

Understanding Chinese Business Culture

Krzysztof A. Zakrzewski, managing partner at the Domański Zakrzewski Palinka law firm, talks to Beata Gołębowska-Chęciak.

■ **DZP law firm has been described as the leader in its field in Poland. What hard facts support this assertion?**

For the past seven years we have been named the largest law firm by the *Rzeczpospolita* daily, the business community's newspaper of choice. We employ over 140 lawyers, and including auxiliary staff our team numbers about 250. As Poland's leading law firm, we boast a multinational team - at present our employees include lawyers from various European countries and Asia. We do our best to serve our clients from all over the world in their native languages and by taking account of the specifics of their business culture.

■ **How broad is the firm's experience in working with Chinese businesses?**

We have worked with clients from China for many years now. We treat this as a priority, as shown by the professional publications we have published in Chinese and by our participation in many events boosting Chinese-Polish business relations. We advise Chinese companies with an extensive range of profiles, from the financial,

telecommunications, construction, real estate and shopping center sectors to industry (from bicycles to advanced electronics).

■ **Commentators often highlight the cultural differences between Polish or English-speaking business and Chinese practices originating from the Confucian tradition. What differences have been most evident to you in terms of business negotiations?**

The Chinese way of running projects is very different from ours. First of all, the Chinese prefer to get to know a business partner well, on a personal level too. Signing a contract after the first or second meeting, which is common in the case of American clients for example, can face many obstacles. Chinese clients are not very direct, whereas we Europeans or Americans try to get down to business as soon as possible. Things are completely different in Chinese culture. The Chinese believe that partners should first build a bond, then if it lasts, the relationship will be continued in a commercial transaction. In China, business deals with foreigners are the effect of careful cultivation of relations and trust between partners.



■ **With your experience and cultural know-how, do you plan to develop a dedicated team for Chinese clients?**

We always take market circumstances into account in our strategy. Assuming that the overall economic situation continues to improve and Chinese investors' interest in Poland increases (which we are counting on), we will follow this trend. Especially since our reputation among investors in the region has grown with each year. We are often invited to take part in conferences and seminars organized by business associations over there. We also initiate various projects ourselves and work with a number of government institutions to draw investor attention to the Polish market.

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