



Business

Global Language Learning:

Employee Engagement and Business
Performance Game Changer



AN HR DIVE PLAYBOOK



When augmenting the benefits package for your organization, it's natural to focus on traditional perks that employees have come to expect: PTO, health insurance, and maybe a tuition assistance credit here or there. But if you're looking for creative and effective ways to stimulate employee engagement while also driving business results, you'll want to consider the powerful impact of offering language-learning opportunities.

Why language learning? It offers immediate and long-term benefits to both employees and employers. Research shows that organizations that offer access

to language learning see an increase in employee engagement factors like loyalty, morale, and productivity, which in turn boosts business performance factors such as customer satisfaction and internal communications.

Where's the connection? And how can you reproduce these benefits within your organization? This playbook offers a deeper look at why language learning has such a positive influence on employee engagement and business performance, as well as step-by-step instructions for implementing a language-learning program in your organization.

Organizations that offer language learning see an **increase in employee loyalty, morale and productivity.**



Language Learning Stimulates Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a business-critical corporate responsibility. But while the [2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report](#) reveals that almost 80 percent of executives rated employee engagement as “very important” or “important,” only 22 percent of those executives felt their companies were excellent at building employee experience. To paint an even bleaker picture, despite the fact that employee engagement is an integral driver of company performance and employee productivity, a [2015 Gallup poll](#) reveals that only 13 percent of employees worldwide are engaged in the work they do.

“We all want to do well at work. We want to achieve things, and work in a meaningful workplace,” says Jack Marmorstein, product and sales strategy principal for Rosetta Stone. “But we’re trying to do that in an

inevitably multicultural, multilingual, international world. Benefits like health insurance and PTO are important, but they don’t directly affect our performance at work the way that language learning does.”

How exactly does language learning promote engagement and communication? Recent research presents several key findings:

- **Language learning drives company loyalty.** A recent [Rosetta Stone study](#) reports that 80 percent of employees who participated in language training felt more positively toward their employer, and 66 percent felt more engaged with their work.
- **Language learning benefits employees on a personal level.** Forbes Insight’s [Best in](#)

[Class: How Enterprises Succeed With Language Learning Programs](#) report reveals that of employees who participate in language-learning programs, 51 percent have greater confidence, 46 percent have improved performance, and 35 percent have increased innovation or creativity.

- **Language learning boosts engagement among hard-to-reach team members.** The [2016 Rosetta Stone Business Impact Study](#) reveals that language training helped a wide variety of teams boost job performance, productivity, and engagement across such disparate departments as IT (73 percent performance improvement), HR (74 percent performance improvement), and operations (72 percent performance improvement).

Offering language-learning opportunities within your organization puts your human resources and recruiting teams in a great position to attract and retain top talent and reap the rewards of a highly engaged and skilled workforce. And since few companies are capitalizing on this opportunity ([The Society for Human Resources Management's 2017 Employee Benefits Report](#) reveals that only 4 percent of companies surveyed offer English as a Second Language learning opportunities and only 5 percent offer non-English language-learning opportunities), it could translate into a significant competitive advantage for companies that move forward with it now.



“The biggest benefit we’ve seen from implementing a language learning program is decreased turnover rates. We are in a fast-paced industry that is very stressful, and it gets costly to find and train new employees. We were able to see a 19 percent lower turnover rate when looking at regions that had the highest number of language learners as compared to those with lower usage or without Rosetta Stone in place.”

Alvin Tang, Learning & Development at Panda Restaurant Group

Language Learning Strengthens Business Performance



No matter where your organization is located, increased employee mobility and digital economic opportunity require you to consider how you operate, sell, and recruit from a global perspective. If you don't proactively address the multicultural elements of how your business functions, you won't make the most of the resources you have. And that's where language learning comes in.

"Many businesses have internal resources that are worth a lot but completely unrecognized and unrealized," says Marmorstein. "Whether we're talking about Spanish speakers who don't have the English skills they need to excel at a new position or English speakers who need to collaborate at a high level with non-English speakers in

other countries, the language piece represents an enormous human capital opportunity."

Here's a look at the documented impact language learning can have on how your company operates, sells, and recruits:

Opportunities for operations

In today's global economy, your team's ability to communicate and collaborate at a high level has a substantial impact on how efficiently it communicates and implements business processes. And yet according to a [survey](#) conducted by IDG Research Services for Rosetta Stone, 90 percent of business leaders say their departments face language challenges, but only 1 in 3 are actively engaging

their HR resources to solve those challenges. Investing in language learning can smooth out these communication barriers to make way for more efficient business processes.

