



INTERKONSULT – a winning formula, from Kazakhstan to Venezuela

INTERKONSULT Limited is a consulting practice based in Nottingham and was established to provide advanced engineering and evaluation techniques for the mining industry. The company also works in other fields such as construction, environmental remediation, conservation and archaeology. The firm was founded by Dr Peter Graham, who has over 20 years' international experience in managing and resolving subsurface engineering issues.

The company employs a group of highly qualified professionals, who are supported by a network of specialists to provide the resources for any particular project. Seven out of ten of these projects are undertaken outside the UK, making it heavily reliant on the language capability of its staff, associates, and consultants. The firm operates through overseas offices in Spain, the Dominican Republic and India, where its staff come from a variety of professional backgrounds and offer competences in a variety of languages.

Within the core staff and associates, there exists the capability to work in French, German, Catalan, Spanish and Russian; founder Peter Graham is bilingual, speaking English and German, and is also fluent in Spanish, having spent time living and working in Central America. In addition, some of the material on the company's website is available in Spanish.

“We have long recognised the importance of languages in our business strategy,” says Peter. “Currently we are active in countries as far apart as Spain, the Dominican Republic, Kazakhstan and Venezuela, and the majority of our designs and reports are prepared and presented in the client's mother tongue.”

To win or not to win

Peter firmly believes that the language skills available within the company have often made the difference between winning a contract and not. With major assignments worth in excess of £50,000, there is good reason to make sure that they put these capabilities to good use. The work they have undertaken in Spain and Latin America

is carried out entirely in Spanish, and INTERKONSULT could not commit to this work if it did not have good in-house Spanish competence. Peter comments: "In our market, being successful depends on taking advantage of opportunities. We actively look for problems, and then offer organisations the solutions to tackle them. Our language skills mean we can network more effectively to identify opportunities, can offer better solutions, and can deliver these solutions in our customers' own language."

Most of INTERKONSULT's projects are long-term, and as a consequence it is important to make a good impression with each piece of work done. In this way, the company stands the best chance of winning repeat contracts for the same project. Peter reflects: "The importance of communicating well with clients in their own language, and developing a good understanding of local culture, cannot be overestimated. Technical expertise alone is not enough: in our experience, customers value above all someone who can talk to them clearly, keep things simple and help them understand the issues. In the end, it is our ability to build a good client-consultant relationship that sets us apart from our competitors and helps us win repeat business."

New recruits keen to develop language skills

Environment and conservation expert Shani Lambert is the newest recruit to the INTERKONSULT team. So far she has been involved in UK-based projects, but Peter is keen to expand his company's work in the areas of her particular expertise. This will mean looking overseas for suitable projects, and Shani is about to embark on an intensive Spanish language course in preparation for future work in Spanish-speaking countries. "There is great potential for us to expand the company's portfolio and get involved in some fascinating and worthwhile projects, particularly in Latin America. Learning Spanish will be a good opportunity for my own personal development and will mean I can participate in international projects," says Shani.

Languages first, technical training second

Expansion of the team in Nottingham is part of INTERKONSULT's future plans, and language skills will be high on Dr Peter Graham's checklist for recruiting new consultants. He remarks: "I would not be afraid to recruit a candidate with a strong language background and appropriate profile, and offer them subsequent technical training. I would have major reservations about taking on a technical expert with no linguistic ability or aptitude in our field of work."

<p>Contacts</p> <p>INTERKONSULT www.interkonsult.co.uk</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>RLN East Midlands, UK Trade and Investment, International Trade Centre, Innovation House, Riverside Park, Raynesway, Derby, DE21 7BF.</p> <p>Tel: 01332 826432 www.rln-eastmidlands.com</p>
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