

Report No. 9, August 2005

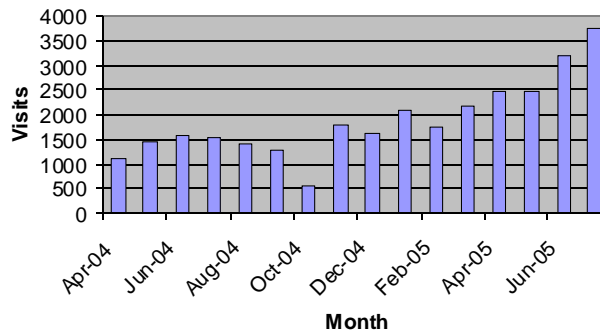
RLN South West Website update

The new RLN SW website was launched almost 6 months ago, and our figures show that it has been well received.

The website provides basic information on the RLN and for each of the RLN's key audiences: employers, language service providers, education, partners and individual linguists. In addition, it provides:

- Current news and events pages
- Downloads of relevant regional documents
- All RLN SW publications and "How-to" guides
- Individual downloadable country briefings
- A resource of over 50 business case studies which highlight best practice in international communications
- Indexed links to further information and partner organisations.
- Monthly reports to steering group and stakeholders
- An e-newsletter: first issue to be sent out September 2005
- (From August 2005) Area for RLN SW hubs to post and share information

RLN SW web visits



Key figures

Since the new site went live in March 05, visits to the website have shown a month-on-month increase, with a record 3743 visits in July 2005, more than two-and-a-half times the monthly average of the former website.

The directory of case studies has proved to be a particularly popular addition to the site. In July 2005, visitors to the site viewed the case studies 1,285 times. Visits to this part of the site have increased by 30% every month since the case studies section was created in April, and we expect this trend to continue, particularly as it has not yet been aggressively publicised.

The most popular downloads are:

1. South West Regional International Trade Strategy

2. "How-To Guides" – in particular "Basic International Communications"
3. RLN SW monthly reports

The website has become an important part of RLN SW's publicity and delivery, and we continue to add to its content monthly. The first issue of the e-newsletter in September targeting our entire database will bring even more visitors, and we will support this with publicity to business networks as the new BLIS Services website also becomes ready for use.

CBI raises alarm as drop in language A levels continues

This month's A Level results show that just one in 25 students study a modern language at A Level with very few studying those needed by business in the increasingly globalised world - such as Mandarin, Russian or Spanish. Schools are also no longer

required to offer a language subject while in Europe pupils study two foreign languages for at least a year.



The number of 16 to 18-year-olds studying a language A Level decreased by a fifth between 1999 and 2004 with German and French down 34 and 30 per cent respectively. Last year just 451 people in England and Wales took A Level Russian, 1,677 studied Chinese and 4,650 learned Spanish.

[Sir Digby Jones, Director-General of the CBI](#), said: "The strength and future success of the UK economy relies on the education system producing students of a high calibre in disciplines like science and languages.

"Youngsters need to be equipped with the skills to make their way in the competitive globalised economy of the 21st century and business must have them if it is to meet the onslaught from countries like China and India. China alone produces almost 300,000 high quality science and engineering graduates each year.

"Anyone who can clinch a deal in Argentina because of a grasp of Spanish, give directions to an Italian family visiting a tourist information

office in the Lake District or work with a Chinese sporting delegation in London for the Olympics, will be of immense value to business and Britain.

"These issues must be tackled by Government, teachers, careers advisors and companies - we cannot allow it to blight the UK's future economic success."

Figures released earlier this week from the 2005 CBI/ Pertemps Employment Trends Survey, due to be published in full in the Autumn, reveal significant employer dissatisfaction (74%) with the language capability of school-leavers. At graduate level dissatisfaction among employers was 54%. One fifth of companies believed they had lost business because of a lack of language and cultural skills, while one quarter had experienced problems handling international business.

This echoes RLN findings in the South West and nationally.

[Isabella Moore, Director of CILT, The National Centre for Languages](#), said "This is a long overdue acknowledgement from British business that language skills matter, as an important element of competitiveness for the country and for the regions. Our research shows that companies who are proactive in developing language skills can increase their export turnover dramatically. As all businesses know it is much more cost effective to obtain new contracts from existing customers, and that can only be achieved by developing relationships. With overseas customers, that means the

ability to communicate with them in their own language."

Hubs starting second phase

After slightly revising the tender for the sub regional hubs the three original consultants have been reappointed.

Philada Rogers and James Piriou in Dorset, Peter Gold in the West of England and David Head, Jacqui Hope and Valentina de Micheli in Devon and Cornwall.

Between them the hubs have to visit 90 businesses, take part in five or more events in their area and speak to at least 220 people.

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