"There is an enormous cost to the inefficiencies that come from language barriers," says Marmorstein. "It's hard enough to coordinate global supply chains when you speak the same language. Consider how much it compounds the challenge when a shipment originates in one country, ships to another, and must sync up with operations in yet a third country. Giving your managers the dominant language of their employees and collaborators supports a higher level of communication that improves morale and reduces error."

“At Daimler, we coordinate production, engineering, manufacturing and intellectual design operations among locations in North America, Mexico and Germany, and sometimes work with engineers in India and Japan. **It’s not uncommon to sit in Portland, USA, but your boss is in Germany. It is a business imperative that we learn and support languages.**”

*Brian Stowe, Learning & Development
at Daimler Trucks North America*



Opportunities for customers

Language learning for employees can benefit customers in two ways. First, a [study from Bain & Company](#) notes that employee attitude and behavior is a significant driver in customer satisfaction, so any positive impact language learning has on employee engagement will also influence customer satisfaction.

Second, building rapport with customers is critical to customer satisfaction. Even if an employee is not able to answer a customer's exact question or solve a particular problem, being able to speak their language shows respect and builds trust, whether you're trying to improve customer satisfaction for help desk services in India or Costa Rica or preparing a member of your executive team to live abroad for three years.

"If you've moved up in your human resources career and haven't worked face-to-face with customers in the past 5-10 years, you might not realize how often your customer-facing employees are speaking with English-as-a-second-language customers," says Marmorstein. "Since your team can't report on what doesn't happen, you simply

won't see the opportunities you're missing out on if your customer-facing employees can't engage with customers that don't speak fluent English."

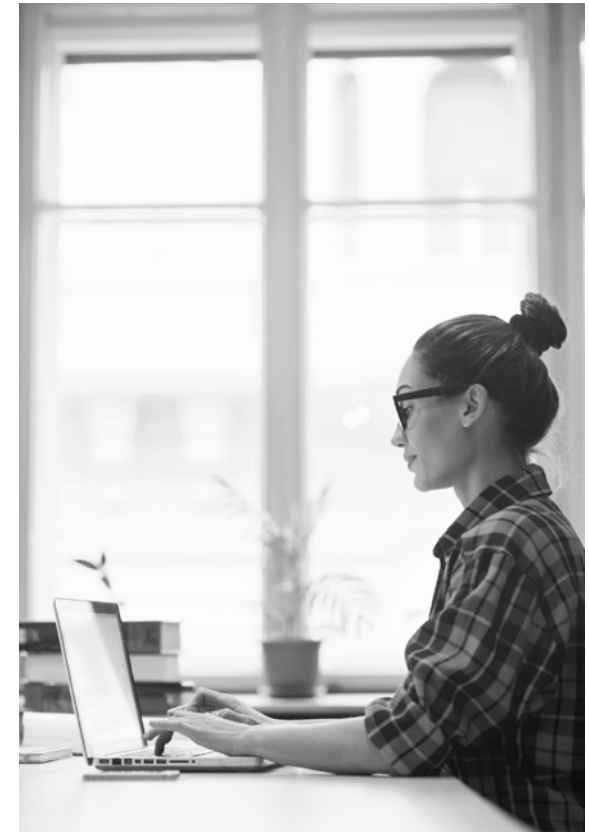
Opportunities for employees

We've already established that language learning drives loyalty and boosts confidence in employees, but it's also worth considering the long-term benefits that come from offering language opportunities to your workforce.

For example, while the [2017 Society for Human Resources Management Benefits Report](#) notes that 21 percent of employees surveyed cited a lack of career advancement opportunities as a reason for leaving a company, [Rosetta Stone research](#) indicates that 44 percent of employees who participated in language-learning programs were more engaged in their work and 33 percent of employees achieved promotions or advancements. Offering language-learning opportunities is a powerful way to show employees that you're interested in their development and success long-term.

"Language and work are both deep human processes," says Marmorstein. "ROI and KPIs

may justify the spend on language learning, but this benefit also speaks to every employee's desire to do meaningful work and to have an impact. It encourages a personal level of motivation that makes employees feel supported as human beings at the HR level."





