

The Korea Playbook

The system for doing business with South Korea — 42 lessons from 17 years of operating on the ground. Not survival tips. A method.

17+ years

OPERATING IN
KOREA

€350M

FACILITATED CORRIDOR
TRANSACTIONS

Top Voice

LINKEDIN
KOREA 2025

42 lessons

7 MODULES · UNDER 8
MIN EACH

Korea deals don't die on price. They die on what you can't read.

Every failed Korea entry I've seen in 17 years had one thing in common — and it wasn't the product. Carrefour, Walmart, and Uber didn't fail on strategy or price. They failed reading Korea: the "yes" that means no, the introduction that is actually a loan, the chairman who agrees to the price and still doesn't sign.

The Korea Playbook packages that reading system — the one that took me 17 years to earn — into 42 short video lessons, workbooks you run on your live project, and a monthly line to me. It is deal-first, not culture-trivia-first: entry strategy, partner vetting, negotiation, the failure patterns, and operations.

WHO IT'S FOR

01 Export managers and international BD leads

Korea is on your target list — or already frustrating you — and the trial-and-error budget is your career.

02 Founders and CEOs taking their company into Korea

You've done other markets. Korea is different, and one bad partner choice costs two years.

03 Startups entering the Korean market

Accelerator, K-Startup program, or on your own — you need the operating rules before the runway burns.

04 Anyone starting business with South Korea

You have the product and the intent. What you don't have is 17 years of knowing how this market works.

Honest note on Cohort 1: nobody has taken this course yet — that is what Cohort 1 means. Founding members trade social proof for position: the founding price, modules shipping live over eight weeks shaped by their questions, and a 14-day full-refund guarantee so the risk stays mine.

The 42 lessons

MODULE 1 • 7 LESSONS

How Korea actually works

- 1.1 Why good companies fail in Korea — the course map
- 1.2 체면: face — why the price was never the objection
- 1.3 Hierarchy and the chairman: who actually decides
- 1.4 The indirect no: what "we're discussing internally" means
- 1.5 The introduction economy: access is borrowed, not bought
- 1.6 The dinner-table layer: where deals actually move
- 1.7 Korea ≠ Japan ≠ China: why your Asia playbook fails here

MODULE 2 • 7 LESSONS

Your Korea entry strategy

- 2.1 Is Korea right for you? The readiness test
- 2.2 Entry modes: distributor, agent, JV, direct — real trade-offs
- 2.3 Seoul is not the strategy: city clusters and your industry
- 2.4 Pricing and positioning for the Korean buyer
- 2.5 Regulation, certification, and the traps in old laws
- 2.6 What KOTRA and government programs give you — and don't
- 2.7 Workbook: your one-page Korea entry plan

MODULE 3 • 7 LESSONS

Partners: find, vet, sign

- 3.1 Where real partners are found — not the list you were given
- 3.2 Vetting a Korean distributor: readiness vs. politeness
- 3.3 The first meeting: what's evaluated that nobody says
- 3.4 Structuring the deal: exclusivity, targets, exit clauses
- 3.5 Contracts vs. relationships: what the paper does and doesn't
- 3.6 Red flags: the partner who will waste your two years
- 3.7 Workbook: partner vetting scorecard

MODULE 4 • 6 LESSONS

Negotiate the Korean way

- 4.1 The negotiation timeline: slower — and where it speeds up
- 4.2 Reading yes, no, and maybe: the three Korean "no"s
- 4.3 Face-saving moves that unlock stuck deals
- 4.4 The informal meeting: 회식, golf, coffee — roles and rules
- 4.5 Price talk: when it happens and who raises it
- 4.6 Workbook: negotiation prep sheet

From failure patterns to operations

MODULE 5 • 5 LESSONS

The failure files

- 5.1 Carrefour: misreading the market
- 5.2 Walmart: the wrong playbook at scale
- 5.3 Uber: fighting the system instead of reading it
- 5.4 The unnamed failures: SME patterns from 17 years
- 5.5 Workbook: the pre-mortem checklist for your entry

MODULE 6 • 6 LESSONS

Operate and grow

- 6.1 Managing the partner after signing: cadence, targets, face
- 6.2 When things go wrong: dispute prevention before lawyers
- 6.3 Payment terms, FX, and getting paid
- 6.4 Hiring your first Korean team member or country manager
- 6.5 Growing from the beachhead: retail, online, B2B channels
- 6.6 Workbook: your first-year operating rhythm

BONUS • 4 LESSONS

Your Korea network from zero

- 7.1 Building presence before you land: LinkedIn and the corridor
- 7.2 Trade shows and delegations that actually matter
- 7.3 Chambers, associations, and government doors
- 7.4 When to bring in an operator — what good help looks like

FORMAT

- ✓ 42 video lessons, each under 8 minutes — about 4.5 hours total, built for action between meetings
- ✓ Four deal workbooks: entry plan, partner vetting scorecard, negotiation prep sheet, pre-mortem checklist
- ✓ Templates and scripts for first meetings, follow-ups, and term-sheet checkpoints
- ✓ Private community of operators doing business with Korea right now
- ✓ Monthly live Q&A — bring your real deal, leave with a move
- ✓ Lifetime access, all future updates included

Join as a founding member

Cohort 1 opens with **50 founding seats**. Modules ship live over the first eight weeks — founding members' questions shape the lessons while they're being made — and the monthly Q&A runs from week one.

FOUNDING PRICE · FIRST 50 SEATS

\$299 / lifetime · then \$399

14-day full-refund guarantee, no questions asked — and you keep the workbooks. Most members expense the course as professional training; an invoice for your finance team is provided at purchase.

Sending a team? A company license — 5 seats plus a private 90-minute working session on your actual Korea situation — is \$1,490 per company. Write to laura@thekoreaplaybook.com.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Laura Valls Alvarez has operated in South Korea for over 17 years — entering markets, vetting partners, and sitting on both sides of the table across €350M of facilitated Korea–Europe corridor transactions. She is a LinkedIn Top Voice for Korea (2025) and a speaker for trade organizations including APICCAPS and the K-Beauty Expo (KINTEX). The Playbook is the system behind that work: the reading of the market that decides whether you sign, with whom, and on what terms.

— **Laura Valls Alvarez, Seoul**