Vademecum
for employers and employees for language capacity building

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Why this Vademecum?

“Success at trans-hemispheric trade required expertise, contacts [...] commercial background, forging of personal alliances eased by language…”

S.A. Stein,” Plumes, ostrich feathers, Jews and a lost world of global commerce"

“Translation is not just about knowing the right word for things, it is about transposing ideas between languages”

A. Cocchi, 1631, quoted in T. Brook’s “Vermeer's Hat”

“If I am selling to you, I speak your language, aber wenn Du mir etwas verkaufen willst, musst Du Deutsch sprechen”

Willy Brandt, quoted in PIMLICO Report
Why this Vademecum? (2)

2006: ELAN Study: Loss of potential contracts because of lack of language skills = loss of 50+ ME to SMEs = loss to European economy

2008: “Davignon” Report: Europe needs to turn its linguistic diversity into a real competitive advantage

2011: PIMLICO Report: 25+% increase of turnover of 43% of questioned SMEs that used a language strategy; 16% increase of sale turnover of almost ¾ of questioned SMEs.

2012: “Economist”: How cultural and communication barriers affect business: Language is key!

2012: CELAN results: Needs analysis – Available tools & services analysis – On-line analysis tools as support for companies with language needs
Language Strategies for Business

• Language Strategy = ‘the planned adoption of a range of techniques to facilitate effective communication with clients and suppliers abroad’ – ELAN study

Four elements of language management were found to be associated with successful export:
• performance: having a language strategy,
• appointing native speakers,
• recruiting staff with language skills
• using translators/interpreters.

An SME investing in these four elements was calculated to achieve an export sales proportion 44.5% higher than one without these investments.
The Language Value Chain

Business Strategy

Language Needs

In-house Availability

Outside availability: services/tools

Language Strategy

Communication/ Management/ Technical

Integration/ Implementation

Centralised/ decentralised

Market Outreach
Business needs driven approach

Intensity of language needs + Level of development of language strategy

- Where are they most needed?
  e.g. shopfloor, directors etc.
- Which abilities are needed?
  e.g. speaking, writing etc.
- How often are they needed?
  e.g. daily, on travel etc.

In-house skills?
  e.g. multilingual staff
Formal language strategy?
  e.g. training, outsourcing
Use of technology as support?
  e.g. translation tools etc.

Determines the steps to be taken for a full language management strategy
Scenarios

Possible language needs scenarios by grade of intensity:

1. Business meetings/product presentation/networking:
   - Communication skills (speaking) in a Lingua Franca, manager level;
   - editing promotion text in a Lingua Franca; eventually, in language of target country; technical/PR level.

2. Commercial and non-commercial projects:
   - Communication skills (reading, writing and speaking) in a Lingua Franca of the project team: managers, researchers, technicians.
   - Editing project texts in project Lingua Franca: management/technical/PR level

3. Virtual selling of products/services:
   - Multilingual PR: Website/Social Media/Local Media: PR/web editor
   - Multilingual Customer Service: On-line/telephone: native speakers
   - Product descriptions: writing/editing – eventually certified
   - Localisation issues: Website/colour scheme/linguistic nuances

4. Physical presence in target countries
   - Like 3 plus: shopfloor multilingual/regulatory issues/post-selling services
Solutions from real-life cases – example 1

Scenario 1: Business meetings/presentations

• Multilingual staff: bi-lingual; native speakers. CAVEAT: Communication skills are needed, not theoretical language knowledge; business language ≠ language learned at school/HE

• SOLUTIONS:
  – Communication is key using the lingua franca;
  – select staff by their communication skills;
  – take advantage of mobility schemes

• Multilingual staff: writing/editing promotion text/slides

• SOLUTIONS:
  – Hire trainees/stagiaires as native speakers
  – Hire young people that know how to use social media – they can add value to “old-fashioned” communication channels; they can enliven your presentation with new features beyond their language skills
Solutions from real-life cases – example 2

Scenario 2: Selling on-line

• Multilingual website: local language plus EN is a start but often not sufficient; target country language is needed
  • SOLUTIONS:
    • Hire young people (trainees/stagiaires) that are technically savvy and know the required languages
    CAVEAT: Outsourcing is not an option as you will need to continuously update the web content! CAVEAT: Sometimes translation is not sufficient!

• Multilingual customer relationship: telephone/payments
  • SOLUTIONS:
    – Outsource: Let local people handle customer relationships – tricky, needs (quality) control
    – Hire multilingual/bi-lingual staff
    – Invest in eCRM with cross-lingual tools
Tips for Employees

• Companies in particular SMEs do not need linguists, they need – in most of the cases – multilingual communicators

• Languages are more and more a competitive advantage – use it!

• Combine language skills with technology skills:
  • Web editor
  • Web master
  • Social media communicator
  • Use of free on-line tools to improve language skills (machine translation)

• Combine language skills with other “soft” skills:
  • Cultural competences
  • Social competences
The 10 Commandments of Language Strategy

1. Identify your language needs based on your business strategy
2. Take stock of what is available in-house
3. You need a *lingua franca* to communicate – choose the right one depending on the region/market!
4. To create trust, you need to use the client’s language
5. A website in more than one language is a first step – but you need linked capacities, e.g. speakers if you get phone calls, editors to keep the website up-to-date etc.
6. Make a clear distinction between “necessary to conquer the market” and “nice to have” – this is part of the language strategy
7. Inform yourself about existing technology that may support your own language capacity
8. Inform yourself about services (localisation, translation, interpretation etc. and available standards/certificates) before outsourcing
9. Language skills alone are not sufficient – cultural and social competences may be determining for a new business contract!
10. Involve all departments/staff in your language strategy!
Sources & Contacts

www.celan-platform.eu: Report, needs analysis tool
http://celan-project.blogspot.com/: News

Hyperlinks:
ELAN Report
PIMLICO Report
CELAN Companies’ Language Needs Analysis
Size of Language Industry Report
Competing across borders – Report of The Economist Intelligence Unit

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