“Employees who take us up on language learning opportunities get a boost in their confidence. It helps them round out their professional capabilities. Communication can be difficult when there are cultural differences just under the surface, but if you know the language you can navigate it better. **You are learning the culture in a foundational way, and that builds rapport very quickly.**”

***Brian Stowe**, Learning & Development
at Daimler Trucks North America*

Get Your Language-Learning Program Up and Running



When your company embarks on a language-learning program, spend as much time as possible in the planning stages. It's not as simple as wanting to reach a certain kind of customer and deciding to train your employees in that demographic's dominant language. Instead, language learning should be more strategic and sensitive to the values of your organization.

"When you're implementing a language program, think about your reasons," says Marmorstein. "The implementation of a program designed to improve concrete regulatory processes will be different from a program designed to improve collaboration and interpersonal communication. Understanding your 'why' will help you make

those supplemental decisions and decide the appropriate size and shape of your language-learning program."

When you create a language-learning program, follow these five actionable steps to get it up and running quickly:

- 1. Assess the value of language learning for your organization.** First, align your language learning program to your business strategy. Language learning in a bubble, without any connection to the customer you serve or your global operations, won't deliver the results you're looking for. Instead, identify the future capabilities employees need and consider

what kind of language-learning technology will lay the best foundation for adoption (mobile, tablet, computer-based, etc.).

- 2. Conduct a language audit.** Once you've mapped out where your employees need to go, assess where they are now. Evaluate employee's current level of language proficiency, identify the proficiency levels necessary for effective job performance, and set short- and long-term language goals accordingly.

- 3. Set realistic goals.** The more buy-in you can get from your team, the more impressive the results you'll see from your language-learning program. So, make sure you spend some time >>>

»»» conveying why employees should make an effort to engage with language learning and finding out what motivates them to learn. Then coach employees to pursue their goals with an appropriate amount of sustained effort.

4. Implement your program. When you're ready to implement your language-learning program, don't forget to consider the big-picture decisions you must make. First, develop large-scale language-learning objectives so that you can track the effectiveness of the program. Then, make sure language learning is a part of your employee development plans so that stakeholders at every level within your organization understand that language learning

is a priority. Choose a scalable solution that's going to grow with your company's needs while also offering employees the ability to learn anywhere.

5. Measure your program's success and effectiveness. As you implement your program, stay actively involved. Ask employees about how their training is going and what they like and what they don't like about it. Track key performance indicators (KPIs) to rate how employees are learning and ask managers to observe employee's new language skills. Monitoring the effectiveness of your program will allow you to check for quantifiable business success at 3-, 6- and 12-months out.

“To increase the visibility of our language learning program, we took the program online. We created a Facebook group where learners could post encouraging messages, attend Q&A sessions, and champion super users; we quickly saw these efforts drive engagement.”

Alvin Tang, Learning & Development at Panda Restaurant Group



After you create a blueprint for your language-learning program, don't get sidetracked by implementation roadblocks. Be on the lookout for the following common challenges you might face when implementing your first language-learning program:

- **Coordinate digital and in-person training opportunities.** Set aside time for face-to-face training whenever possible, particularly whenever you're sourcing talent outside of the US.
- **Offer more than one language opportunity.** Provide access to all languages relevant to your business and your customers.
- **Keep the excitement alive after kick-off.** Consider implementing learner engagement incentives to encourage participants to deeply engage with both the language and their coworkers.

For more tips on implementation, watch this Rosetta Stone educational webinar, "[Planning and Implementing a Global Language Strategy to Accompany Global Expansion](#)," presented in coordination with PayPal.



Use Language Learning to Capitalize on Your Company's Hidden Resources

An organization thrives in direct proportion to its employee's ability to communicate. It's there that we see the bigger picture of how language learning positively influences a business's major operation, sales, and recruiting functions: it improves individual communication skills among employees and communicates important values to employees, customers, and stakeholders.

When a company decides that the status quo is "good enough," it leaves itself vulnerable to competitors that use abstract but critical factors like employee engagement, communication, and innovation to reach new customers and serve them better.



Are you ready to implement language learning in your business? **Request a demo of our Rosetta Stone® Catalyst® language-learning platform.**

[Contact Us](#)



Business

Rosetta Stone is a global leader in technology-driven language and learning solutions for individuals, classrooms, and entire organizations. Our scalable, interactive solutions have been used by over 12,000 businesses, 9,000 public sector organizations, and 22,000 educational institutions worldwide, and by millions of learners in over 150 countries.

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