



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals



BUSINESS FOR DIPLOMATIC ACTION

Building New Bridges to The World

THE METRO LANGUAGE SERIES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OCTOBER 14, 2008

INTRODUCTION

On October 14, 2008 ten representatives from businesses in and around the Washington, D.C. area convened to share their insights about the need for professional-level language and cultural skills in their businesses, be it for global or domestic markets and management. Participants contributed to the *Metro Language Series* which is co-sponsored by The Language Flagship, an initiative of the National Security Education Program at the U.S. Department of Defense; and by Business for Diplomatic Action, a non-partisan, non-profit, private sector organization.

Below please find a brief overview of the participants' experience, insights, and inspiration as it informed the discussion about the actual need for foreign language and cultural skills in the corporate sector and the role business can play in developing global professionals. Participants brought a broad range of experience to this session not only in terms of their responsibilities, but the breadth of industry sectors they represented. As this session was in Washington, D.C. there were a number of defense contractors represented, supporting work overseas that needs to be conducted only by U.S. citizens. One company deploys global waste management systems in Latin America and North Africa. Several companies are involved in high technology development and deployment globally. Participants' professional responsibilities included global business analysis and development; global media and government relations communications; international project and operations management; research; and information technology development. Participants represented the following companies and organizations:

- Aero-Mod, Inc.
- American Systems
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Alutiiq International, LLC
- American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS
- General Dynamics Information Technology
- McNeil Technologies
- Raytheon International, LLC
- U.S.-Algeria Business Council.

SUMMARY OF NOTES

LANGUAGES THAT IMPACT YOUR BUSINESS: WHICH AND HOW?

Participants were asked to list which languages are of interest to their organization, currently (be it for global markets and workplaces; or domestic markets and workplaces). They then listed which languages they felt would be of interest five years from now.

Current Languages Needed

- Farsi
- Pashto
- Urdu
- Dari
- Chinese
- French, Creole – North Africa
- Arabic (dialects: Diridja & Fousa) – North Africa
- English
- Spanish
- Portuguese – Africa, Latin America
- African Continent languages
- Afrikaans/Dutch
- Russian

Languages Needed in the Next Five Years

- Per Aero-Mod: same languages as currently needed (see above), but with an expansion into Eastern Europe (for example, Polish, Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian)
- Korean
- More weight on Chinese
- Need for multilingual speakers – various forms of a language and different languages

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE

Participants were asked to generate, in writing, the top three usages of language skills in their corporations or those of their corporate clients. A discussion with additional points ensued. Note that each point made by a participant, either written or during discussion, is denoted as a separate point. The following is a compilation of those various ideas.

Business Development & Negotiating Contracts

- Negotiations
- Business meetings
- Facilitate local business dealings
- Negotiating contracts
- Business negotiations with top-level officials
- Daily management of overseas offices

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE – CONTINUED

Communications/Public Relations/Marketing/Publications

- Marketing / sales
- Do business communicating in other countries
- Media relations
- Government relations (overseas)
- Customer relationship building
- Public relations
- Language publications (dictionaries, grammars, lexicographers)

Translation

- Translation of documents
- Language analysis to support U.S. intelligence production
- Translation of foreign documents to support business
- Interpreters overseas, especially the Middle East
- Intelligence analysis
- Information processing

Training

- Foreign language training
- Training
- Gather information and enhance understanding
- Provide instruction and training

Employee / Member Recruitment

- Provide people to Federal government with special language requirements
- Recruiting members

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE – CONTINUED

Projects & Services

- Provide services and support
- Post-sales service
- Project development
- Explanations of technical usage of systems

PURPOSE AND LEVEL OF USAGE

Participants were asked to discuss what level of language and cultural skills are needed in their business dealings. The following notes reflect that discussion.

Communications / Public Relations / Marketing / Publications

- Customer relationship building
 - Long term and over time
 - Higher proficiency produces better relationships
 - Faster relationship building
- Need language and technology knowledge (translations simply is not adequate).
You need to know the business and the technology.
- Showing respect, even if you don't speak the language
- Just knowing the language is not enough; you need to know the culture (for example, losing a multi-million dollar deal even though the employee spoke Spanish, but did not know the culture of this particular Latin American country).
- "It just seems to go better" [if you know the language.]
- Publishing – need versus high level of understanding of the language
- Problem: losing this level of lexicographers. [We will not have the technical and domain-specific dictionaries produced if we do not produce language learners who can be high-level translators of dictionaries.]
- Problem: Having Fortune 500 companies in the Middle East without language skills (in general)
- Media interface & government interface are very important and require language and cultural skills.
- Media and government relations need language speakers to keep your priorities on top.

