



## CORPORATE SUCCESS WITH ENGLISH – AN INSIGHT

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ABSTRACT

The business landscape is ever-changing, and as global divides continue to blur, language and culture play an ever-increasing role. Emerging economies present new opportunities, and corporations often employ people from multiple countries. Many companies understand that they benefit from having multi-lingual employees on their teams. Language and culture skills that have always proved useful for customer service, business development, sales, and general business growth are becoming mandatory components of international business. Still, many companies are unclear about which skills matter the most now, which will be important in the future, and how to develop these skills. In a competitive global marketplace and in the face of increasing business pressures, it has never been more important to communicate effectively with external and internal audiences. Successful communications are increasingly central to the management of an organisation's reputation in all its forms. Spoken and written English has become the means of business communication, not just within the country but also between various countries. With the advent of globalization, the picture took a different turn altogether. Now business deals and conferences are not confined within a single region but it is spread across the globe. But this widespread confinement raised the need for a single language, through which everyone can communicate. English being the most widely spoken language easily became the business language. It also motivates and boosts the morale of an individual to perform better. It not only churns out the best skills within a professional but also promises a growth oriented career. It is significant for an effective interaction with the colleagues which may prove to be beneficial depending upon the organizational environment.

**KEYWORDS**

Communication, Corporate world, Globalization

**INTRODUCTION**

It is the technology that allows people to travel further and faster than ever before. It is the Internet that links people regardless their nationalities and countries they live in. And technology is also the reason why lots of business people are active globally and why more and more entrepreneurs are on the move than ever before. In this world full of the state-of-the-art technology English serves as a uniting element in many situations, giving all entrepreneurs and small companies a better chance on the market and an ideal comparative advantage over those who lack the ability to communicate in this language.

There is no doubt that professional knowledge and experience is essential for entrepreneurs and managers. But reaching and staying at the top requires more than just being knowledgeable and experienced. One of the reasons why some entrepreneurs are successful and some of them are, let us stay optimistic, less successful, may lie in the ability to communicate knowledge in a foreign language. Of course, one has to agree that entrepreneurs and companies can hire interpreters who are both fluent and skilled. However, entrepreneurs cannot expect that people, who are not really involved in a company's matters, will establish relationships in the way loyal and committed employees of the company can. The solution to this problem lies in constant learning and studying the foreign language. But first of all, it is significant that employers realize the importance of learning (Business) English at the workplace.

Over the years, research and needs analyses have produced a wide range of the language-using tasks an employee should be able to tackle in order to deal with the exigencies of the situations which may arise at the workplace. These are:

the ability to communicate appropriately with superiors, colleagues and subordinates, and to representatives of other companies from abroad,

the ability to assist an English-speaking (native or non-native) person when hosting business partners from abroad,

to participate in the social life of the enterprise (e.g. sports and social clubs, etc.) when visiting business partners abroad.

Finally, let us realize that a quarter of the world's population, i.e. 1.2 to 1.5 billion people, can speak English. Moreover, English has become the *lingua franca* of international business. These and many other factors make learning English interesting and useful for all those who might be using it when they enter the exciting world of business.

**Why English Only?**

There's no question that unrestricted multilingualism is inefficient and can prevent important interactions from taking place and get in the way of achieving key goals. The need to tightly coordinate tasks and work with customers and partners worldwide has accelerated the move toward English as the official language of business no matter where companies are headquartered.

Three primary reasons are driving the move toward English as a corporate standard.

**Competitive pressure.**

If you want to buy or sell, you have to be able to communicate with a diverse range of customers, suppliers, and other business partners. If you're lucky, they'll share your native language, but you can't count on it. Companies that fail to devise a language strategy are essentially limiting their growth opportunities to the markets where their language is spoken, clearly putting themselves at a disadvantage to competitors that have adopted English-only policies.

**Globalization of tasks and resources.**

Language differences can cause a bottleneck, a Tower of Babel, as it were, when geographically dispersed employees have to work together to meet corporate goals. An employee from

Belgium may need input from an enterprise in Beirut or Mexico. Without common ground, communication will suffer. Better language comprehension gives employees more first-hand information, which is vital to good decision making. Swiss food giant Nestle saw great efficiency improvements in purchasing and hiring thanks to its enforcement of English as a company standard.

### Change always comes as a shock

No amount of warning and preparation can entirely prevent the psychological blow to employees when proposed change becomes reality. When an employee first learned of FrenchCo's English-only policy, she was excited. She had been communicating in English with non-French partners for some time, and she saw the proposed policy as a positive sign that the company was becoming more international. That is, until she attended a routine meeting that was normally held in French. "I didn't realize that the very first meeting after the rule came out was really going to be in English. It was a shock," she says. She recalls walking into the meeting with a lot of energy, until she noticed the translator headsets.

### Self-confidence erodes

When non-native speakers are forced to communicate in English, they can feel that their worth to the company has been diminished, regardless of their fluency level. "The most difficult thing is to have to admit that one's value as an English speaker overshadows one's real value," a French Company employee says. "For the past 30 years the company did not ask us to develop our foreign-language skills or offer us the opportunity to do so," he points out. "Now, it is difficult to accept the fact that we are disqualified." Employees facing one-language policies often worry that the best jobs will be offered only to those with strong English skills, regardless of content expertise.

### Employees resist.

It's not unusual to hear non-native speakers revert to their own language at the expense of their English-speaking colleagues, often because it's faster and easier to conduct meetings in their mother tongue. Employees in Asia might schedule a global meeting that falls during the middle of the night in England, for instance. In doing so, non-native speakers shift their anxiety and loss of power to native speakers.

