

Opportunists would **Communicate in English**

If you are a first-time exporter or going on a market visit for the first time, then it is important to get the best advice. Speak to Regional Language Network and your International Trade Adviser.

First impressions count. It is important to consider very carefully how you are going to present yourself and your company. This means in person at meetings and exhibitions, and in marketing and technical documentation. Is your written material clear and easily understandable?

Some companies still rely on the notion that English is the “language of international business”. Regional Language Network argues that, however well they may think they are performing, things would be much better if they embraced the development of international communication skills.

Language skills increase your competitiveness. Are you competing with another company whose people speak the customer’s language? Ask yourself, who would you give the business to?

It’s easy to make simple assumptions; something seemingly straightforward could cause misunderstanding. For example, dates and numbering – is it clear for your potential international business partner whether you want delivery on 3/10 or 10/3, for example – October 3rd or March 10th? A late delivery due to misunderstanding caused by an international communication barrier could cost you a repeat order.

One in Five North East businesses is aware of losing business as a result of a lack of language skills

(RLN)

While people in many countries do learn English as their second language, 75 per cent of the world’s population speaks no English at all.

While we counsel strongly against this do-nothing approach, we would observe that using body language and talking more slowly may be helpful tactics when conducting meetings in English with overseas partners or clients.

Always worth a look

■ www.rln-northeast.com

■ www.solvit.org.uk