

## **Business Communications in the Kazakhstan Media Space: the Challenges of Modernity and Dialogue of Cultures**

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*В статье авторы обращают внимание на необходимость учета изменений на рынке Казахстана в построении эффективных бизнес-коммуникаций, факторов вовлечения его в глобальные процессы и связанных с этим структурных перемен. Определяются возможные направления деятельности деловых СМИ и характеристики их функций, соответствующих времени. Характеризуется их роль в преодолении межкультурных барьеров, приводятся примеры неудачного применения.*

**Ключевые слова:** медиaprостранство, бизнес-коммуникации, деловые масс-медиа, блогосфера, архетипы поведения, Казахстан.

*The authors of the article draw attention to the need to take into account the changes in the market of Kazakhstan to form effective business communications, factors to involve it in global processes and related structural changes. Some possible directions of business media activity and characteristics of their functions corresponding to time are also specified herein. Their role to overcome intercultural barriers is characterized, and some examples of unsuccessful use are given.*

**Key words:** media space, business communications, business mass media, blogosphere, behavior archetypes, Kazakhstan.

Approximately 8 percent of large enterprises in Kazakhstan are foreign companies. Besides, nowadays there are about 300 thousand enterprises in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and 16,500 of them are foreign companies. Most of these firms are small enterprises and over the one year these companies began to open 18% more often than it was before [1]. This fact definitely indicates that our country has genuine interest for foreign business, and also has undoubted potential for their further growth. However, we need pay attention to some aspects in this area because it has own specific nuances. Despite the obvious profitability of international cooperation and associated technological, technical and financial advantages as well as supposedly indisputable benefits of the direct investments and the opportunities for effective involvement of domestic structures in global processes, there are some quite heated debates about the dangers or even some “uselessness” of foreign capital in Kazakstani business that arise from time to time in domestic media and Kaznet in professional, scientific, pseudoscientific and

mass audiences. It shows that there is a range of problems remained, and that other approach is required to address the specific challenges.

It cannot be claimed that the problems specified in this text are related only to our country. Even more, the concept that these “childhood diseases” are applied only to the countries in transition period. For example, the US trade wars declared periodically by the current leader of the White House with special zeal against almost a half of the world’s economies. According to some data, only in 2018 the estimated global economy losses due to Trump's policy amounted to about \$ 80 billion (half thereof was attributed to the USA), and the cost of products increased by 10-15% [2]. Undoubtedly, Trump’s actions include a protective component but if we consider the fact that his strategy does not always find support even in the American business circles, we should not exclude the North American leader’s stereotypical biases. And yet, if in some cases the current leader of the White House, as an apparent representative of the American business establishment, is governed by considerations to protect domestic business interests and to maintain its competitiveness in the world market, then these problems get slightly different accents with regard to our countries.

Given the fact that foreign capital tends to come more often to the areas where there is an urgent need for external cash injection, taking into account the weakness of domestic investment programs, the competitive immaturity of certain industries and the desire of foreign companies to occupy empty and non-demanded Kazakhstani market openings first of all (more often, this is a strategy of a small business), there's no risk to assume that there is a degree of negative stance on any foreign presence in the domestic audience, and not on the capitals much as the fears on any foreign presence. And there are known conceivable reasons for this, including a very long period of closed economy in the Soviet time, a traditional patriarchal way of life in the Kazakh society still influencing any possible social and economic relations, the tragic background of the national history that formed the archetypes of attitudes towards foreigners, as well as the relatively recent acquaintance of our audience with the laws of market relations and, in the same way, the negative experience gained after shock reforms in 80-90s. In this situation, any nihilizing affects in the nation’s “historical memory” will outweigh even the most obviously advantageous sides, and these negative, already potentially disadvantageous and even dangerous to a great extent effects (for the economy and international relations) will be only intensified in the situation of unwillingness or inability to provide the opposing side with counterarguments.