PURPOSE AND LEVEL OF USAGE – CONTINUED

Communications / Public Relations / Marketing / Publications -- continued

- Prejudices and pre-conceived notions affecting communications (for example, American pre-conceived notions of Black Africans through non-verbal communications. Speaking the language knocks down prejudices.)

Business Development & Negotiating Contracts

- Need specific languages
- Lowest bidder with the best value usually gets the contract. It doesn't necessarily depend on the right level of language skills.
- Sometimes knowing the language is a detriment in a negotiation room, especially for defense or sensitive topics
- On the other side, if you don't know the language, you have to rely on a translator, resulting in loss of time and loss of trust – even within the U.S.
- Problem: Dealing with local lawyers to handle contracts can be problematic if you do not know the language or culture sufficiently. For example, your company may experience long-term “mystery pain,” if you do not fully comprehend the legalese in the documents that you are signing and the agreements you are entering in to; particularly in countries where the level of government oversight is not the best.
 - Knowing to pay the “right” people to get what you want for your company
 - Dealing with the “wrong” people can cost you time, money, and trust
 - Cost of doing business is affected if you misunderstand the agreement
 - Loss of time and materials if you don't get the agreement right the first time

Training / Employee / Member Recruitment

- Using interpreters for training: “ain't a whole lotta learnin' going on”
- Our client required training manuals in French
- Language training within the organization brings the advent of businesses offering language
- Understanding your country and regional “tick;” you need language and cultural knowledge
- Challenge to find people willing to go work in dangerous zones
- Using a variety of levels of languages to reach different levels of employees and members; some are basic concepts and some require sophisticated concepts; each calling for a different level of knowledge of the language
- Problem: manuals are currently in English then interpreted overseas. We need to produce training materials a-culturally.

PURPOSE AND LEVEL OF USAGE – CONTINUED

Translation

- Interpreting from any medium
- Support for intelligence community
 - High skill level
 - Translation
 - Cultural skills
 - Need to be a U.S. citizen
- Need people who have been overseas
- Need translation of technical documents and working manuals
- Liberalization of the energy sector in Algeria created a big change that nationalized it, but showed up only in non-Western media. If it had been understood and translated, companies in the West could have moved faster and to their benefit.
- Translation of contracts into Arabic and in French. Need to have an understanding of both.
- Need someone on your own team in addition to a hired interpreter

PURPOSE AND LEVEL OF USAGE – Additional Discussion Points

- Need for strong understanding of culture – formalities important for building relationships
- Communications via email and instant messaging across languages creates opportunity to communicate – be it English or other languages (for example, in Polish)
- Domestic need – dealing with foreign nationals in the U.S. (for example, in our airports)
- Need to be aware of the differences within a language or within one country – cultural nuances
- Establishing the relationship requires cultural understanding even before command of the language
- To use research you do not necessarily need a full understanding of the language
- Workforce management: need language skills in leadership positions regarding workforce effective across countries/culture (for example, acquiring a local company and then bringing it into the “home” corporate culture – standardizing and customizing products – but still need someone with language skills in-country)
- Use in-country nationals at management level with native language and English

PURPOSE AND LEVEL OF USAGE – Additional Discussion Points – CONTINUED

- Marketing product & services
 - Customizing to the language for the website and marketing materials for overseas markets
 - For U.S. market, big opportunity to help market outside company's materials for the U.S.
 - Translation and localization
 - Four "P"s: Product, Place, Price, Promotion
- Product team needs to work with a local marketing team
- Regarding the market-facing component, there are very few "global companies"– they are working locally with local agencies (often starting with an acquisition). It becomes a matter of branding.
- Machine translation
- Profound difference between translation and localization (localization is a huge, growing industry)
- Marketing to a variety of language groups within the U.S. (with nuances per region)

OPPORTUNITY COSTS TO YOUR BUSINESS, CLIENTS, AND STAFF

Participants were asked to discuss what losses they perceived in their business dealings if they do not have adequate language and cultural skills available to them. They were also asked how they can measure and value this loss to their company. The following notes reflect that discussion.

- Time (productivity; salaries of people; potential loss of client/projects)
- Materials (wasted materials on projects that begin, but do not get finished because of misunderstandings)
- Multi-million and multi-billion dollar deals can be lost because of misunderstandings
- Loss of relationships in business
- Foreign military sales
 - National loss, in addition to loss of actual sales
 - Loss of reputation for the business and for the nation
- If we don't have the language capabilities in-house, we don't even get the RFPs
- Loss of potential contracts because the RFPs are published in French and Arabic (the U.S. companies are surpassed)
- Challenge: holding on to your critical talent

OPPORTUNITY COSTS TO YOUR BUSINESS, CLIENTS, AND STAFF – CONTINUED

- Need to be sensitive to your multicultural talent
- Challenge to companies that are providing language support
 - Government causes delays to U.S. (for example, clearance takes too long)
 - Opportunity loss for the government because of delays and requirements
- As language becomes more important within government, we need to make it easier to retain this talented language skill base

CURRENT SOLUTIONS TO YOUR NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Participants were asked to describe how they respond to language and cultural challenges currently. The following notes reflect that discussion.

