

Doing Business in English NOW

Short Case Studies

2007-2008

studio ODS
Consulenza Formazione Ricerca
per lo sviluppo delle Risorse Umane

Via Falcone, 7 - 20123 Milano - numero verde 800 466 445 - www.studio-ods.it

THE MD CONFERENCE CALL

The MD has to handle a conference call in which he must obtain funding from shareholders for a major expansion programme.

He does have the necessary language skills, but is very nervous about this important conference call in English.

In the past they were handled by the current chairman of the company who speaks excellent, though very formal, English.

The MD sets out presenting the business plan in the formal style of the chairman, not in his own dynamic manner.

The formal style had worked in the past and he feels he should stick to it. But, he is not the same person, his style is different. The presentation is flat.

Switching back to Italian the presentation comes to life.

The subsequent sessions are all targeted at activating in English the considerable communication skills the MD has in Italian.

It's a success and only hours after the conference call shares are up 5%

HANDLING BUSINESS CONVERSATIONS

The first impression is that this person speaks perfect English, so much so that the trainer questions the need for any kind of intervention.

However, this PR specialist goes on to explain his problem. In Italian he can lead conversations, take his interlocutor where he wants him to go. In English he follows...

Words are an important tool in his profession. This situation not only reduces his efficiency, it also makes him feel inadequate.

First we analyze the language and communication strategies used in some real and some hypothetical situations. We then move on to simulations of these situations.

The PR specialist did not learn any new structures or words, but did learn how to make better use of what he already knew.

This led to a feeling of greater confidence in his use of English in a business environment.

MEETINGS WITH INTERNATIONAL CLIENTS

Has a solid knowledge of the vocabulary and structures of the language, certainly sufficient for his job. However, lacks the confidence for handling meetings with foreign clients.

This lack of confidence stems partially from an unfounded conviction that he does not have the necessary "tools" and partly from a lack of "familiarity" with the language.

First we establish that he does have the grammar and vocabulary necessary, thus removing this "excuse".

Then we move on to conversations on topics that are not business related, but of great interest to the individual.

Gradually he relaxes and the topics become more business oriented and more complex. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce success and analyze eventual communication breakdowns.

At this stage, one of his colleagues, hearing of the progress made, joins the sessions.

After a total of 30 sessions they both had the confidence to tackle their international business meetings.

TRAINER RE-TRAINED

This person has a strong classroom presence when he runs his courses on a wide variety of topics. This is enhanced by his considerable command of the Italian language. He has a wide range of English vocabulary and knows the necessary structures.

But, as in some of the previous cases, he lacks the confidence to do business in English. He is afraid of not being understood and that what he perceives to be a deficiency will lead to his interlocutor making value judgements.

The sessions concentrated on the fact that the listener wants to understand, he is not listening for errors, and indeed will rarely hear them. The mistakes simply disappear in the overall comprehension.

As in the previous case, the sessions concentrate on topics of great interest to this person, although these are more immediately professionally oriented.

Getting involved in the topic the trainer worries less about the actual language and gradually realises that he is expressing quite complex topics successfully. The sessions are gradually lengthened to increase stamina.

This trainer has since successfully conducted in English two separate three hour meetings with American clients.

JOB INTERVIEWS

Many jobs today require knowledge of English, so often job interviews have an English language component.

As a result people frequently ask to brush up their English before their interview. However, the problem is rarely a purely linguistic one.

Most people have to quite simply exercise their ability to give good answers to job interview questions, probably also in their own language.

Thus these become interview coaching sessions, starting from an analysis of the CV, which often is partially rewritten.

We then move on to discussing and practicing answers to interview questions.

We start with the most traditional questions, moving on to the less common, the unusual and the totally unexpected.

We finish with a full interview simulation.

So far, only one of the candidates did not subsequently get the job he was trying for.

studio ODS

Consulenza Formazione Ricerca
per lo sviluppo delle Risorse Umane

Via Falcone, 7 - 20123 Milano - numero verde 800 466 445 - www.studio-ods.it