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Executive courses in the USA

In an era of globalisation there is a large and growing need for Business English courses among business executives and schools in the USA report a steady influx of programme requests.

The ability to communicate in English is an imperative skill if employees want to see personal advancement in their careers, according to Teresa Barile, Director of Education at Rennert Bilingual in New York, NY.

The school's Professional English programme has attracted clients from all fields, from all around the world since 1993, during which time the course has been adapted to help keep up with supply and demand. Most schools agree that in today's fast-paced and competitive commercial world, Business-Eng-

lish courses must constantly evolve in order to meet the ever changing needs of business clients.

At the Embassy CES schools in New York, Fort Lauderdale and San Francisco, the traditional Executive English course is being phased out in recognition of a change in demand from the schools' key international markets. The Embassy Certificate 8 course has been developed to offer more to its students, with weekly start dates; small, personalised classes allowing for interaction between students; and the chance to opt for one-to-one tuition as an added supplement.

Besides the shift in the course content's focus, Director, Chris Taylor speculates that the course, having been placed at "a more attractive price point", may now be more appealing for potential clients. This addresses the question: are big companies prepared to pay large sums of money for their employees' courses? Not according to Taylor, who reports that most companies no longer have the same training budgets as five years ago. "Even for more senior executives, companies are now looking for better value and to buy affordable but still relevant programmes that make their dollar go further," he relates.

Expectations of Business English courses appear to be increasing, however, as suggested by the fact that almost all schools listed offer added perks such as visits to local US businesses and meetings with local business people. The University of Nebraska at Omaha, NE, offers both of these and for professional students requiring hands-on experience, the school can even place students in local companies in order to gain work experience.

Bridge-Linguathec in Denver, CO, also provides students with various options besides language training. Marketing Manager, Cara Pulick, explains, "We supplement classroom learning for our executive clients with networking opportunities, company visits, and customised programmes to meet their specific professional and linguistic needs." Meanwhile, students at Rennert Bilingual can take free, optional certificate courses in such subject areas as Globalisation, Economics or Real Estate, through the school's partnership with the Henry George School of Social Science nearby.

It seems that offering flexibility is a top priority among schools, which are increasingly keen to meet the individual requirements of each executive client. The University of Pennsylvania English Language Program in Philadelphia, PA, demonstrates a concerted effort to provide an individualised service. Kara Bundy, Marketing Coordinator, says that they once had to meet the language needs of one client who was, "preparing for negotiation with striking workers at one of their major branches in northern Europe". In these situations, time is of the essence, and in more general terms, any long-term stay away from a company could be detrimental to the business. The array of short-term, intensive courses on the market suggests that employers are reluctant to waste valuable company time and that the solution lies in a course that promises fast results.

The University of Philadelphia has developed a one-to-two week intensive course – the Executive Communication programme – to focus on developing the advanced linguistic skills of their business clients, including the art of negotiation, and presentation skills. In another example, Embassy CES prides its Certificate 8 course on being "highly interactive", with clients being able to benefit from testing out their new practical professional skills on other class members. Taking a different approach, Rennert Bilingual arranges networking lunches for their short-term professional students during which, "the international professional meets their NYC counterpart and shares common interests from their field or industry", explains Barile.

The future looks bright for executive English courses in the USA, and schools predict the sector will grow in line with international commerce. ●



Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of school	Courses offered		Min. hrs of lang. tuition p/w	Min. length of course (wks)	Courses include	
		Year round?	No. of start dates			Visits to local US business	Meetings with local people
Boston, MA	English Language Center	●	9	20	1	v	v
Denver, CO	Bridge-Linguathec	●		15	1	●	●
La Jolla, CA	International Center for American English	●		15	1	req	
La Jolla, CA	Uni of California, San Diego Extension	●		20	1	●	●
New York, NY	Rennert Bilingual	●		15	2		●
Omaha, NE	University of Nebraska at Omaha	●	5	30	8	●	●
Philadelphia, PA	Uni of Pennsylvania ELP	●	4-5	v	v	v	●
San Francisco, CA	Brandon College	●		n	1	●	●
Santa Ana, CA	Santa Ana College, ELA	●		24	8		●
Santa Cruz, CA	Uni of California Extension, Santa Cruz	●		v	4	●	●
various	Embassy CES	●		20	1	req	req

v varies req on request n none