

## Russian-born American Ingenuity: Google

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<b>Text</b>	Russian-born American Ingenuity
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<b>Audio</b>	Natural speed

### Pre-Text Activity

#### 1. International Business: Small Group Discussions

There are 127 McDonalds restaurants in Russia. Ford and GM cars are being built in Togliatti and outside Petersburg. Russian gas fuels American cars, and Baltika beer has appeared on the shelves of larger liquor stores.



Kevin McCaughey with Baltika in California. Note redwood trees in the background. Photo: Phil Venuti

These are signs of Russian-American business cooperation. And yet U.S./Russian political relations are often strained.

In small groups discuss the questions below. Elect a secretary to record key answers in notes. Afterwards groups will compare answers as a class.

1. Do Russian-American business ventures help us understand each other better? Are they a good thing or not? Explain why.
2. Has the presence of McDonalds restaurants in Russia improved or damaged the image of the U.S? Do you yourself like McDonalds? Why or why not?
3. The future: Do you think that Russian-American business ventures will continue to grow, or will the two countries revert to a kind of cold-war mentality, discouraging connections between one another?
4. Do you think these cooperative ventures are fair to both partners? Why or why not?
5. Do Russians and Americans *think* differently? In what ways? Do we have different ideas on how to conduct business? Can you explain?

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Written by Kevin McCaughey

(About 200 words) [Listen to natural speed audio](#) (1:48)

If there's something you need to find out, hey, just google it. Google – the name of a company – has now become a common verb in English.

Google is the most popular and innovative Internet search engine. It also happens to be the product of Russian and American ingenuity. Google was developed at Stanford University in California by Larry Page and Sergey Brin.

Sergey was born in Moscow and moved to the U.S. in 1979 when he was six years old. As a co-founder of Google, Sergey is, well, wealthy. His net worth is estimated at about 13 billion dollars.

No doubt his parents' strong scientific education in the Soviet system helped to foster his genius. His father is a math professor at an American university and his mother works at NASA (The National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

Despite spending nearly all his life in the U.S., Sergey has maintained his Russianness: he did not let his Russian language slip; he has a classic scientific background; and for physical training his passion is gymnastics. He frequents San Francisco, a city with a very lively Russian community, and he can be seen at Russian restaurants there, like Katia's Russian Tea Room.



Sergey Brin. Photo: James Duncan. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/x180/50329318/in/set-1076331/>

Google will soon be opening a research and development office in Moscow. And why not? Russia has one of the highest populations of scientists.

Source: Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey\\_Brin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey_Brin))

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## Post-Text Activity

### 1. Stopping the Brain Drain: A Type of Role Play

Sergey Brin is a brilliant guy. Does his brilliance derive from his Russian birth, his parents' Soviet education, or his own American education? It's probably all these things—and more.

However, the emigration of Sergey's family from Russia to the US exemplifies a particular problem facing Eastern Europe, among other countries: the Brain Drain.

Also called Human Capital Flight, the Brain Drain is an emigration of very smart and talented people from one country to another.

**STEP 1:** In a group of four or so, consider the brain drain. But why do they leave? For money? Maybe, but that is oversimplifying matters. Many come to countries like Canada, Britain, or the U.S. without the promise of riches. Besides, most people would need a lot of money to uproot their family. So money is not the only answer. Discuss other motives people have for leaving.

**STEP 2:** You've discussed who leaves and why? But is the Brain Drain a negative thing? What effect can it have on the educational system in a country? Will the government fully support its educational system if the best minds are leaving?

**STEP 3:** Once you have discussed these aspects of the brain drain, you will begin your role-play. You are going to be on a committee for the government of a fictitious country that is suffering from brain drain. You can give your country a name. It's a wonderful country, but at this point, there's not a lot of money. So scientists, artists, and other talented folk are moving overseas to work.

Your group is going to make a list, a manifesto, a bill of rights. You will list the guarantees that you will make to your citizens. Remember, you can't promise lots of money to people. A government can't bribe its citizens to stay. It can require them to stay through law, or it can offer them privileges and rights that encourage them to stay.

Your group will make a list of these rights that are intended to make the most talented and educated people want to stay in your country.

Afterwards, each country will reveal its list and you can discuss which would be the most effective.

## Answers & Extras



Will the future see more high-tech Russian-American cooperation?  
Photo: Kevin McCaughey

[A Brief Article on the Opening of a Google Branch in Moscow](http://www.mosnews.com/money/2006/04/18/googlemoscow.shtml)  
<http://www.mosnews.com/money/2006/04/18/googlemoscow.shtml>

[See the Menu at Katia's Russian Tea House](http://www.katias.com)  
A successful Russian restaurant in San Francisco, Katia's has an online menu that you can check out. See what San Franciscans are paying for Russian food.  
([www.katias.com](http://www.katias.com))

### Websites on Russian-American Business

Foundation for Russian-American economic cooperation (<http://www.fraec.org/>)

American Business Association of Russian Professionals (<http://www.ambarclub.org/>)