

Human Resources

Any company wishing to do business in Latvia must be willing to invest time and resources in training their personnel. Due to the short period of time that a free market economy exists in Latvia, there is a lack of qualified personnel. Often, potential managers and staff come from very different professions held in the Soviet era: professors, scientists, teachers, engineers, etc. The basic understanding of financial concepts or business processes tends to be fundamentally different from what Canadian businessmen are used to.

However, Latvians have rapidly been retraining with management or accounting courses to gain at a minimum academic knowledge of the principles of a free market economy. The younger generation (under 40) in particular has become the major source of management resources.

Aspects to be aware of:

- **English proficiency.** It is difficult to find a large choice of potential personnel that fluently speak English as a second language (above and beyond the native Latvian and commonly spoken Russian). Spoken English is possible -- but written fluency rarer.
- **Computer literacy.** Though Latvia boasts with a high percentage of highly skilled computer professionals, particularly in the software area, most administrative personnel are not computer literate.
- **Business processes.** Though rapidly changing and improving, knowledge of and experience with basic business processes is lacking: business letters, telephone manners, preparation of business meetings, etc.

When determining appropriate remuneration for personnel, the following 1994 data may be of guidance:

- minimum wage: 28 lats/month
- teachers' salaries: 49 lats/month
- civil servants: 80 lats/month
- employees in the hospitality industry: 90 lats/month
- medical specialists: 58 lats/month
- telecommunications: 138 lats/month
- employees in the financial sector: 170 lats/month
- white collar workers with at least two languages: 150 lats/month.