

THE LEADER



WORKERS REPAIR towers on St. Petersburg's Lomonosov Bridge in preparation for its 300th Jubilee celebrations this year. The Jubilee is drawing more foreign corporate interest in local businesses, says Dun&Bradstreet Nord Director Ila Vinnik.

'I'm very sincere about what I sell. I really believe that this information can help my clients, and I think that people trust me because of that. I also have a lot of experience communicating with foreign people ... I have a lot of foreign friends.'

Ila Vinnik
Director, Dun&Bradstreet Nord

Vinnik: Some companies still reluctant

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KT: What proportion of your clients are foreign?

IV: About half are foreign, and it's actually much easier to work with foreign clients. In Western countries, people are used to paying for information, and are more comfortable with outsourcing.

KT: What skills make you a good salesperson?

IV: I think it's because I'm very sincere about what I sell. I really believe that this information can

help my clients, and I think that people trust me because of that. I also have a lot of experience communicating with foreign people. This is probably because, in my private life, I have a lot of foreign friends, and because of the experience I gained living in Germany.

KT: You've worked training salespeople. What weaknesses do you commonly spot?

IV: Laziness — sometimes, anyway. I find a lot of people need to be pushed. They're not self-starters.

KT: What would you like to improve about yourself?

IV: I'd like to improve my business education. I often feel I lack knowledge in particular areas, and, of course, I don't have time to study. I've been to some short courses and seminars, but I haven't found many of them very useful. So I try to fit in as much self-education as I can. I'm always reading, but I also try to consult people who have knowledge in areas I'd like to know more about.

KT: You often give lectures at conferences about the investment climate in northwest Russia. What's D&B's outlook for 2003?

IV: I think now is a good time for investing in Russia, particularly in the northwest region. The most difficult thing for us is of course something like a crisis. During economic crises, business information is the first thing to be cut.

KT: Do you think St. Petersburg's 300-year Jubilee

celebrations are improving the city's investment prospects?

IV: The Jubilee has certainly brought more money into the city, but I think this kind of celebration primarily stimulates interest. I can say recently we've had a lot of interest from foreign consulates, from Italy, the United States and Great Britain for example.

It seems more business people in these countries than usual want to find business contacts in St. Petersburg. ■

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