



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

WHAT STARTS HERE CHANGES THE WORLD

AUSTIN LANGUAGE SUMMIT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

12:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

On September 10, 2009 twenty-three representatives from the corporate sector and business organizations in Austin, Texas convened to share their insights about the need for professional-level language and cultural skills in their companies, be it for global or domestic operations. Participants contributed to the Austin Language Summit which was co-sponsored by The Language Flagship, an initiative of the National Security Education Program at the U.S. Department of Defense; and by the University of Texas, Austin and the Texas Language Roadmap initiative being coordinated there. 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 in terms of their corporate responsibilities including software and high tech development; energy production; food retailers; executive search; legal service, in-home health care services; hospital services; human resource management, global marketing/sales/communications; export assistance; and global and domestic transportation matters. They represented the following companies and organizations dealing with businesses:

- Advanced Micro Devices
- Anue Systems, Inc.
- Austin Asian American Chamber of Commerce
- Baker Botts LLP
- Carte Solutions, Inc.
- Connecttel, Inc.
- cxo360
- Freescale Semiconductor
- Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
- H-E-B
- IBM Business Consulting Services
- UPS
- Harden Health Care Services
- Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism
- Office of Representative Mark Strama
- Seton Family of Hospitals
- Stanton Chase International
- TiE: The Indus Entrepreneurs
- Teco Westinghouse

SUMMARY OF NOTES FROM GROUP DISCUSSION AND EXERCISES

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. Those denoted with an asterick (“**”) were deemed by the group to be of particular importance to business.

Current Languages Needed

- Chinese***
- Spanish*** (domestic and international: trading)
- Spanish, Hindi and Chinese: in spoken form
- Vietnamese (domestic: healthcare, schools, community)
- Korean (domestic)
- Portuguese (international)
- Key Trading Partners: France, Germany, China
- French and German: in written form

Languages Need in the Next Five Years

- Basically the list of current languages needed with an emphasis on Spanish and Chinese***
- For the growing energy sector: Arabic
- European Union: France and Germany (trade)

General Comments about Use of Language

- Challenge of dealing through the “written word” via electronic format
- Language and cultural knowledge
- Communication gap: cultural knowledge - “Everybody speaks English.”
- Being able to adapt in the future to needs for different languages
- Companies don’t see the need: we don’t have time to train
- Chasing low-cost labor: where are they located? For example, if low-cost labor is located in Asia, we need capabilities in those languages.
- Treat people the way they’d like to be treated.
- We will still – at the senior level – conduct business in English; but we need the cultural component
- More and more people are learning English
- Rounding out of a person by knowing another language helps to open mind to other cultures

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE AND LEVELS OF USAGE

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 focused on specific examples of usage. 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 and examples with the largest categories listed in descending order.

Business Development, Relationship Building, and Customer Service

- Business introductions with international companies in Austin
- Business development (outside the U.S.)
- Business development
- Building relationships
 - Even if starting out in one language – switching to English
 - Establish the relationship and credibility
- Remove barriers from the relationship and go directly to the person
- Healthcare: reaching out and building trust among clients
- Health research or emergency room/high-risk areas need languages
- Winning new clients
- Customer service and sales
- HEB: serving our domestic customers
- UPS: Put in an Internet environment - single portal with drop-down menu of languages for our customers
- Employee is providing in-home care to multi-lingual patients

Communication with Clients/Customers, Employees, and in General

- To communicate solutions to customers
- Interact with customers
- Understanding the client need (socialization)
- Communication with clients outside of the U.S.
- Understand clients and customers better
- Communicating and understanding patient concerns and questions regarding care.
- Communicating a physician's plan of care and medications to our home health patients
- Communicating patient care instructions to a family member
- Communicate effectively across cultures
- Communicating with software developers
- Overall communication

- Communicating with foreign scholars (within the business of running a university)

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE AND LEVELS OF USAGE (CON'T.)

Negotiating Contracts

- Multi-lingual negotiation teams (knowing what's going on behind the scenes)
- Contract negotiations with different executives who may not have proficient English skills (Brown)
- Challenge of dealing with a translator (understanding) creates a barrier sometimes
- Negotiation
- Negotiating deals
- Memorializing an agreement
- Memorializing a contract: need to have people who speak both languages well
- Subcontracting for supplies
- Supplier negotiation

Sales and Marketing

- Selling products and services
- Sales/support (customer)
- Selling – need to show that you have what it takes to offer products and services in a foreign language
- Marketing and naming [branding]
- IBM deals with 86 countries worldwide
 - Need language and cultural speakers
 - Need cultural launches
 - Problem: our senior marketing folks are mostly Americans without language or cultural experience needed to draw from the local culture
- “Think globally, execute locally”
- Healthcare: universal signage
- Development of promotional materials
- Support for trade we conduct overseas

Operations, Production and Supplier Management

- Operation processes
- Operations worldwide
- Improve quality of healthcare and increase patient satisfaction scores (Rodriguez)
- Product development

- Coordinating projects
- Reviewing laws and regulations of other jurisdictions

YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS: TOP USAGES FOR LANGUAGE AND LEVELS OF USAGE (CON'T.)

- Engineering design changes
- To discuss internal process improvements
- Regulatory

Advocacy and Working with the Community

- Advocacy
- Engaging members on advocacy issues for business-related issues
- Promoting community-related events
- Helping foreign students with immigration documents
- Conducting research
- Interaction with local Austin parents

Human Resources

- Being part of a global team
- Building team rapport
- Associate development
- H-E-B: Employees / “Partners” in Human Resources
 - Education; health and welfare issues are important for those who work for our company. There is a need to communicate these matters in different languages.
- Teco: Need English and Spanish specifications our employees for product/processes on the floor (domestic)

Translation

- General translation purposes
- Translation of technology documents (product data sheets) and marketing data
- Medical care interpretation and translation

Safety – Generated Ideas from Written Exercise

- Safety
- Safety and security
- Safety documentation

Culture

- Understanding client's culture
- Treat every individual with dignity and respect
- Making traveling overseas easier

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.

