



Steering Group Report No. 3 December

Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you from Gwyneth, Catherine and Jonathan!

Since our last report we have been recruiting participants for Business Language Champions, and have been delighted with the response.

The businesses selected represent different sectors across the South West region. They all offer excellent examples of profiting from successful development of language and cultural skills and are keen to encourage young people to develop business-focused skills which will serve them well in the future.



In this report we introduce two of our Business Language Champions, Flybe., the UK's no.1 independent regional low fares airline and gro-group international (formerly Grobag), the

award-winning baby sleep brand specialists based in Ashburton, Devon. Case studies of the participating companies are also available to view on our website at: www.rln-southwest.com/blc

Flybe.: growing number of international routes increasing demand for language skills amongst employees

Flybe., based at Exeter International Airport, has become one of the most successful low-cost airlines in a very competitive domestic and European aviation market.

Following its re-branding as a low-cost airline in 2003, the company now operates 101 Routes to 41 UK & European destinations with plans for further expansion. It is now Europe's 3rd largest low cost airline.

It recently announced it will commence flights from Exeter International Airport to Paris Charles de Gaulle in March 2005 providing a 'local gateway to the world' for people in Devon and Cornwall.



A company which truly values employees who speak languages

The company currently employs around 1,500 staff, with over 800 staff based at Exeter International Airport. With a growing European network, it is no surprise therefore that the ability to speak a European language is an increasingly important asset amongst its employees.

Steve Parrott Personnel Director, comments on how knowing a foreign language can increase the employment chances of prospective candidates wanting to work for the company. "If there are two candidates, one who speaks a foreign language and the other not, all other things being equal, it is the person who speaks the language we will employ". It is not only in customer-facing roles in sales and marketing and amongst cabin-crew where speaking a foreign language is advantageous. Steve also states: "Regardless of their role, if an employee speaks a language, which is of use to the company, they will be paid extra".





Flybe. allocates an allowance to contribute towards the cost of employees' language training.

No doubt this provides an incentive amongst staff to learn a language or consider brushing up on languages skills learnt at

gro-group international: languages helping to build overseas success

school or college.

gro-group international, based in Ashburton, started as a family company in September 2000. It specialises in the manufacture and distribution of grobag® baby sleeping bags, other sleep related nursery products and maternity products.

Its progress and success have been remarkable. The company has established itself with the UK's top baby sleeping bag brand, selling over 30,000 grobag® baby sleeping bags a month. It has also set up joint venture companies in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Spain to market and sell its products.

gro-group uk was recently awarded the coveted Gold Mother & Baby Award for Best Nursery Item in a competition judged by a panel of Mother & Baby readers.



Languages and culture key in building overseas relationships with distributors



Languages play a key role in gro-group international's overseas sales strategy, setting up joint ventures with foreign companies to market and sell its products. Geraldine Bedford, Commercial Co-ordinator, comments: "Languages help build relationships with overseas staff and potential distributors".

The company believes that languages are not the only important issue in devising successful strategies to do business overseas. Geraldine stresses: "Understanding other cultures is also important for business opportunities". The importance of being aware of subtle cultural differences can ultimately dictate whether or not successful working relationships can be formed with overseas customers.

A company with an increasing number of linguists

The company now has five employees at its head office in Ashburton who have language skills, including the Managing Director, who is a French national. The company encourages its staff to learn other languages, which can form part of staff's ongoing training. Geraldine is currently learning Spanish as part of her own development.

gro-group international hopes to build upon its success abroad by targeting more Euro-

pean markets. The company is now beginning to look for potential distributors in European countries to achieve this.



The company looks to recruit people with language skills, particularly in the areas of international marketing and export sales, and has a good relationship with a local recruitment agency, who understand the growing company's specific needs.

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