

From Russia, with love

The adoption of Michelle Rosser's two young Russian children during her sales team's busiest time would have been even tougher without her colleagues' and the company's logistical and emotional support.



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I worked for a small document management company, SoftSolutions, which was acquired by WordPerfect in January 1994, and then WordPerfect and Novell merged in March 1994, so by August 1994 I was an official Novell, Inc. employee.



Left: One of Michelle's favorite pictures. "Just seeing the two of them hand in hand after being in separate orphanages for 11 months has always made this picture more beautiful in our eyes."

Below: A 'family' picture taken before leaving Vladivostok.



I began by supporting the Development teams in what was known as the GroupWare division, and then moved into supporting sales and marketing in 1998, with a switch to just sales over the next year or two. I've been in my role as a sales controller now for over 15 years, with various different titles and slightly different responsibilities at times, but always supporting assigned sales teams, mainly in North America.

In the summer of 2008, my husband and I decided to pursue an international adoption of Russian siblings. At the end of November 2009 we were to travel to Vladivostok in Russia to meet a brother and sister that had been selected as children we might want to adopt. I used a week's vacation and we made the journey from Utah to Seoul, and then onto Vladivostok.

There we met Igor (age 5) and got to spend two days with him before we made the four hour journey over paved and frozen mud roads north to Spassk Dalny, the town our children were born in, to meet his sister, Katya (age 3). We fell in love with both of them as soon as we met them, and the day after we met Katya we signed the petition to adopt them.

The adoption process typically took about six to eight weeks, but due to the upcoming holidays it would probably be February before we could return for our court date to finalise the adoption and bring them home.

In February 2010, a woman in Tennessee in the US decided that the Russian boy she had adopted was not a good fit in her life. She sent him alone on a plane back to Moscow with a note saying that she wanted to return him. This caused all adoptions in Russia to be put on hold. We were in limbo not knowing if or when we would be allowed back for our court date and bring our children home.

But the laborious process at home continued. This required us to continually update paperwork and send any requested information or forms as quickly as we could. Finally, on July 9, we received word that our court date had been set for July 23. We had less than two weeks to get everything ready and be back in Vladivostok. It was also the final month of Q3 for Novell, which meant quarter end for the sales force I supported and financial close processes for the company books – the busiest time of the year for me and my team.

We were informed that we should expect to be in Vladivostok for around four weeks. My boss and the sales management I supported were fully aware of the upcoming adoption, and thankfully were very willing to accommodate my travel and court appearances needed to finalise the adoption. I made arrangements to work half days in Russia, and more if needed for the finance close processes.

At last, my husband and I were off to Vladivostok, complete with my laptop to work from a location 17 hours ahead of my normal time zone. We saw our son the day after we arrived and our daughter the following day, just to confirm that we still wanted to adopt them, which of course we did.

We got to court on the morning of July 23 and found out that we were assigned to the judge that had granted the adoption of the boy who had been returned to Russia back in February. Our hearts sank. We answered all her questions through our assigned translator, then returned to our motel to grab some clothes for our daughter. We signed papers stating that we wouldn't leave the country in the next ten days, and were allowed to bring Katya back to the motel with us during the standard ten-day waiting period required before adoptions are declared final.

It was midnight when we returned to Vladivostok from

Spassk Dalny. The power had just gone out in the motel (which looked like it was from decades ago) and the back-up generators were supplying a little light in the hallway and nothing in the rooms as we put Katya to bed for our first night together.

We started getting to know her better over the next ten days while I juggled what was required each day for the sales force I was supporting to close their quarter end deals that final week. Katya was a definite mama's girl for the first week, as we don't think she was used to seeing men very often. We also had the chance to visit our son, David (we changed his name as part of the adoption) twice during the ten-day waiting period, the second time being his 6th birthday. We finally got custody of David on August 3. The sales quarter was over and I was buried under the finance quarter end close processes.

We now had two children who didn't know English, and our Russian vocabulary was very limited, living in a motel room with a small playground outside and not

much else for a four- and six year-old to do inside, while I attempted to meet work deadlines. It was both exciting and stressful but I made it through, sending my husband and children out to the playground in the mornings until the basic wifi would get too busy to be of much use. I'd then work again late at night after the children were asleep and fewer people were using the wifi, and people in my team in the US were also working.

After completing all the required paperwork over the next eight or nine days to get the children out of Russia and into the US, we left Vladivostok on August 12, routing through Tokyo, a 13 hour layover in Honolulu, finally arriving home in Utah on August 13. All in all it was quite an adventure but worth every moment.

I'm so thankful to the company and my team for their overall support and willingness to work around my personal circumstances during the most hectic part of our work schedule. I'll always be grateful to them for their help in enabling us to bring our children home.

We now had two children who didn't know English, and our Russian vocabulary was very limited, living in a motel room while I attempted to meet work deadlines those first few days with the four of us together.

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