

United Against Entrepreneurship

In the last two weeks, I was in Russia with other MBA students to visit Russian companies. We had the chance to meet with many bright and talented people in different Russian organizations. These people gave me confidence in the future of Russia, as this large pool of talent is the human fuel that supports the current and ongoing growth of the country. Also, these people were all very confident themselves in the future of Russia, recognizing that the country is too dependent on oil prices, but also saying that many opportunities were there in almost every industry. This level of self-confidence is a very good indicator to judge the future of a country.



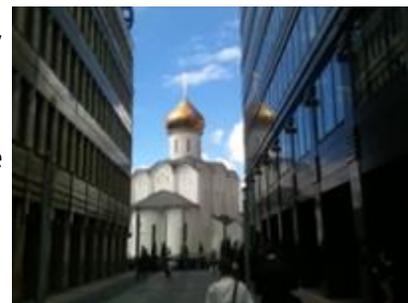
At the same time, I see a cloud in the sky of Russia's future. This cloud is the attitude they have towards entrepreneurship. We asked some of those talented people if they could be interested in starting their own company at some point of their career. In every case, we had a similar answer: "No, that's not something I would do". And in every case, they seemed very sure of their answer and had that smile of someone who has a clear mind.

When asking why, we again had similar explanations: "If I start my business and have some level of success, corrupted politicians and people from the organized crime will come to see me to ask for their piece of the cake and will threaten me or my family. Is it worth it? No." Also, as this is well known by everyone, business people are seen as corrupted and there is not a true respect for them in the population. Russians don't want to see their kids become businessmen.

Of course, the people we met were very educated and currently had very good careers, which is not necessarily the typical profile of an entrepreneur. But still, when most of your bright and talented people don't even imagine the possibility of becoming an entrepreneur, this leaves a lot of eventual good ideas unexplored and a lot of unrealized potential.

There is still a lot of growth that will happen in Russia, but playing the world's game of growth without the very important card of "clean organic growth" through entrepreneurship is probably not the best strategy for the country.

In the context of the different corruption stories that are currently discovered in Quebec, with stories heard of construction entrepreneurs being threatened for proposing in a "reserved market" and stories of collusion between the industry players, I think we should see the Russian situation as a warning sign. Our economy is very dependent on our small and medium size companies, and our entrepreneurs are still respected by the population. But we can feel that those current stories are affecting this level of confidence. So we should act with force and energy in those alleged stories, and try to stop the vicious cycle of cynicism that can lead to the diminution of the interest for entrepreneurship. Closing the eyes and thinking this is normal is not an option.



For a different and more cultural point of view on my Russian adventure, I also invite you to read this other blog article that describes the story of a proud Russian father (in French): http://experience.hec.ca/campus_abroad_internationaux/russie_russia/la-fierte-dun-pere/

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