

Partnership with UK Government Departments

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Background

Following the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) review of its training policy and consequent formulation of a new strategy, Communicaid was selected as the DfES language training supplier in March 2004. The framework agreement, awarded to Communicaid by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, has been extended to cover all the legal aspects of engagement within the DfES while a detailed Service Level agreement has been agreed directly between Communicaid and DfES Learning Academy.

Training Objectives

The DfES policy review identified the following priority areas:

- Provide effective training for Fast Stream (UK's civil service's accelerated development programme)
- Provide an effective system of external validation/accreditation system for all work-related training
- Rationalise spend and focus on work-related language training with clearly defined content in support of departmental business needs
- Devise innovative programmes in support of personal development and methods for maintaining participants' current level of proficiency in a foreign language

Challenges

The main challenges were seen as:

- The design of a series of workshops that integrated the linguistic and cultural awareness needs of civil servants who would be taking part in meetings with the EU officials during that time
- The development and consistent implementation of a new approach to language training across the Department's four sites in the UK – London, Sheffield, Runcorn and Darlington

Training Approach

Communicaid carried out an extensive language competency audit, consisting of individual assessments of over 100 delegates to identify common needs and language competency levels. All delegates who were identified to attend cultural awareness training were required to complete a pre-course questionnaire in order to ensure that the course content was suitably tailored for them.



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Proposed Solutions

The following actions were recommended:

- Introduction of European Language Portfolios and Common European Framework assessment scale for all training across the Department together with alignment of training programmes to appropriate external qualifications
- Small group training for delegates with compatible levels and similar business needs
- Organisation of individual flexible programmes for Fast Stream with an option of transferring training between London and Brussels
- Intensive immersion training in Communicaid's training centre in Paris for senior civil servant in the European Union Division
- Organisation of several Language Clubs in major west European languages and Russian to facilitate personal development and maintenance of language competence
- Efficient programme administration and monthly reporting to all departments, including financial spend and consumption of training
- Series of workshops in Advanced Language Skills in key EU languages
- European Cultural Awareness training

Client Feedback

"Communicaid efficiently prepared over seventy DfES language volunteers for their role as delegation liaison officers for ministerial meetings during the UK EU Presidency 2005. Courses were well prepared, relevant and covered a broad range of European languages."

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Contact Details

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Results

The DfES is now able to develop, assess and monitor linguistic competence of civil servants in their work with international colleagues. It is also able to monitor spend effectively and measure outcomes of training interventions in the area of cultural and linguistic skills.

Civil servants taking part in the UK's EU Presidency events are now familiar with the diverse cultural background of their European counterparts and can deal effectively with overseas visitors to the Department. Through their professional competence in foreign language skills they will be able to raise the profile of the UK Civil Service in an international arena.

