

Business courses in the USA

Schools in the USA offering language courses designed to meet the needs of the executive market ensure that their programme is progressive and their business clients are offered a luxury experience.

Catering to the executive language learning market is not an easy proposition. Business clients are more exacting in their requirements and are more likely to demand higher quality services in terms of accommodation, teaching facilities and fast results. Schools in the USA that have gone down this route often go out of their way to provide specialist facilities and highly tailored language programmes to appeal to this niche sector of the language learning market.

Sheila Hoffman-Hicks, President of Global Language Institute in St Paul, MN, relates, "Executives, particularly high-status executives like many who enrol on our programme, are looking for something different than what is offered in a traditional intensive English programme. They often don't want to be in classes with university-aged students [as] they aren't in that mindset anymore. They have more life experience and different motivations. Second, they are usually looking for specialised language instruction which is relevant to their specific job or profession."

At Converse International School of Languages, based in San Diego and San Francisco, CA, the distinction between executive language learners and those taking more general English courses is marked. "We have a separate suite of classrooms dedicated to these programmes," says Jean-Pierre Guittard, General Director of Operations at the school. "Executive clients enjoy a 'business class' setting and a four star level of service. We also have a separate website [for business clients]."

At The Language Academy in Fort Lauderdale, FL, the success of their business lan-

guage courses is also heavily reliant on the school providing a specialised, personal approach to clients. Marco Pinna, President of the school, explains, "We have designed profession-specific executive English programmes for several universities and business colleges, which regularly send groups of students once or twice per year."

Keeping executive language courses as distinct as possible from general or academic English programmes seems to be a key feature of this sector. Rina Buberoglu Levin from Talk International School of Languages in Davie, FL, says that participation in such courses is restricted to ensure a more targeted approach. "We require that students have an upper intermediate or higher level of English proficiency and a minimum of three years of business experience – so they are not available and do not appeal to the general market."

Some language schools have got around the problem of appealing to a broader market while maintaining the exclusivity required by executive clients by offering a range of business language courses. Hoffman-Hicks says that they have recently started offering a new business language programme to complement their original programme. "A few years ago we began getting requests for a less high-end programme which fitted with the training budgets typical for mid-level managers and for those professionals having to pay personally for their training," she relates. "In response to this, we began offering the combined intensive programme for professionals. This combines individualised instruction with a group oral communications course. It's a more affordable option."

The financial rewards of business language course provision can be great and established schools within the sector have to continually find new ways to stay ahead of the competition. Caroline Gear from the International Languages Institute of Massachusetts in Northampton, MA, says that they offer business clients an extra incentive to study at their school. "We also offer professional networking opportunities for executives to meet and interact with native English speaking professionals in their field," she says.

Meanwhile, at ProActive English in San Francisco, CA, developments in technology and course provision have enabled the school to offer students a completely different language learning experience. "Through the business English website, ProActive English offers a synchronous language learning that allows trainees to upload recorded speech for review by a trainer or for self-guided practice," says David Kertzner at the school. "Trainers provide text and audio feedback. The web tool features an interactive Powerpoint presentations module allowing trainees to record audio for each presentation slide and receive audio and text feedback for each slide."

Selection of programmes available

School location	Name of institution	No. of start dates p/y	Min length of stay	Types of courses offered
Boston, MA	OISE	yr	1 week	c,i,o,t
Cambridge, MA	New England School of English	12	4 weeks	c,i,o,t
Edmond, OK	The Language Company	yr	2 weeks	c,i,o,t
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Talk International	2	2 weeks	c,i,o,t
Fort Lauderdale, FL	The Language Academy	yr	2 weeks	c,i,o,t
Irvine, CA	University of California, Irvine	yr	4 weeks	c,i,t
Monterey, CA	Monterey Institute of Int. Studies	yr	60 hrs	c,i,o,t
Northampton, MA	Int. Lang. Institute of Massachusetts	yr	1 week	c,i,o,t
Omaha, NE	University of Nebraska at Omaha	5	20 weeks	i,t
San Francisco, CA	ProActive English	yr	1 week	c,i,o,t,w
St Paul, MN	Global Language Institute	yr	1 week	c,i,o,t
various, CA	Converse Int. School of Languages	yr	1 week	c,i,o,t

c closed groups i intensive o one-to-one t in a teacher's home w web-based yr year round