

[00:00] **Albek Nurbol**: Thank you for joining me today, Khulan. I'm excited to learn more about work culture in Mongolia, especially at a major company like Oyu Tolgoi. It's impressive how Oyu Tolgoi contributes to the Mongolian economy and the mining sector. I'd love to hear about how the company's culture reflects both Mongolian traditions and modern work practices.

[00:45] **Khulan**: Thank you, Albek. It's a pleasure to speak with you. Oyu Tolgoi is a unique place to work because it blends traditional Mongolian values with the standards of an international company. The mining industry plays a critical role in our economy, and we take great pride in our contribution. Respect for hierarchy and elders is deeply ingrained in Mongolian culture, and this respect carries into the workplace. At the same time, we're encouraged to be proactive, share ideas, and continuously learn. This dynamic mix of tradition and modernity makes Oyu Tolgoi a unique and inspiring place to work.

[02:14] **Albek Nurbol**: That's fascinating. Could you elaborate on how hierarchy works in practice? Is it very formal?

[02:15] **Khulan**: Hierarchy is important in Mongolia, but it's not as rigid as people might think. We respect our elders and those in higher positions, but we also value open communication and inclusiveness. For example, junior employees are encouraged to observe and learn from experienced colleagues, but we're also given chances to contribute ideas. Decisions are often made through consensus, emphasizing harmony and mutual respect. This approach helps maintain good relationships, ensures different viewpoints are considered, and builds a supportive work environment where everyone feels heard.

[04:04] **Albek Nurbol**: It sounds like relationships are central to Mongolian work culture. How do people build trust and connections at work?

[04:05] **Khulan**: Absolutely, relationships are the backbone of our work culture. We often strengthen bonds through shared meals, tea breaks, and social gatherings. Mongolian hospitality is deeply rooted in our culture, so inviting a colleague for a meal or tea is a way to show respect and build trust. This personal connection makes collaboration smoother and more effective, as people are more willing to help and support each other. Over time, this culture of mutual respect creates a sense of belonging and loyalty that extends beyond the workplace.

[06:00] **Albek Nurbol**: What qualities are valued most in leaders at Oyu Tolgoi, and how does leadership differ from other countries?

[06:01] **Khulan:** Strong leadership in Mongolia means being approachable, supportive, and respectful. Leaders are expected to understand their team's needs, motivate them, and lead by example. It's common to see leaders participating in team activities, which helps break down hierarchies and fosters mutual respect. Compared to more hierarchical cultures, Mongolian leaders often balance authority with humility and a personal touch. This approach encourages employees to be proactive and take ownership of their work while feeling supported.

[08:02] **Albek Nurbol:** How does Oyu Tolgoi handle work-life balance and employee well-being?

[08:02] **Khulan:** We take work-life balance very seriously at Oyu Tolgoi. The company promotes flexible schedules, family support programs, and recreational activities to help employees recharge. For those working on-site, a rotation system of 21 days on-site followed by 14 days off ensures adequate rest and quality time with family. This system minimizes burnout and keeps morale high, which ultimately improves productivity. The company also offers wellness programs, including mental health support and stress management workshops.

[09:34] **Albek Nurbol:** What challenges do employees face, and how are they addressed?

[09:35] **Khulan:** Working in the mining industry can be challenging due to long shifts, remote locations, and the demanding nature of the job. Oyu Tolgoi prioritizes safety, providing extensive training and safety protocols. The company also focuses on mental well-being, offering counseling services and stress management programs. To address professional challenges, employees have access to continuous learning, leadership training, and career development opportunities. This support system helps employees thrive in a demanding environment.

[11:08] **Albek Nurbol:** How does Mongolian work culture differ from Russian or other neighboring countries?

[11:09] **Khulan:** Mongolian work culture is distinctive in its emphasis on personal relationships, trust, and flexibility. Unlike the more formal and hierarchical structure often seen in Russian work culture, Mongolian workplaces tend to be more informal, and communication flows more freely. Building trust is essential, and relationships often start with personal connections. Mongolians value open dialogue, and decision-making often considers the input of the entire team. This collaborative and adaptive approach sets Mongolia apart from its neighbors.

[13:11] **Albek Nurbol:** Have you experienced any interesting or surprising situations at work?

[13:11] **Khulan:** Yes, one memorable moment was during a company event when a foreign manager tried Mongolian wrestling, a traditional sport. Although he didn't win, it was a great icebreaker, and everyone had a good laugh. Events like these are common, where we celebrate traditional customs and bond as a team. These moments bring out the lighter side of work, helping us connect on a personal level. It's amazing how cultural exchange can strengthen our work relationships.

[15:08] **Albek Nurbol:** What are some misconceptions foreigners have about working in Mongolia?

[15:09] **Khulan:** Some people think Mongolians are reserved and hard to approach, but we are actually warm, friendly, and welcoming. Building trust may take time, but once established, relationships are deep and genuine. There's also a misconception that Mongolia's work environment is unstructured or lacks professionalism, which isn't true. We value hard work, integrity, and innovation, and the work environment is dynamic and focused on results.

[17:01] **Albek Nurbol:** How does Oyu Tolgoi contribute to the community?

[17:02] **Khulan:** Oyu Tolgoi is committed to supporting local communities through sustainable development. We invest in education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects, often collaborating with local partners. The company prioritizes environmental responsibility, working to minimize its ecological impact. Programs are in place to support local businesses, create jobs, and provide vocational training. This approach helps ensure that the benefits of mining reach the wider community.

[19:02] **Albek Nurbol:** What advice would you give to someone looking to work in Mongolia?

[19:02] **Khulan:** Be open-minded, adaptable, and genuinely interested in building relationships. Respect for local customs, such as hospitality and modesty, goes a long way. Mongolians appreciate sincerity and genuine effort to understand the culture. Learning a few basic Mongolian phrases can also create a good impression. Embrace the experience—you'll find Mongolia's work culture rewarding and enriching.

[21:01] Albek Nurbol: Thank you, Khulan! This has been an insightful conversation.

[21:01] Khulan: My pleasure, Albek! I'm glad to share Mongolian work culture with you. It's been great discussing how our traditions shape the way we work and live.