- Third party agencies
 - In-country managers' knowledge of region, culture and company (Note: language is not a requirement)
 - Using Rosetta Stone to give them some basics in the targeted language
 - Negotiate and translate in English
- Negotiations: Per Raytheon International: some local / some in-country (75%) – all have some language skills; use interpreters for negotiations
- Administration: use third party with language skills
- General Dynamics: outsource to a third party for translation. Most of the workforce is American (low percentage has any language skills). They would be interested in people with language skills. Note: doesn't have the ability to localize our workforce because these are government contracts that require that everyone working on it is a U.S. citizen.
- Relying on global partners. Challenge: security clearance
- Challenge and Solution: Collecting resumés of people with language skills
- Cultural training for executives (for example, Thunderbird University and role playing around different cultural situations; found very useful)

Aero-Mod, Inc.

- Technical and legal work that requires language knowledge is done internally (in French and Spanish)
- Success in Algeria: working with the U.S.-Algeria Business Council that was already there in Algeria to help American companies with Arabic, French and interpretation services
- Working with a business council, like U.S.-Algeria Business Council, aids with government relations to help open doors for American companies

CURRENT SOLUTIONS TO YOUR NEEDS AND CHALLENGES – CONTINUED

Booz Allen Hamilton (consulting)

- “Persia House” example, internally-funded by Booz Allen Hamilton for doing research for the company using all open source materials
- Looking at community colleges and University of Maryland for language support, but their academic schedules do not accommodate business learners very easily
- Employees with language background sent to Berlitz for assessment then training and maintenance
- Berlitz was chosen due to its flexible schedule and low cost

Raytheon International, Inc.

- Use business councils’ services to assist them in country.

RESPONSES TO BUSINESS’ CHALLENGES

As a co-sponsor of the Metro Language Series session, Dr. Robert Slater briefly reviewed what The Language Flagship is doing relative to advanced language acquisition for the next generational of global professionals.

- The Language Flagship: *Creating Global Professionals*
Dr. Robert O. Slater, Director, National Security Education Program
<http://www.thelanguageflagship.org>

A representative of the other co-sponsor, Business for Diplomatic Action, was unfortunately not able to attend this session. Please refer to the following for further information on their work promoting cultural awareness in the business sector.

- Business for Diplomatic Action: *Building New Bridges to the World*
Mr. Thomas Miller, Vice President, Business for Diplomatic Action
<http://www.businessfordiplomaticaction.org>

WHAT ROLES CAN BUSINESS PLAY TO AFFECT CHANGE?

Participants discussed what role the business sector, individual businesses, and business people can play to help prepare the next generation of global professionals. The following notes reflect that discussion.

- Make high schools students aware that business wants language skills
- Need to make the value of language in business much more visible at an early age
 - Do a media piece
 - Do action events with role models

WHAT ROLES CAN BUSINESS PLAY TO AFFECT CHANGE? – CONTINUED

- Influence college professors and deans who are advising students about their career paths and choices. In other words, reach out and influence the professors and advisors to student beyond the traditional language departments so that students come to understand in what ways they can use languages in their professional careers.
- Influence universities to certify language majors without having to focus on literature. This helps with one's resume to have a language certification.
- Business can partner with government agencies to get the word out
- Businesses can offer internships and field projects overseas (for example, Northrup Grummon)
- Have business people go into schools to speak and even teach languages
- K-12 Change: what schools teach languages? It isn't perceived as a priority for students at the K-12 level to learn languages.
(for example, 82 schools in Ohio teaching Chinese. This change is driven by business which seeks to attract Chinese business to Ohio.
- Underline cultural education (as part of Flagship)
- Send Flagship speaker to AFCEA.
- Tap into additional funds for Flagship through a company's corporate citizenship division.
- NGOs and non-profits: encourage them to do work overseas and to put education on their agenda (for example, student exchanges)

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

- Booz Allen has a multi-cultural forum. Staff attend events and presentations and, most importantly, are alerted via email to the Forum about U.S. and foreign language-related, client-supported opportunities. (Dr. Terry Thompson, Principal, Booz Allen Hamilton)
- Clarification of African example of prejudice – two way perceptions between key groups and perceptions of each as to relationships between the other two:

Black Africans ↔ White South Africans ← → U.S. ↔ Black Africans