

## Steering Group Report No. 4 January 2005

Welcome to the slightly belated January RLN SW Steering Group Report.

### New website launched



We can finally bring you the good news that the new version of the RLN SW website is online at [www.rln-southwest.com](http://www.rln-southwest.com). This went live on Thursday 3rd February. It is still very new and content is being added every day. We hope that you will find it useful, accessible and easy to navigate. If you have any comments, or if you experience any problems in using the site, we would be very glad to hear from you - contact Catherine on 01392 264371, [catherine.dawson@rln-southwest.com](mailto:catherine.dawson@rln-southwest.com).

We are the first of the (R)LN's to have our new website go live - another first for the South West following our piloting of the Business Language Champions programme.

### BLIS Jobs success for South West

Another recent success is that the BLIS Jobs candidate database hit the 1,000 mark for the first time (1,072 candidates recorded at the end of the month), and the UK sub-region with the most candidates registered is Devon and Cornwall, with 56.

This proves our message that companies don't have to go to London to find people with language skills: the South West has no shortage of linguists who are actively looking for work. As our well-subscribed



BLIS Professionals database of language and cultural service providers shows, language and cultural provision is a strength in this region. The task is to highlight this to businesses and to continue to promote the benefits of developing a foreign language and cultural strategy. Our new website should aid us in this, and we would be delighted if you could help to spread the word.

January saw 47 new vacancies added to BLIS Jobs, the highest monthly total to date. The total visits for the whole BLIS site in January were 7,180, which is the first time monthly visits have been over 7,000.

A new version of the BLIS Services website is almost ready to go live, which will offer features such as single registration for all services, making the site easier to use. All services continue to be free of charge.

### Language skills critical to business success in global marketplace - new survey

The ability to speak more than one language is critical to succeed in business in Europe, Asia and Latin America, according to a survey of executive recruiters.

The survey by HR consultants Korn/Ferry International shows nearly 85 percent of recruiters in Europe, 88 per cent of recruiters in Asia and 95 percent of recruiters in Latin America agreed that being at least bilingual is critical to succeed in today's business environment. Among recruiters in North America, that percentage was just 34 percent.

In terms of which foreign language capabilities are in most frequent demand by employers, recruiters in Asia and Latin America overwhelmingly chose English (88 per cent). Recruiters in North America selected Spanish (79 percent), French (43 per cent) and Mandarin Chinese (30 per cent).

Korn/Ferry UK managing director, Giles Crewdson, said: "These findings suggest that

although English remains the dominant language of international business, multilingual executives clearly have a competitive advantage."

## New book aims to help companies prepare for international communications barriers



Professor Stephen Hagen

Prof Stephen Hagen of Warwick University has published a new book called Language and Culture in British Business.

The book looks at all the existing surveys regarding barriers to trade due to deficient language skills and lack of cultural knowledge. It also looks at the rest of the Europe and what businesses there do as regards language and culture.

The main language problems arise when there is a phone call or in a meeting or negotiating. Basically, when a spontaneous response is needed. Making presentations or providing technical literature is far less of a problem because it is anticipated.

There are many case studies and quotes throughout the book regarding both the use of English and cultural awareness. These include:

"Our Japanese agent speaks English, but not as well as he thinks he does."

"We did not appreciate the 'getting to know you' culture before going in for the hard sell (in the Pacific Rim)"

"Total lack of understanding of punctuality by them"

Companies featured adopt a wide range of measures to solve their problems. These include:

- Using software to translate an e-mail
- Hiring a chauffeur-cum-translator via the embassy
- Planning a long term language strategy
- Studying the foreign culture in advance of going abroad to avoid the more obvious mistakes

Stephen's advice to companies who want to expand international trade is to adopt a range of tactics amounting to a company-wide embedded international communications strategy.

## Jonathan's last month at RLN SW

In October, Jonathan Parry-Jones joined RLN SW on the Graduate Business Partnership scheme. His five months with us comes to an end in February. During this time, Jonathan has been a valuable, cheerful member of the team, particularly contributing to Business Language Champions and BLIS Services. Last week he presented to 30 people from business, Exeter University, and other GBP participants about RLN SW. We wish Jonathan well in his future career and hope that he will stay in touch. This is what he had to say about his placement:

"I began working at the Regional Language Network South West last October on a Graduate Business Partnership scheme organised by Exeter University. My time at the RLN has been a very rewarding experience and has helped me to focus on transferring the knowledge and skills I have gained from my education into a workplace environment.

"Undecided on my future career path after graduating from Sheffield University and the College of Law, Chester, I saw the placement as an immense opportunity, especially the chance to work for an organisation whose primary aim is to raise awareness about language and culture, which complemented my background as a language graduate.

"I have been made to feel a valued member of the organisation and have learnt a considerable amount in a short period of time. I have enjoyed the variety of work I have been involved with, especially working on Business Language Champions and managing the BLIS Services database.

"I believe I can take a lot from the placement that will stand me in very good stead for the future. Firstly, I feel that my communications skills have improved tremendously which has increased my confidence and ability to deal with people. The placement has also taught me a lot about workplace culture and expectations, especially teamwork and the importance of being able to get on with colleagues. I believe these will all contribute to the future career path I choose to embark upon as either a solicitor or barrister."

### Future monthly reports

Comments on this report and suggestions for content of future reports would be very welcome from all members. Please send them to Catherine.

### Staff contacts

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