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TURKMENISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Internet Boosts Business Operation

Turkmenistan's Small Businesses Modernize, Increasing Profits and Salaries



A Melhem staff member using her new ICT skills acquired at IATP for routine paperwork
Photo: IREX

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- Melhem accountant Margarita Hemraeva

When the chief operating officer of Melhem, a firm specializing in the shipment of building materials, decided to send his employees to computer and internet training, he had no idea how dramatically it would improve company's operations.

Melhem employees were among the dozens of business sector representatives trained by the USAID-funded computer and internet center in Turkmenabat City in 2004-2009.

Like most Turkmen businesses, Melhem had never used computer technologies before. All the records were kept manually, eating up most of the staff's time. At the USAID-funded training center, Melhem's employees studied basic computer skills, various Microsoft Office applications, and internet technologies. They were eager to learn how to apply these technologies to business operations.

Shortly after the training, Melhem invested in three computers and connected them all to the internet. Now the company keeps track of their clients through e-databases and finds and maintains new contacts online. The freed-up time is spent on the company development, which suits employees well, as their salaries are based on a percentage of the company's profits. Just recently, Melham established a significant new partnership with a client in China through internet outreach. “Before, we spent most of our time doing paperwork and did not have as much time to seek out new clients,” says Melhem accountant Margarita Hemraeva. “IT skills have enabled us to focus on our real goals—on expanding our customer base and increasing profits.”

The company estimates that the modernization has improved its efficiency by almost 70 percent and has quadrupled company sales. “The training has helped us to understand that it is impossible to work effectively without modern technologies,” says Hemraeva.

Employees' salaries have also grown significantly and are now four times what they were prior to the training at the USAID-funded center and computerization of their operations. From the previous \$100-150 per month, they have increased to about \$400-500 per month.