

White Paper

Language training:

Advice for achieving optimum ROI



ROI

Dialog/FluentRussia

More Than Just Languages

Advice for optimal ROI

Year after year, companies invest in the language skills of their employees, mainly English.

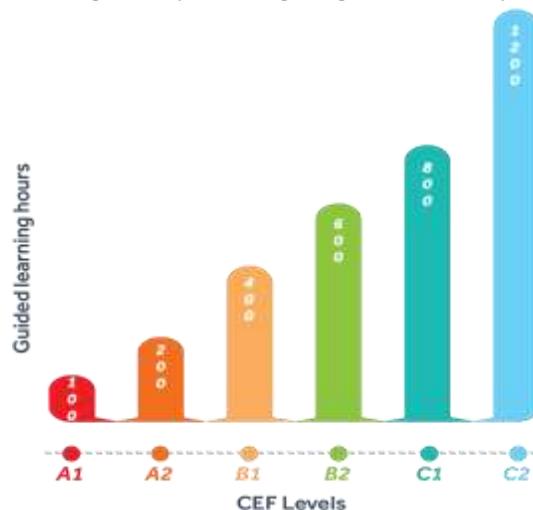
It is not uncommon to find that the returns on these investments are never made and that the employees leave the company before even reaching the level of English that allows them to be wholly operational.

This document will examine whether it is possible to secure a return on your investment by better targeting which employees to train as well as using more efficient training methods, such as social learning.

Define the required level of your employees

The required level of English is the level at which an employee can fully carry out responsibilities for the company.

If a job requires no communication in English, neither written nor spoken, the required level is zero. On the other hand, if communication in English is required, even occasionally the level B1 (independent user) on the Common European Framework (CEF) scale will be necessary (levels A1 and A2 being merely learning stages on the way towards B1).



If we look at the CEF figures, we note that around 300 hours of training by traditional methods are required for an employee at false beginner level (A1) to

reach level B1: a great many resources would need to be employed for this to be achieved.

02

It is, therefore, necessary to begin by defining, for each category of employee, the required level of English:

- Level B1 is satisfactory for employees who are rarely confronted with English,
- Employees regularly required to use English must, at least, be at level B2,
- Employees who need to be able to convince, explain or maintain professional relationships in English must be at level C1,
- Level C2 is required only for those whose ability to communicate perfectly in English is of strategic importance for the business.

We can also define for each employee required levels in four different categories:

- Required reading comprehension level
- Required written expression level
- Required listening comprehension level
- Required spoken expression level

Of course, each of these skills is linked to the others but the time and money invested can vary greatly depending upon the relative importance accorded any one of these skills.

Measuring the actual level of your employees

Of course, it is possible to have all employees who use English sit a test such as the TOEIC® or Bulats® at the outset. You can also use the level testing of e-learning solutions service providers who provide equivalence statistics for the main evaluation scales.

The evaluation of reading and listening comprehension skills is generally automated and thus not very costly. However, reliable evaluation of spoken and written expression requires the support of teachers and can consequently represent a non-negligible expense.

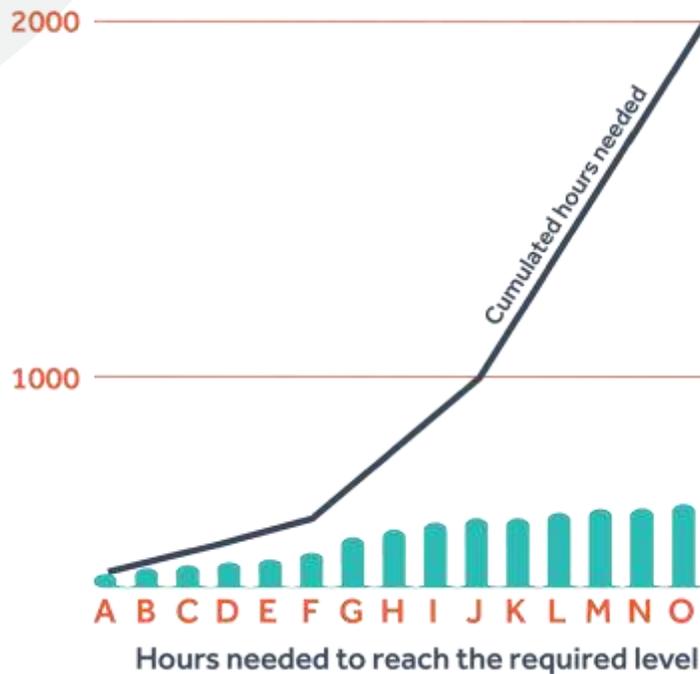
Generally speaking, there is a close correlation between the levels of comprehension and expression, it is possible to make do with deducing the levels of expression when these skills are not of top priority.

