

# Alto survey results: agency role is key

The latest member survey of the Association of Language Travel Organisations (Alto) throws up some interesting trends across the 47 agencies and schools that took part. The most encouraging trend for agencies is that schools taking part in the survey identified “expanding agent networks” as the most important marketing issue to be addressed in the next 12-to-18 months.

This was despite a very gradual decline in reliance on agencies for student recruitment, according to *Global Directions in Language Travel*, the report produced by Alto. International agents accounted for 58 per cent of student recruitment in 2005, across the 26 members operating a school or school and agency. In the 2004 survey, the figure was 62 per cent. And in last year’s survey, schools forecast that agency-led recruitment of clients would dip slowly to an expected 59 per cent, and 57 per cent in 2006.

The difference is accounted for by Internet recruitment, up from 12 per cent in the 2004 survey to 19 per cent. Nevertheless, agencies remain integral to the business activities of schools. And overall, all the Alto members taking part in the survey were optimistic about business growth in the future, with forecasted increases of nine per cent in 2006 and eight per cent in 2007.

Other trends noted in the survey included the fact that most agencies (from a sample of 20) expected Australia to be the leading destination in terms of growth of market share over the next few years, followed by China. In terms of preferred destinations, the UK was in the lead, with two-thirds of the agency sample identifying it as one of their top three destinations for students.

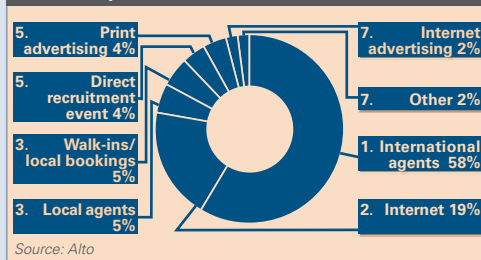
Japan was the most important source country for the language schools that took part in the survey, in terms of the global importance of nationalities across a relatively small sample, followed by Germany and the USA. Just under half (46 per cent) of the 24 schools in the survey said that Japan was one of their three leading source countries.

Aside from expanding agency networks, schools identified product diversification as the next most important marketing focus in the next 12-to-18 months, while agencies said this was their prime marketing concern, followed by defining or building brand image (50 per cent

agreed) and improving communication strategy (50 per cent).

In a separate survey of industry news sources, undertaken by Alto parent group, Fiyto, *Language Travel Magazine* was found to be one of the single most important channels for reaching industry professionals.

Sources of students for Alto member schools, 2005



## IDP poses strong competition to agents

IDP EDUCATION Australia, which was hit by financial troubles last year that saw the company downsize to focus its operations on Asia-only (see *Language Travel Magazine*, March 2005, page 10), is back with a new focus due to an injection of capital.

In a structural shift, the student recruiting operation will be a for-profit concern and offer extra services to students such as accommodation, travel arrangements, health care and career counselling.

A new for-profit operating company will house business operations, which gives the organisation access to new capital. President of IDP, Denise Bradley, said, “The new business plan sets the scene for IDP to grow and prosper in the increasingly competitive arena of international education.”

The other area IDP plans to improve is English language testing – IDP co-owns the Ielts test along with the British Council and University of Cambridge Esol and has a majority

shareholding in Ielts Australia. IDP, which is owned by 38 universities in Australia, will develop products and services related to its testing division, offering everything from proficiency tests to job placement and “further study down the track”, it announced.

Anthony Pollock, the company’s Chief Executive, said, “IDP intends to become the pre-eminent provider of services to international students studying in Australian educational institutions.”

## Agency of the month



This month, **Eurasia Institute** in Germany nominates **International Education** agency in Russia. Andrew Geddes, Founding Director at the school, explains this decision:

In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.



“I would like to nominate our partners in Perm, Russia. International Education Agency have been conscientious, efficient and exact in their processing of applications and have been pleasant to work with in all respects. We have been

working together with the agency since our first meeting at the Berlin Workshop in 2003. They are most well-organised, original and dedicated in their approach and pro-active in their marketing efforts [for example, organising articles featuring schools in a local magazine]. We are pleased to have the opportunity of building up long-term relations with them in a difficult and increasingly competitive market situation.

The agency is particularly interested in university transfers for students and we are able to offer a fast university transfer procedure to Eurasia partner universities in Germany.”

## Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

### Q Do you sell flights and additional services such as tours, discount cards, insurance, etc and, if so, does this help bring in clients for your language tuition services?



