

Substantial benefits

Five years of IndoGerman Trade Network – successful collaboration between India and Germany



Gunter Benthous, Co-director of Green Rent, Mohammad Rehan, founder of the Network, Dr. Annegret Haffa, owner and Managing Director of Dr. Haffa & Partners, and Giuseppe Cicorella, Co-director of Green Rent at an IndoGerman Trade Network meeting



Nadine Ulrich, Managing Director of the German Centre Delhi, Gurgaon, Sylvia Hausbeck, Bayerische Landesbank and Dr. Annegret Haffa networking

India is one of the fastest-growing markets in the world. More and more German companies are recognising this and want to increase their involvement in the Indian market. Conversely, with globalisation Indian businesses are also increasingly interested in the German market and in collaborating with German companies. However, there are a number of things to bear in mind when entering the market and embarking into cooperation.

Mohammad Rehan founded the IndoGerman Trade Network in 2005 to make start-ups easier for German and Indian companies in their respective partner countries. The network now has 9,000 members. To mark its fifth anniversary in March 2010, a birthday party was held at the Indian Consulate in Munich.

"A huge amount has been done since I founded the IndoGerman Trade Network five years ago. We have been able to support many companies in

gaining a foothold in Germany or in India, finding business partners and identifying contacts with appropriate partners and consultants," says Rehan. The IndoGerman Trade Network was founded in 2005 with the aim of supporting organisations and companies from India and Germany in developing and expanding their business relationships. This is achieved by offering its members a large range of consultancy support and services: for example, it helps companies and organisations to find business partners and provides contacts with suitable partners and consultants.

In India in particular, nothing happens without personal contacts – and that applies to politics, business and industry. As Giuseppe Cicorella, one of the co-directors at Green Rent, the German sales dealer for Indian car manufacturer, TATA, knows well: "We have been a member of the IndoGerman Trade Network for just under a year now and have already been able to gain substantial benefits from it. For example, we got to know the Indian software company, ShriTek, through the network, who designed our website." His business

partner, Gunter Benthous, adds: "The network has helped us, for example, in introducing vehicles from TATA Motors into Germany. Also we're grateful for the support of the IndoGerman Trade Network for the fact that the TATA Nano has become an opera star at the Saarland State Theatre in Saarbrücken and can proudly represent the technological progress, sustainable economic management and environmentally aware thinking of its motherland, India."

Membership reflects the diversity of Indo-German relationships: IT and high-tech companies are involved, not-for-profit organisations, tourism companies, representatives of government institutions, management consultants and lawyers, as well as antiques dealers and representatives of cultural institutions and universities.

Bilateral sharing at the Business Table

Once a month, the IndoGerman Trade Network gives its members the opportunity to get to know each other at its Indo-German Business Table event in Munich. A firm feature of this regu-

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lar get-together are the presentations by Indian and German companies. It is, firstly, an opportunity for businesses to report on their experiences in the German or the Indian market. Secondly, it allows management consultants and service providers from Germany and India introduce their services to make starting up in the partner country easier and to enable businesses to develop professionally and with no hitches.

Marie Aichagui of Linde AG regularly attends these events: "I value the relaxed atmosphere at the Business Table. As well as the very interesting and informative presentations given by other members, it's a wonderful opportunity to share experience. For example, just now I'm developing a travel kit for business people who travel to India. To do this, I've also drawn upon the experiences of members."

Aichagui commutes for her employer, Linde AG, between India and Germany. She reported on the experience she has gained and the differences between the two countries at the anniversary party in her

presentation, 'Opportunities and highlights of building air separation plants in India'. One of her points was that the saying "time is money" is not applicable to India and that, as a German company, you have to adjust to that. At the same time, Aichagui emphasised her enjoyment of her work as well as the openness of the Indian people towards other nationalities and towards women in leadership positions.

More women in executive positions

The latter is a point which network founder, Rehan, also highlights in his presentation, 'Globalisation of the Mind and Indo-German Industry'. "In India, there are far more women in executive positions than in Germany – Chanda Kochhar of ICICI Bank would be an example. Indian managers, who come to Germany therefore, often cannot understand that it is different here."

One exception is Nadine Ulrich, Managing Director of the German Centre Delhi, Gurgaon, who took part in the anniversary event as an honorary guest. "I am delighted that the

IndoGerman Trade Network birthday party falls during my visit to Germany so I can take part. I've known Mohammad Rehan for a little over six months now and can say that he does very good work. The further development of German involvement in India lies close to his heart, as it does for us."

Commenting on the future plans for the IndoGerman Trade Network, Rehan says: "We want to expand the network still further and get even more involved in consultancy and identifying suitable business partners. So, for example, we're planning a matchmaking platform which will be available to our members and potential contacts on our website." He adds with a smile: "And in five years we'll be celebrating our tenth anniversary."

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