

Case Study One – Intensive Training in China

Background

Global companies are continuing to integrate their operations and support systems on a worldwide basis. Besides driving the need for competent communication in English by staff at all levels; there has been an increase in the number of staff sent from China for overseas postings. The reasons for these postings range from taking up senior management positions across the APAC region to short assignments to provide technical support on projects.

As a training provider we have been involved in a number of projects designed to rapidly improve staff's language ability and provide insight into the new cultures they will experience on their postings. Recent examples of such intensive programs include bankers and analysts from a leading corporate bank on long-term assignments to Tokyo and the US, several groups of engineers traveling to the US for extensive technical training and projects, and groups of junior managers from a major shipping and logistics firm enrolled on management development programs in Denmark.

For the purpose of this study we will look in detail at the latter example of the Denmark posting.

Issues

The target group consisted of around 30 junior managers located in offices in Shanghai, Qingdao and Shenzhen. Although there was some variation in language level, the majority were already fairly competent speakers of English and used English regularly in their daily communications. The main concern for the client was that the trainees need to be able to express their ideas persuasively during the management training sessions and actively participate in social activities included in their program. In addition, none of the staff had any previous experience of living in a foreign country, so there was a need to explore and discuss cultural issues that might arise whilst living in Denmark.

Availability was limited as they were undergoing simultaneous technical training whilst handling their daily workload and timing was also an important factor as their training program in Denmark had already been scheduled.

Solutions

Language Key was able to draw on our extensive experience with this type of training and our seven-year relationship with the client to quickly put together a program that addressed their objectives. The main areas covered on the courses included socializing, expressing opinions and participating in discussions, presenting ideas persuasively and insights into Danish culture. The language content was tailored to the participants' level and opportunities for extended discussion on business and social topics were provided in each session.

The courses were held simultaneously in the three cities over the weekends for eight hours each day to minimize disruption to the trainees existing commitments. Language Key was able to ensure the quality and consistency of delivery by using our regular trainers in Shanghai and Shenzhen. For Qingdao, the best solution proved to be to dispatch one of our trainers from Shanghai. Although we have worked with trainers in Qingdao before, deploying

a fulltime trainer from Shanghai reassured the client that we would be able to maintain the high quality of training they had come to expect from Language Key.

Key Factors to Success

Several factors lead to the success of this program. High on the list is our experience in developing and delivering intensive language programs and the use of tailored materials that have been developed by our team of expert trainers specifically for Chinese learners of English. These materials were supplemented with a variety of media and activities to support the learning objectives and provided for a stimulating and productive training experience.

However, great resources mean little without talented trainers who know how to use them to best effect and take advantage of the longer periods of interaction that intensive training provides. In achieving this goal we were able to call on some of our most experienced trainers and, by deploying a fulltime trainer from Shanghai, we were able to plug a gap in our coverage when it was not possible to schedule a local trainer in Qingdao with similar experience. With intensive training sessions lasting up to eight hours a day it was essential that the facilitator be creative enough to maximize the advantages this type of scheduling provides for extended discussions, activities and practice.

On the logistics side there are obvious advantages to using one provider for all locations. Scheduling is simplified, materials are standardized across all locations and evaluation reports are consistent. Additional benefits to the client are increased value through economies of scale and the guarantee of quality that comes from using a trusted training provider in locations where there are no local providers have the experience and competence to deliver on such objectives.

How can this help me?

If your company has staff about to be placed overseas for short or extended assignments this type of training is an essential tool to ensuring the success of their assignment. Programs can be designed based on your objectives to incorporate both language proficiency and cultural understanding specific to the location. Looking at things from the opposite direction, intensive training can also be effective in preparing staff in local offices to communicate effectively with foreign managers, whether they are just visiting for an important meeting or conference, or staying on to help run the operation on a permanent basis.

Language Key has delivered intensive programs for clients in the banking, engineering, shipping, telecommunications and technology industries and has the experience you need to develop an effective solution to your language training needs.