**Magda Boczar,  
JDJ Bachalski,  
Poland**

"When we started the JDJ company some 16 years ago, our main goal was to provide quality language courses to our clients. Soon, however, we introduced other services that expanded our product range. Basically, we were arranging plane flights or coach trips and obtaining insurance policies for people who wished to study or learn English abroad. We also assisted clients in obtaining visas. Such a policy does not seem to guarantee a huge number of clients, yet, as they are extremely satisfied with the standard of our service, they frequently decide to purchase additional language courses. It has had a significant impact on our sales. At the moment, 100 per cent of our clients buy insurance policies from us and furthermore, about 50 per cent

of them buy plane or bus tickets. When low-cost airlines entered the Polish market, we expected that it would somehow affect the number of plane tickets that we sold, but this did not happen."



**Denis Mello, MA Intercâmbio & Turismo, Brazil**

"Yes, we sell flights and insurance and we organise tourism trips for the student at the end of the language course. Today, we cannot offer only the course and the additional services help us to improve our image and increase our revenue. One-hundred per cent of our customers need another service. We need to discover their needs and offer choices. The low-cost flight companies don't inconvenience our market; we have special rates for students. We sell insurance for 90 per cent of our students. The additional services help us to personalise our business. "



**Viktor Sundberg,  
Nomad Språkresor,  
Sweden**

"Since the Swedish National Board of Student Aid provides an excellent insurance alternative, this is what many Swedish students choose. However, we do also work with a privately owned, commission-paying insurance company, which will be integrated into our application system shortly. This is, of course, good for us economically, but it also gives the student a chance to compare the two alternatives and choose the one that suits him or her. We always like to give our students a few options. Since development is something we think about every day, we do, of course, have plans to add certain other profitable features to our system, which increases the level of service we provide to the student. We do not sell flight tickets, and probably never will, however we do have part-

ners in this area and recommend websites and companies where all the information needed is presented."



**Adriana Ortiz,  
Maadri Turismo,  
Brazil**

"We provide to our clients all necessary arrangements for their travel. We sell tickets, tours, insurance and we help with documentation, such as passports and visas. These make the difference. We started as a travel agency but as my brothers and sisters studied in England at the Harven School of English and we extended this service to our clients so we started looking for different schools to offer to our clients. One hundred per cent of our clients request additional products such as flights. In Brazil, they don't feel secure to book on their own. Fifty per cent book insurance with us."

# Q&A



The Canadian Association of Private Language Schools (Capls) is at the centre of activities in Canada to develop national accreditation standards. GERRY LA BELLE, the new President of the association, answers our questions.

## Fact box

**Full name:** Canadian Association of Private Language Schools / Association Canadienne des Ecoles de Langues Privées  
**Year established:** 1997  
**Number of members:** 72 institutions with over 100 locations across Canada  
**Type of members:** Private English and French as a Second Language Schools  
**Association's main role:** Promoting Canadian private ESL and FSL schools internationally, promoting Canada worldwide as a leading educational destination and working together with government for the benefit of the language training industry  
**Membership criteria:** 3 years in operation, agree to Code of Ethics and by-laws, meet Capls standards for teachers, undergo site visit  
**Government recognition:** Yes-  
**Code of practice:** Yes  
**Complaints procedure:** Yes  
**Agents workshops/fam trips:** No  
**Contact details:** Capls / ACELP Secretariat, 12880 - 54A Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3X 3C9, Canada.  
**Tel:** +1 6045072577  
**Fax:** +1 6045020373  
**Email:** info@capls.com

### What are Capls' plans for the year ahead?

Capls will continue to build brand recognition of the association and work with other Canadian education stakeholders to develop a cross-sectoral, intergovernmental "Education Canada" branding initiative.

### What has the association achieved in the last year?

The single largest achievement for this past year for Capls was the completion of the site inspections of our schools resulting in accreditation of 100 per cent of our membership. The Capls Quality Standards Accreditation scheme (CQSA) standards were developed as an integral part of the future success of the private language training industry in Canada.

### How are plans progressing towards a national accreditation scheme in Canada?

Capls has met with Industry Canada, International Trade Canada, Ailia and the Canada Language Council (CLC) and all parties want to move ahead on this initiative. We have approached Industry Canada and International Trade Canada to initiate an interim step by recognising both [associations'] current standards/accreditation schemes. A separate secretariat will be established within the Department of Canadian Heritage, which will receive the lists of accredited English and French language programmes from both associations.

