

THE
GLOBAL
MINDSET

Hidden
Partners in
your global
expansion

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YOUR LOCAL YET GLOBAL BUSINESS

A local store, salon, mom and pop shop or professional services firm is no longer just a local business. Because of the internet, every business is now in front of a worldwide audience. This means whether you think so or not, your business is now a global business.

If your business has a website, a twitter, Instagram or Facebook account, the next person to walk in the door or even just talk about you to someone could come from any location on earth.

The minute your business went online, you opened up the door to reaching the maximum amount of clients and to making sure that as many people as possible knew about you.

The climate in which we do business is also changing.

Consider the following unconventional customer acquisition scenarios.

- An expat businessman immigrates and moves into your neighborhood and needs your product.
- A potential customer in another country hears about you through a YouTube post.
- A tourist tells a friend, “You just have to visit this place when you go there”.
- An Instagram user way across the world likes a photo on your Instagram page and sends it to 1000 people you’ve never met. Just Ask Alex Lee who gained 400,000 Twitter followers in one night because a teenage girl thought his picture was cute and posted it.

The shift in thinking that makes a big difference:

Several years ago, I attended my company’s annual convention in Las Vegas. Up until then I had been getting along just fine dealing with mostly English speaking Canadian clients. When I arrived in Las Vegas, I found out that the company’s business in the Latino market had exploded and several hundred Spanish speaking clients were waiting for me. I didn’t plan for it. I didn’t expect it and I certainly wasn’t planning for the bilingual MC to disappear part way through the event and leave me all alone with them.

Up until that event, I didn’t really realize that I was a part of a global business. Later on as I began to work more with Spanish speaking clients, I learned two very important things.

- 1) A lot of goodwill can come out of just learning a few phrases in someone’s language. Being perfectly bilingual is not required to gain goodwill with clients. Just making the slightest effort to say a few phrases in someone else’s language signals that you care enough about the business relationship to learn a little bit about their culture.

- 2) A few phrases will get you in the door and create **a little** goodwill. This goodwill can change to **highly profitable** relationships and partnerships when you speak **a lot of** the other person's language.

What are the changes in thinking required?

- 1) Realizing that your customer base can change in an instant. In short this means admitting that you're in a global business.
- 2) Realizing that even small efforts at communication count more than perfection when trying to earn goodwill with foreign customers.
- 3) Recognizing the impact that being able to communicate with an untapped market could have on your business.

THE NEW RULES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the new connected world of global business, new rules and opportunities are in play.

Customer Demographics and their needs can change at any time.

- A restaurant that usually serves English speaking customer receives a visit from a large tour bus filled with clients that speak another language.
- A Canadian employee is thrown into a situation where the clients speak neither English nor French.
- A store owner has a brand new set of customer because of the sudden influx of refugees in his neighborhood.
- A group of friends have flown in from out of town for a wedding and need some spa and salon services before the big day.

Any employee can be a brand ambassador...or not.

- An employee who speaks a second language is prepared to engage, welcome and even pursue clients that speak another language. This opens up the door for that employee to act as a brand ambassador in markets that you may not have considered.
- While it isn't possible for any employee to speak every language, the pool of clients has the potential to increase with each additional language that an employee speaks.

Any location on earth can hold opportunities.

- When we think of companies that could be getting business from anywhere, we think of ecommerce websites that ship globally and have multilingual websites. However, the examples listed in section one have already shown that this is not always the case.
- The internet has the potential to bring the world to you in many other ways including search referrals, online reviews, tourist walk-ins and through other local clients who may speak another language.
- Even when the internet doesn't bring the world to you, there are other cases where you will go out to meet the market. A chance meeting during a vacation in a foreign country turns out to be a potential client. A conference or trade show turns out to have an overseas market that is ripe for your product.

The new rules of engagement

The new rules of engagement require that in either of these scenarios, the right thing to do right now is to prepare to communicate with that new potential client in their language.

THE CHALLENGES

In a global business environment, sometimes it is not a marketing agency or a public relations agency that has the greatest potential to expand your reach.

Some of the best people for that task are sitting at a cubicle near you and they exist in every department. Some of your greatest brand ambassadors are the employees that come to work for you every day.

However, if tomorrow you embraced a global mindset and approved some employees to learn Spanish or Japanese or whatever the language you may need, this is exactly what would happen: You would run into a little problem called **regular speaking practice**. It seems that with all the learning tools, apps and courses out there nobody has taken into consideration that in order to become bilingual in a second language you have to speak it regularly. An HR or training manager will be faced with the following options:

- 1) Option 1: Get the employee registered for an HR approved community college course that lasts 1 or 2 semesters. The employee would spend the next few months mostly listening to the instructor talk, completing written assignments with a pen, not a mouth and taking tests. The employee at the end of 4 months would be functional but certainly not bilingual.
- 2) Option 2: For a high ranking exec you might approve a lesson once a week with a private instructor. This would cost between \$25 to \$65.00 per hour. The employee would speak the language for 1 hour per week with the instructor then go back to a mostly English existence the rest of the week.
- 3) Option 3: The manager may recommend one of many language learning apps or software programs to the employee. The employee would download the app and spend the next several months typing answers to questions into the app. This would involve typing with a hand instead of speaking with a mouth.
- 4) Option 4: If the company had an enormous budget, they could send the employee overseas for a year or transfer the employee to an overseas office. This option would in fact create a bilingual employee but would not work well if you actually needed the employee to do their job in your own office.

So the options that you have for creating a fluent, bilingual brand ambassador to help you expand your global reach, as you can see, mostly involve producing an employee who is frustrated because they're studying a lot but not speaking much.

YOUR STRATEGY AND YOUR HIDDEN PARTNERS

A lot of people have tried to build language learning apps. But no one has zoned in on the regular daily speaking practice that really leads to fluency.

This is the gap in corporate language training and this is a gap that can result in an enormous missed opportunity. Even in a bilingual nation like Canada or a multi-lingual country, getting regular speaking practice is not as easy to come by as one may think. As you may already know, having a neighbor who speaks another language does not make you fluent in that language. Nor does it mean the neighbor has time to teach you or practice with you.

Creating a truly bilingual employee who could use their language skills to add value to the business, increase your client base and drive revenue takes time and more importantly it takes regular daily practice. However, it is possible.

These employees, when fully trained as bilinguals are your hidden partners in growth.

When it comes to the effect bilingual employees have on your business this is what we know:

- American companies lose over \$2 billion every year due to language or cultural misunderstandings.
- According to Forbes, Bilingual employees **can** help you to tap into opportunities for diversified business and educational pursuits in countries that have hitherto been out of your reach.
- **A technavio** language study demonstrated that language learning programs helped to engage employees.
- Employees stay longer when you invest in them: It is a well-known fact that employees who stand to gain something usually do not leave the company for a long time. This is more of a psychological benefit than anything else.
- Training an existing employee can save the cost of hiring a new employee.
- In addition to business benefits, there are also cognitive benefits. These include increased brain size, improved memory, delaying dementia, improving problem solving, negotiating and decision making skills.

Summary of the role of your hidden partners

A bilingual workforce equipped to communicate in multiple environments can act as a powerful ambassador of your brand in whatever environment they find themselves in.

A bilingual workforce is the hidden key to positioning yourself as a global brand that's ready and equipped to do business with an ever increasing client base.

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