. It's a challenge to grab the right one when leaving home at 4:30 a.m.