### How else is the government helping the industry?

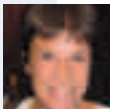
It is hoped, and strong indications have been given, that the combined list of language programmes would give accredited language programmes access to two important government initiatives that are currently being piloted. The first is the Live, Learn and Succeed (LLS) web-site portal, a one-stop information portal (see *Language Travel Magazine*, July 2005, page 6). The second is the National Electronic Acceptance Letter System (Neals), which would help streamline visa processing as it would virtually eliminate the possibility of counterfeit documentation.

## On the move

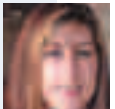
Nick Bendall (pictured), his father John and Celta course tutor, Petra Harries, have recently acquired St Peter's School of English in Canterbury, UK. Mr Bendall has spent 15 years as a media manager and was looking for a new direction. The team will renovate the historic, 500-year-old building and have already introduced teacher training courses, among other developments.



Paula Gunther, born in Peru and based in Italy, is now working for Istituto Marangoni, a fashion and design school with branches in London and Milan. Her role is Marketing Director for Latin America. Previously, Ms Gunther worked for Istituto Europeo di Design, also in Milan.



Alison Warburton is the new Marketing Manager at Australian Internships in Brisbane, Australia. With eight years of marketing experience in various sectors, her main aims in her new role are to drive business growth and increase brand awareness in the marketplace. Ms Warburton said, "I moved from the UK to this exciting new role and I'm very much looking forward to the challenge."



Gwendolyn Guzman has joined the University of California, San Diego Extension (UCSD) in the USA as Marketing Manager for International Programs. Ms Guzman was previously working as the Public Relations Manager for the Downtown Business Association of Escondido. The previous marketing manager of six years, Erik Humphrey, resigned from the university in December 2005 to start a small, boutique winery, San Pasqual.



Alfredo Gutierrez has taken over the role of Marketing Manager at CLIC-IH in Seville, Spain, replacing Jaime Lopez who is now working for an export company. Mr Gutierrez has worked for the company for more than a year, having previously worked for an English language school in Spain and as marketing manager at a record label.



Gerald La Belle is the new President of the Canadian Association of Private Language Schools (Capls). He plans to focus on challenges such as unifying the industry and setting the sails for a clear national branding of the industry and Canada, abroad as well as domestically. Mr La Belle recently sold the Canadian College of Business and Language after 17 years of operations.



## Grapevine

Members of Tandem International got together in Paris, France last year for an AGM and to decide direction for 2006. Thirty-five delegates representing Tandem schools were present, as well as delegates applying to join the group. Schools that are part of the Tandem group offer a language-exchange partnership, whereby two students teach each other their own language. Marcelo Cuestas, Marketing Manager, said quality standards and marketing are two areas that will be worked upon during the year by the group at large, pictured below.



Manchester Academy of English.

That the editorial team of *Language Travel Magazine* is intelligent is not in doubt, but that the editor and three other intellectuals (Richard Young, Celine Cameron and Alison Rex Paulin) could take on the entire delegation of Beta members at their Christmas party cruise on the Thames and win the Christmas quiz was not entirely expected. Two of the clever teammates bask in the knowledge that the prize is theirs: Richard Young, Beta International (left) and Celine Cameron, Manchester Academy of English.

Aliens have landed in London – or so the Malvern House marketing team would have us believe! The crazy creatives at the school decided to let an alien host their five-minute video and CD for agents, explaining their schools' facilities and selling points. Katherine Bradley at the school says, "We didn't want our 'hero' to be of any specific terrestrial nationality." Agents who want to find out more about Zog's adventure should contact k.bradley@malvernhouse.com



Consulting supremo, Murtagh Forde, has teamed up with French language school, French in Normandy, based in Rouen, to help the school boost enrollments further, after a satisfying 36 per cent increase in students was recorded in 2005. Forde will focus on the European markets for the school. Pictured above: Tom Maitland of French in Normandy seals the deal with Forde.

If you have any lighthearted news, photos, or stories of industry interest, please contact amy@hothousemedia.com and ask to appear in the Grapevine section!

Next issue - April 2006: **Special Report** looks at executive programmes • **Market Report** charts trends in Spain • **Direction** looks at the work of regional school groupings • **Agency Survey** canvasses Indonesian agencies • **City Focus** visits Berlin in Germany • **Spotlight** profiles university foundation courses in Australia