It is therefore important to define which employees have particular need for spoken and/ or written expression skills so that they can be specifically tested.

Give priority to training employees who are closer to their required level

Once you have defined the target levels for each of your employees and you are aware of their current levels; budgetary allocations should be prioritised for those who are closest to their required level.

Simulation on a fictional group Number of hours of training necessary



In the above example 15 fictional employees (from A to O) have been tested and placed in order of number of hours required to reach the required level, from least to most hours.

The company could rapidly train 10 employees (from A to J) to great effect, with a budget equivalent to 1000 training hours. It would need to double the budget to train the other 5 employees.

From one employee to another, the attainment of the required level will have a different impact on the productivity of the business. To take this into account it is recommended that you attribute a weighting to each employee. The employees can then be ranked in order that those with the highest ranking be trained as a priority.

Intensify the training using technology

When it is not possible for the learner to spend more than 60 hours a year in face-to-face training, it is possible to spend up to 150 hours a year on a blended learning package, thanks to the greater flexibility of this kind of training (any time, any place and with much shorter sessions).

Starting at level B1 or B2 it becomes necessary to practice more intensively in order to improve. This is where practicing oral and written expression often becomes very expensive for companies, who have to increase the number of face-to-face or telephone lessons with teachers.

There is a more economical method that allows learners to get this oral practice: social learning.

Add value to your internal resources by using social learning

A good social learning system is more than capable of getting your employees intensively communicating in English as soon as they attain level B1 and can be a good substitute for expensive interactions with a teacher.

According to the Eldon Akwall study, classic e-learning tools give a rate of recall of 50%. Social learning enables this number to reach as high as 95%.

You have, within your company, some very important but underutilised training resources: the employees themselves!

Your employees, your peers can also, in certain circumstances, take on the following roles:

YOU REMEMBER



Learning partner
Forum manager
Mentor
Expert

Whatever role they take on, they become both providers of and recipients of social learning.

LEARNING PARTNERS

Peers are an almost inexhaustible source of discussion in English as well as of communal learning activities (for example: role play where one is the client and the other the supplier).

You may think that one learner is not a logical choice to contribute to the training of another learner.

What we call peers could be other employees, managers and team leaders of all nationalities; they are actually typical of the kind international colleagues your employees need to correspond with in the course of their international activity.

They are therefore, exactly the kind of individuals who will aid progress. In fact, in international business exchanges, 73% of those involved are not English mother tongue.

“We learn alone, but never without others”

P. Carré

FORUM MANAGER

A forum manager facilitates, in English, a professional forum which enables participants to develop skills in English that are linked to their professional activities. Whether or not the forum manager is English mother tongue he/ she will develop professional skills as well as the capacity to pass them on.

MENTOR

A mentor has more of an individual relationship with a smaller number of colleagues and is generally a more experienced professional who is willing to share knowledge and know-how in English, and to guide colleagues in their professional development.

EXPERT

An expert is able to give the benefit of her/ his professional expertise to a group of learners whether it be via conferences, debates or specialist documents. This person is a precious resource for the forum manager.

All employees of level C1 and C2 are possible candidates to take on the role of forum manager, mentor or expert.

Conclusion

To ensure that you optimise your return on investment, we recommend that you respect 5 major rules:

- Define the required level of English for each one of your employees,
- Measure their current level,
- Prioritise the training of employees who are closer to their desired level whilst taking into account the impact that each of them can have on business productivity,
- Intensify the training by using technology,
- Harness the knowledge of more advanced employees to boost social learning.

Address:

Sushchevskiy val Street, 43, Building 2

Moscow, Russia 127018