Despite the fact that modern business today is a rather challenging continuum of interdependent processes, skills and knowledge of the market strategy, and it increasingly involves some technical, technological and even purely scientific competencies requiring sometimes special professional trainings in its interests area, the ability to build interpersonal

relationships continues to be the basis of the business. For centuries merchants, industrialists and representatives of the trading have been aware of the ancient truth that a deal can only be concluded if there are mutually beneficial and voluntary desires; the absence of any effect in establishing such kind of communications is more likely indicates the inability to communicate, or the unwillingness to take into account the partner's position. On the background of international business contacts which are moving to the level of intercultural, cross-cultural and interethnic relations, the situation becomes more complicated due to the fact that each party remains "burdened" with its special historical, legislative-behavioral and archetypal-mental experience. The Economist Group's studies performed as far back as in 2012 show us that 61 percent of international companies have difficulties due to cultural and language barriers, 50 percent of international companies complain of a misunderstanding between the parties. We can estimate in this report that company's profit losses only for "intercultural motives" can reach up to 30 per cent [3].

The "dispositions" described above demonstrate us very clearly that both parties can be losers, i.e. international business that incurs specific losses, estimated in financial, material and labor-intensive categories and economic losses, and the economy of a "receiving side", i.e. losses determined in not less specific figures due to the flow of investments in other regions and misopportunities of technological and technical modernization that is also important. Once Harold S. Geneen, one of the most experienced and wise business representatives of our time, who has remained in his position for a very long time, the president of the largest ITT corporation, said, "In the business world, everyone is paid in two coins: cash and experience. Take the experience first, the cash will come later." That is, in other words, Kazakhstan found itself in a situation when it has losses in experience, as well, for instance in know-how, technology and methodology, i.e. in the advanced, time appropriated business practices and economy management characterizing the course of the scientific and technological progress. It would be incorrect to blame only one side for mistake, for example, Kazakhstani side. This means exactly the two-edged problem; the first side cannot explain the benefits of its technologies, and accordingly loses the potential market, the other side is unable to convince partners on the prospects and benefits of its market in the face of competitors' pressure, while losing the necessary technologies.

A modern business audience has a number of distinctive characteristics. Firstly, this is far from that local space. It must be admitted that today's realities practically do not leave any chance for existence of completely isolated, closed and "self-sustainable" states. And the very point here is not in the sinister role of the global network or some desire of the "world centers" to control the periphery at all. "Globalism is meant that we have been living in the world society for

a long time, in the meaning that the idea of enclosed spaces has turned into a fiction. No country or group can fence itself off from each other"[4].*The global economy has thus transformed into a single, interdependent organism; and this is far from the result of recent decades.*

So, for example, completely closed Iran would constantly look at oil and gas price changes in the global market today, wishing or not, or look for partners who can bypass the sanction barriers in access to machines, know-how or the necessary raw materials that is, in fact, are also technologies.

Markets of raw materials, grain, products, chemicals, spare parts, scientific research and labor are interdependent today; changes at one end, regardless of the state of local markets, will have consequences at the other one. An outstanding example is that the problems in the Chinese "world factory" on the whole world... Accordingly, the reliable and timely information "from abroad" will always be badly needed even in the "local" market.

Another feature is that *business communications passed into the category of mass communications* long time ago; these are far from those purely interpersonal negotiations, the notorious "closed-door deals", "parties" of people from the business field. Thus, the negotiation process of two, or, more often, more institutions (and it is quite a common thing to engage many contractors or to outsource) involves much larger circle of persons making business decisions than it seems at the first glance. There are involved much wider range of departments and establishment levels in the processes of one company even on a scale of one company. The role of the middle and lower technical team should not be depreciated, as they are also able to make their opinion known on, besides it can be often at the most inappropriate moment resulting in disrupting the company's life...