- Missed Opportunities, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises
 - Difficulty in providing service
 - Need to partner with others in a foreign country
 - e.g., complying with requirements for shipping product is very expensive for small and medium enterprises. But they will miss a market if they do not comply to it resulting in a potential loss of millions of dollars
- Lower productivity and manufacturing quality because of not having language skills for specifications and training for employees (e.g., circuit board)
- Hotels in Austin geared toward guests from Mexico. There is an expectation of having Spanish on staff. If not there, the guest may not come back.
- UPS: to understand offshore market we need to take advantage of opportunities for cultural and language knowledge. We cannot be confined to a U.S. perspective.
- Lost productivity with multi-lingual design teams
 - Everything had to be written down for future reference
- H-E-B: need to understand the preferences of different ethnic groups to provide what they want
 - Opportunity costs can go into millions of dollars
 - For example, 1 store = \$75k/week for a year until fixed
- Creating an affinity model that attracts customers or clients – within the U.S.
- Legal issues: Example: Korea
 - Business negotiations broke down which means that the project takes longer; and involved (i.e., costs) more people
- Be vigilant in usage of words and terms in a legal setting
 - Dealing in highly specialized fields makes these nuances more critical
- Seton: recruiting nurses – we didn't focus on bilingual nurses, but now we do.
- Hospitals are measured by patient satisfaction
 - Intact measures
 - Spanish speakers rate more favorably, or they will not come back!
- Health: "close calls" because of language issues with patients or family members (for example, "coma" versus "induced coma")
- Potential loss of \$10k/month in the respiratory unit in the hospital because we do not have someone to provide language skills

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.

- Partner Overseas (Anue Systems)
 - We hire to the culture; localize and workaround the language issue
 - We use distributors
 - Sometimes they will do the localization and the marketing
- Anue Systems: most of our customers speak English and are well-educated
 - Legal: work with a U.S. law firm with language and cultural skills
 - Regarding a lower-skilled, bilingual domestic workforce: we now have enough Spanish speakers on staff to manage
 - For documentation: we outsource to global companies to translate
- UPS: our talent pool is large
 - We identify skills in the company (e.g., choose a young employee who is bilingual and bring them along on the professional side. The language piece is an adjunct to the resumé. I expect them to come with it.)
- AMD: strategy to hire in-country except for marketing.
 - Hire translation company with multiple languages to work for whole company.
- IBM: Has a company directory: the “Corporate Blue Pages”
 - It lists one’s language(s)
 - But our first need is content knowledge; one’s language skills are as critical.
- Teco: e.g., We had a quality challenge which was an issue with communication regarding a product in China
 - Direct costs for not solving this issue could be \$500k per year
 - Our answer: hire
- Stanton Chase International (executive search): We have 450 employees, of which 75 or so in the U.S.; the rest are overseas
 - Majority are local nationals or multi-year expatriates with language skills
- Translations and Translators: Pros and Cons
 - Pro: paid only when needed
 - Con: control; not sure if translation is correct
 - Seton: research for a policy regarding translators – expecting a 4th – 6th grade literacy level for Spanish-speaking patients.
 - Work with one company with multiple languages for product introduction in many countries
 - Level of consistency across our website.
 - Freescale goal: getting close to customers “AM/FM” → Lost in Translation
 - Both parties need to take ownership of the project – and the translation used – when wrong, it costs money and time
 - Using our local sales force who are bilingual → closing the deal in the local language
 - Get 2 engineers to adapt to each other; always follow up with written communication
 - Seton: 2 years ago, spent \$1.2M for language services
 - Interpretation for patients
 - 24/7 telephone interpretation
 - Training for bilingual employees
 - Improving English skills for employees
 - Seton is looking to reduce costs but add services

CURRENT SOLUTIONS TO YOUR NEEDS AND CHALLENGES (CON'T.)

- The cost is “unbelievable” to take a U.S. person overseas and it is very rare for a U.S. company to do that anymore.

WHAT ROLES CAN BUSINESS PLAY TO EFFECT 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.

- Call to business leaders in the policy realms
 - School board
 - State and law level
- Build the business case for why we need these policies
 - Use more technology to engage the various communities of interest in Austin
 - Identify organizations with business' focus
- Tough until business calls for language skills → motivators for students
 - It is becoming more important as it becomes a world economy (e.g., for advancement within Teco, I need to understand culture and language of China)
- Motivate the parents to influence the students' choices
- But what language to study? If one learns a language early in life it makes it easier to learn other languages
- Language learning needs to be appropriate to the local and state area
- Barriers to immersion programs in Texas
 - Availability of materials
 - Textbook approval process
- Call for language proficiency level for high school and for university (rather than measuring “seat time” in the classroom)
- Call to start very young (Kindergarten through middle school)
- “We don't know what we don't know” → the educators need to go into businesses and look a language usage specifically in that company
 - Companies want to see the return on investment for hiring people with language skills. e.g., if UPS could reduce its number of employees in one division from 62 to 58 because of the deployment of language skills, that would be a demonstrable and measurable return.
- Seton: building the next generation of healthcare professionals
 - Go into middle schools with information to students and parents
- Austin Area Research Education Organization
- Ethnic groups understand the need for language and cultural knowledge
- NAAO