

OPENING THE DOOR TO BUSINESS

BISNIS' NEW RUSSIAN LANGUAGE WEBSITE

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Thanks to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS), U.S. exporters and investors can now benefit from a newly launched website, targeting companies in the markets of the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. In March 2000, BISNIS launched the Department of Commerce's first-ever Russian language website (www.bisnis.doc.gov/nis), allowing U.S. exporters and Russian language-speaking businesses to effectively communicate for the first time. The new page complements BISNIS' existing English-language site, which provides trade information to U.S. companies interested in the markets of the former Soviet Union, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Caucasus. The English language page receives over 100,000 hits per week from companies interested in market reports, trade leads and other information provided.

BISNIS ASSISTS U.S. BUSINESS

Since 1992, BISNIS has served as the U.S. Government's information clearinghouse for U.S. companies conducting business with the NIS, which includes some of the world's largest

developing market economies. BISNIS promotes U.S. trade and investments with NIS countries by providing information services designed to link U.S. and NIS companies in lucrative business partnerships, as agents and distributors, licensees and licensors, and investment partners. By bringing buyers and sellers together in successful business transactions, BISNIS has generated over \$2.4 billion in U.S. exports and investments.

Headquartered in the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., BISNIS is staffed by 10 trade specialists in the U.S. and 19 throughout the NIS, including 10 in Russia. The Washington, D.C. office's more than 40,000 American clients, range from small and medium- to large-sized companies, and represent nearly all industry sectors and financial groups. Equipped with both an in-depth knowledge of NIS market economies and resources available from U.S. and NIS governments and private sectors, the BISNIS staff of international trade specialists and overseas network representatives provides U.S. companies with accurate and comprehensive analyses of the NIS business environment. BISNIS keeps U.S. companies informed about commercial developments and business opportunities in the NIS by providing the following types of information: current market assessments and industry reports; trade and partner leads; commercial laws and regulations; tips on transportation, bank-

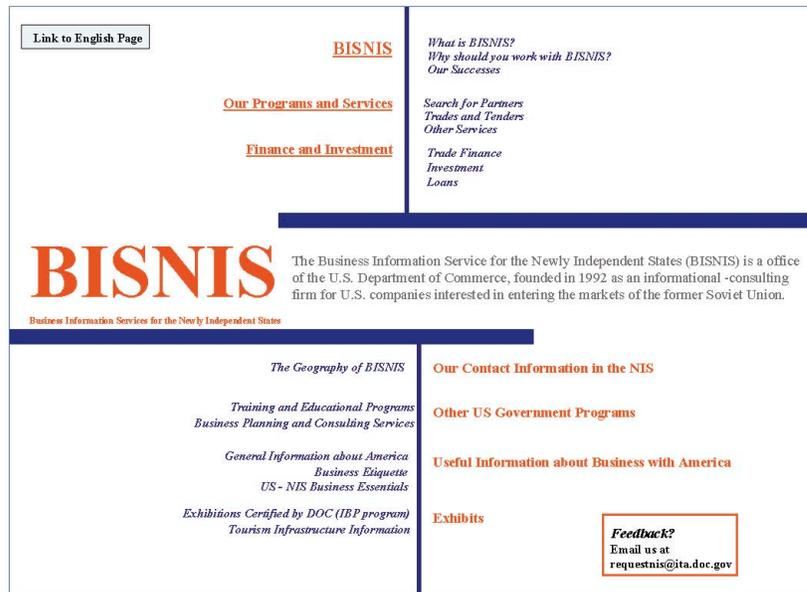
ing and customs issues sources of financing for trade and investment; and trade promotion event descriptions.

NEW WEBSITE BUILDS TRADE TIES

Now, with the creation and launch of the Russian language website, BISNIS has developed one more way to help U.S. companies export to the emerging markets of the NIS, which have over 280 million consumers. The Russian language website caters specifically to the Russian language-speaking communities around the world, who wish to utilize business opportunities with U.S. companies. As Gennady Ozerov, owner of Atlantic Motors, a General Motors dealer in Krasnoyarsk, explains, BISNIS' Russian language website will "serve as a guide to identifying American partners and business opportunities." Ozerov calls the site "an exceptional resource for small business entrepreneurs in the NIS."

"The most amazing thing about the page is that we are reaching companies in the NIS that we would have never been able to interact with otherwise. We have sourced a trade lead from a small town in Ukraine that our BISNIS person would have never visited," comments Kelly Raftery, BISNIS trade specialist and developer of the website.

By communicating in the Russian language, this website reaches out to NIS companies, which are generally



unaccustomed to conducting business in English, and therefore, may otherwise miss opportunities for cooperation with U.S. companies. "Having access to this extremely valuable information in the Russian language will open wide the door to stronger business ties between the U.S. and the NIS," says Ozerov.

The site serves as an educational tool for the Russian-speaking community about how to conduct business with U.S. companies and how to find products and services available from U.S. businesses, while offering a ready source of information on finance and U.S. government supported programs for business.

"The NIS companies are very excited because there is nothing out there that targets their markets in their language. The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly favorable. We have received trade and partner leads from all over, against the common wisdom of doing business there, which told us we would never receive this sort of information over the Internet from usually secretive NIS companies," explains Raftery.

In order to assist in the development of mutually beneficial business relationships between NIS and U.S. companies,

BISNIS features the following information on its Russian language webpage:

- Articles offering advice for NIS companies wanting to conduct business with U.S. companies;
- Guidance on doing business with U.S. companies, including sources of financing and U.S.-NIS business etiquette essentials;
- Information about U.S. government-funded technical assistance and exchange programs; and
- Applications to participate in BISNIS' *Search for Partners* and *Trades & Tenders* programs.

Online applications and questionnaires in Russian for BISNIS' two trade lead programs, *Search for Partners* and *Trades & Tenders*, are perhaps the most unique and substantial component of the website. BISNIS' *Search for Partners*, which is published twice monthly in electronic and hard copy formats, serves as a matchmaker service, bringing together U.S. and NIS companies. The publication features country and industry listings, company history, and contact information about select NIS firms interested in forming business relationships with U.S. companies. NIS companies can now

fill out a Russian language, online application so that they can be featured in *Search for Partners*.

BISNIS' *Trade & Tenders*, which is distributed each week via email, publishes sales opportunities for U.S. businesses throughout the NIS, including opportunities from individual NIS companies, multinational corporations and financial institutions, and those financed by NIS local and national governments. This program enables NIS companies to search for American producers or suppliers of goods and services. NIS companies can now fill out a Russian language online questionnaire to search for the U.S. goods and services they seek.

The Russian language website was developed over a period of ten months by an international team of ten, including Kelly Raftery in Washington, D.C.; Olga Anania in Moscow, Russia; Seymour Khaliyov in Baku, Azerbaijan; Alex Kim in St. Petersburg, Russia; Ekaterina Solovova in Samara, Russia; and, Andriy Ignatov in Kiev, Ukraine. In the few months that it took to launch this website, this team had only one face-to-face meeting in December 1999. The rest of the project was conducted through conference calls and emails. ■

For more information about BISNIS and the Russian language website, please contact:

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