Globalisation and how to deal with working internationally are issues that directly impact upon the foodservice industry. They are both a challenge and an opportunity for FCSI consultants, as global foodservice markets are growing rapidly and new and interesting markets are emerging. At the same time, customer behaviour is changing.

Many FCSI members have been working internationally for years now. Others want to follow, but are reluctant to take on a risk that is hard to assess.

Frank Wagner FCSI, co-owner and managing director of Berlin-based K3 Kitchen Planning, has his own success story, which he has been sharing with FCSI colleagues. The new president of the German-Austrian FCSI chapter founded K3 in 1998. Today, he travels the globe from Russia to Africa, from Kazakhstan to Dubai and Bahrain but his first overseas trips were to Russia. “I will never forget my first trip to Moscow on 26 August 2006. I paid $1,000 for a hotel room and was really scared by my own courage,” he says.

Here, Frank gives us an insight into K3’s world, as well as giving great tips on how to proceed and pitfalls to avoid doing business abroad.

Frank Wagner FCSI of K3 in Berlin, discusses working in foreign markets with Hildegard Dorn-Petersen FCSI

Going global

Around the globe luxury will be redefined. For me, free time outside an aeroplane is a gift”
could not stay backstage only and had to take centre stage to avoid major mistakes.

**HDP:** Could you give us some examples of that?

**FW:** The two hotels are located apart from each other, but we were able to connect them through underground tunnels, linking them to a central kitchen to make delivery and transfer of banqueting equipment easier. Other substantial changes were small kitchen units for regeneration (reheating) and distribution, located near the large function hall. To make this happen, wardrobes and other rooms had to be allocated, but it was worth the hassle – otherwise, no multi-course, warm meals could have been served at banquets, an absolute no-go in Russia, you can usually expect heavy snowfall, so it’s a good idea to have covered or underground distribution, located near the guest, who must like the view. The general manager must have his office as close to the guests as possible, not on an upper floor with the best view.

**HDP:** Let’s talk about labour. Are there any special requirements in different countries?

**FW:** People must take pride in their place of work – they do a better job and handle equipment with more care. Ambiance influences the quality of work delivered. For staff canteens in Africa we plan a larger space. The warm meal staff get there is likely to be their only meal of the day. We build nice changing rooms and offices with daylight if possible. Not only for the general manager but for the chief engineer as well. The general manager must have his office as close to the guests as possible, not on an upper floor with the best view.

**HDP:** Most of the hotel projects you are involved with are four or five-star establishments. What does luxury mean to you?

**FW:** In the eastern part of Europe especially, there are very rich people and big spenders, but money is not everything. Around the globe luxury will be redefined. For me free time outside an aeroplane is a gift. Luxury concerns the guest and workflow, not for the chief engineer as well. If the hotel has a spa or a pool, a separate elevator is a must – guests wearing bathing suits should not interfere with convention or restaurant guests.

**HDP:** What tops the list for you?

**FW:** Hygiene and security, especially regarding food, are beyond any discussion. I have learned that I must not try to do everything myself, and a good team is a winning team. If there is a firm that can do the job better than our company, we will recommend it – there is enough business around for everybody. We are proud to be members of FCSI as independent consultants.

**HDP:** K3 has offered professional foodservice design for 16 years, and you have completed projects for hotels, restaurants and shopping malls. What have you learned and what did you enjoy most?

**FW:** As I travel a great deal, I have to get organised with new technology – from data transfer of revised plans directly to the designer’s office in Berlin, to social media and keeping in touch with family, friends, colleagues and customers around the world.

We are in a people business, and I really like it. I like to return to Radisson Blu Berlin (the one with the aquarium) and the Spagos Restaurant & Bar in the Park Inn by Radisson Berlin Alexanderplatz. I am fortunate in that I can come back to every outlet, restaurant or hotel we have worked on and be welcomed warmly.

**“Cultural differences even exist between Germany and Austria. I paid a lot of money to learn this!”**

Frank Wagner FCSI’s checklist for saving money and making a prosperous business

- Look for domestic partners and local support.
- Value cultural differences.
- Act in the interests of your client and future guests.
- Hygiene and security are a must.
- Check local support services.
- You cannot be an expert on every topic – if you are not sure, recommend an FCSI colleague.
- Insist on advance payment if you do not know your customer.

**“People must take pride in their place of work – and ambiance influences the quality of work delivered”**

Frank Wagner FCSI was interviewed on the premises of Rational in Berlin, Germany. He was keynote speaker at a seminar organised by Rational in cooperation with FCSI and VfB to present the EXPOFORUM St. Petersburg and share experiences on international products. The hosts were proud to introduce their new seminar and training centre, and prouder still to present the new SoftCookingCenter with technical and practical details. This innovation has given the company a sensational increase on revenue of 15%, especially in Germany and the rest of Europe. Product manager Gerhard Kramer presented the new manual for consultants and planners, where the smallest technical details are explained. If there was an FCSI award not only for design and innovation, but for demonstrating diligence, Gerhard Kramer would be a great candidate for it.