Many French Company employees said that when they felt that their relatively poor language skills could become conspicuous and have career-related consequences, they simply stopped contributing to common discourse. "They're afraid to make mistakes," an HR manager at the firm explains, "so they will just not speak at all."

In other cases, documents that are supposed to be composed in English may be written in the mother tongue—as experienced by Hans at GlobalTech—or not written at all. "It's too hard to write in English, so I don't do it!" one GlobalTech employee notes. "And then there's no documentation at all."

### Performance suffers

The bottom line takes a hit when employees stop participating in group settings. Once participation ebbs, processes fall apart. Companies miss out on new ideas that might have been generated in meetings. People don't report costly errors or offer observations about mistakes or questionable decisions. One of the engineers at GlobalTech's Indian office explained that when meetings reverted into German his ability to contribute was cut off. He lost important information, particularly in side exchanges, despite receiving meeting notes afterward. Often those quick asides contained important contextual information, background analyses, or hypotheses about the root cause of a particular problem. He neither participated in the meetings nor learned from the problem-solving discussions.

### An Adoption Framework

Converting the primary language of a business is no small

task. Adoption depends on two key factors: employee buy-in and belief in capacity. Buy-in is the degree to which employees believe that a single language will produce benefits for them or the organization. Belief in their own capacity is the extent to which they are confident that they can gain enough fluency to pass muster. The two dimensions combine to produce four categories of response to the change, as shown in the matrix "Four Types of Employee Response." Ideally, employees would fall in the "inspired" category, those who are excited about the move and confident that they can make the shift. They're optimistic and likely to embrace the challenge. But undoubtedly, some employees will feel "oppressed." Those people don't think the change is a good idea, and they don't think they'll cut it.

The reality is that without buy-in, employees won't bother to brush up their language; without belief, they'll lose hope. Leaders and managers can help employees move from one box to another more easily than you might expect. There are fairly simple strategies that aid the shift, typically involving some combination of a strong psychological boost and practical training. To shift employees from "frustrated" to "inspired," for instance, managers must offer constant encouragement and an array of language-development opportunities. To shift employees from "indifferent" to "inspired," managers must work on improving buy-in—once these employees feel invested in the change, their skills will follow.

### IMPROVING BELIEF IN CAPACITY

Managers can use strategies to help people boost their belief in their ability to develop language proficiency.

#### Offer opportunities to gain experience with language

Whether through education, employment, or living abroad, experience tends to give people the confidence they need to succeed in this task. You can't change past experience, but you can provide opportunities, such as overseas language training and job rotations, that open new doors and allow employees to stretch their skills.

#### Foster positive attitudes

Attitudes are contagious: People's faith in their own capabilities grows when they see others around them—peers, managers, and friends—having positive experiences with the radical change. The reverse is also true, unfortunately. Managers can model good risk-taking behaviours by showing that they too are trying new things, making mistakes, and learning from those mistakes.

#### Use verbal persuasion

Encouragement and positive reinforcement from managers and executives—simple statements like "You can do it" or "I believe in you"—make all the difference. The managers identified talent that the company wanted to retain and tailored special programs for them, all the while cheering them on because of the English-only policy.

#### Encourage good study habits

Companies need to contract with language vendors who specialize in helping employees at various levels of proficiency. The vendors need to be intimately familiar with the company context so that they can guide employees' learning, from how best to allocate their time in improving skills to strategies for composing e-mails in English. Language development to be made part of every job and grants people time during the workday to devote to it. Every morning, employees can be seen flipping through their study books in the company's cafeteria or navigating their e-learning portals.

#### Messaging, messaging, and more messaging

Continual communication from the CEO, executives, and managers is critical. Leaders should stress the importance of globalization in achieving the company's mission and strategy and demonstrate how language supports that. For instance, each week some 120 managers would submit their business reports, and he would reply to each of them pushing them to develop their language skills.

### Internal marketing

Because a language transformation is a multiyear process whose complexity far exceeds most other change efforts, it is crucial to maintain employee buy-in over time. English intranet regularly features employee success stories with emphasis on best practices for increasing language competence. Company-wide meetings are also held monthly to discuss the English-language policy.

### Branding

Managers should encourage people to self-identify as global rather than local employees. It's difficult to develop a global identity with limited exposure to an international environment, of course. Employees now interact and engage with colleagues worldwide through the company's social networking site. Adopting a universal English policy is not the end of leadership challenges posed by global communication. Using English as a business language can damage employee morale, create unhealthy divides between native and non-native speakers, and decrease the overall productivity of team members. Leaders must avoid and soften these potential pitfalls by building an environment in which employees can embrace a global English policy with relative ease. In this way, companies can improve communication and collaboration.

### CONCLUSION

The experience of learning another language has a major contribution to make to the education of all people. It is especially relevant to people, such as those in the various fields of Corporate, who deal professionally with other people. English, which has become, for historical and practical reasons, the major international language, is especially relevant to speakers of other languages since it is most widely spoken, it is the medium for the initial publication of much of the world's research, and, globally, it is the principal medium for international conferences, negotiations and other events. Modern approaches to methodology for the teaching and learning of English (and other languages) are able to develop high levels of practical language skills or proficiency, they can foster a realistic and balanced understanding of English-related culture, and they encourage the development of positive cross-cultural attitudes that are vital in today's globalised world where, as a normal part of everyday life, people intermingle with people of different races, cultures and languages. English language as a key to corporate success has undergone "a sea change into something rich and strange". It has brought an indomitable change in the communication scenario of the corporate world.

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