Thus, often communications sent "personally" to the management of one company (business correspondence, exchange of technical documentation, third-party letters, etc.) are turned into a "mass message" invisibly for everyone. On the other hand, work processes in individual companies are also not limited with internal information intended exclusively for "internal use". Information of third-party media, social networks, public opinion polls, stock indices, monitoring of administrative resources, etc. can influence particular decisions. Besides, nowadays, it is not uncommon when intercompany management is performed with the help of internal networks (intranets) or corporate publications, rather than direct instructions from the management. And that is in addition to the active correspondence in the global network.

As a result, modern mistakes of business, cross-cultural, and domestic communication can be described with *two parameters*. Firstly, the existence of the situation when the cultural, historical, and archetypal and behavioral characteristics of their partner are ignored; the reciprocity of "guilt" here is obvious and very clear. Neither foreign nor domestic firms are

trying to pay sufficient attention to any refutation, mitigation or destruction of prevailing stereotypes, myths and prejudices, either in their own or in the opposite audience. Sociological polls and materials published in the media, in social networks, say, for example, that many false ideas about the same Russian, American, European and Chinese business are still alive and stable among the Kazakh audience. Kazakhstani researchers are little interested in the image of the Kazakh business in the representations of foreign audiences; as a result, our businessmen have to open their way into foreign markets almost by touch. As an example, there are no methodological and scientific publications in Kazakhstan that give systematically, adequately detailed and comparative characteristics of the mentality and behavior of representatives of foreign and domestic businesses... As a result we can get rejection of large-scale projects involving foreign capital for local business, or ignoring local realities by foreign businessmen for foreign businesses. The traditional audience continues to perceive a foreign merchant almost as an “invader” and an “ill-wisher”, while a foreign businessman does not try to refute such insinuations, only reinforcing false attitudes.

The second parameter naturally proceeding from the previous paragraph and it is the insufficient attention of market participants to existing and potentially possible *information resources* that contribute to salvation of the problems described above. Partners often even don't bother to form proper image of their company in local and foreign audiences, to promote and give information support to the goals and objectives of projects in a public opinion. The public sometimes learns about the existence of the project itself only after a crisis situation or after scandalous publications in the media. But even after that, it reacts rather sluggishly and thereby leaves a field of “freedom” for insinuations to the same journalists and representatives of the blogosphere. The initiators of large projects, “destined” to influence the society, are often limited with PR-support of their projects in elite or purely professional publications, and forget that these “glossy magazines” remain unfamiliar and inaccessible to a wide audience. It looks like the business community participants prefer to live in their own world, and their small representation in the mass audience doesn't annoy them ... These problems are related not only to the foreign companies represented on our market, but to Kazakhstani companies, as we can now form an opinion, developing foreign spaces that also do not particularly care about the proper image both in a foreign audience (the negative publications about the Kazakh business in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia), and support of their own projects in the domestic community. “There is a perception in Kazakhstan that our companies go abroad in order not to pay taxes, but, in fact, this is not so,” EY associate partner Saltanat Dauletova is trying to justify herself carefully in her interview with Kapital.kz [5].

Thus, in the situation when the involvement of the Kazakh economy in the global processes is increased, the general dependence and interaction of world economy structures and elements, the destruction of previous mental barriers and the increasing role of technological and technical factors, as well as the historical and geographical predetermination of the location of our country at major transit crossroads, the functions of business communication in the system of modern media will be subject to significant transformations. And for the first time the number of problems of practical importance will include functions of neutralizing or reducing negative factors from “mental programs” with stereotypes and prejudices, archetypal and behavioral attitudes inherent in the nature of any person or each culture, capable of bearing their significant negative, anti-constructive charge. The traditional “informative” direction is clearly not enough but the systematic, detailed study of the structures and hidden mechanisms of action of the “programs” themselves are needed. In addition, it is necessary to change the attitude to the very phenomenon of business, replacing obsolete and outdated ideas, and setting socio-historical, technological, social and cultural significance at the center of its perspective. We are still quite far from understanding that business is, first of all, the most *valuable experience*. The leader of the American struggle for independence, a journalist and a successful businessman Benjamin Franklin somehow meaningfully predicted, “No nation was ever ruined by trade” [6].

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