

Bevex – making an exhibition of itself in Italian, French, German and Spanish

Based in Coalville, Leicestershire, Bevex Ltd is a manufacturer of bespoke insulated beverage conveyance systems. It numbers blue-chip companies like Coca-Cola and McDonalds among its clients, and nearly half of its business comes from export, mainly to the EU and Scandinavia. With plans to extend export sales to other parts of the world, languages are playing a big part in the organisation's future.

Languages are a pre prerequisite

"I'm surprised that more companies don't view languages as a prerequisite for customer-facing export staff." These are the words of Sally Joyce who is office manager at Bevex and whose own language skills are a key reason for the company's export success. Sally was recruited by the company for her language and customer service skills. She is fluent in German and French and also speaks Italian and Spanish.

"I really enjoy using languages in my work," explains Sally. "And customers

Communication breakdowns can mean costly failure

Howard Whitham, the company's MD and who is also a member of the RLN Advisory Board, agrees wholeheartedly. "I have worked in companies before where valuable business has been lost because of an unwillingness to communicate in anything but English," he says. "This was a particular problem in the Far East, where a breakdown in communication meant the company's key message was being lost, resulting in the costly failure of the venture."

This looks very unlikely to happen at Bevex, where Sally's skills are proving vital in winning new business and cementing current relationships. "It sounds simplistic," says Howard, "but the fact is that customers find it easier to communicate with us and understand our company if we speak to them in their own language."

And the firm is very aware that not everyone out there does speak English. World-wide, 75% of the population doesn't speak it, and even in mainland Europe the situation can be complicated, as Howard explains: "Very often with our continental European customers, many of the senior and middle managers will have good competence in English, but the technicians and operators who will be the end-users of our equipment do not." To this end, Bevex has made use of translation agencies who have produced instruction manuals and other user documentation in the relevant language.



On hand, on stand

The firm has targeted Spain and the Spanish-speaking world as its main area for development in 2005; its main strategy for acquiring new business is through international exhibitions and trade fairs. The company will be attending an important fair in Germany in November 2004 and has made sure that its literature will be available in French, German and Spanish as well as English. And Sally Joyce will be present to impress visitors to the Bevex stand with her multilingual talents as well as with her in-depth product knowledge, a combination that the company hopes will bring in further new export customers to assure its future growth.

Contacts

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Regional Language Network East Midlands helps East Midlands companies access more international trade opportunities by breaking down language and cultural barriers. The RLN offers a central point of contact for information and support on international communications, and provides valuable commercial information through events, newsletters and briefings.

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