

Sixth form students turn their hands to multilingual marketing

GPS PE Fittings working with The Sixth Form College, Solihull



The Sixth Form College, Solihull opened in 1974 and has since earned a reputation for excellence in its modern languages department. With A Levels in French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Urdu offered to students it is clear that the college places huge emphasis on the importance of language skills, which is why, in December 2006, they began working with local company GPS PE Fittings.

Cannock-based GPS PE Fittings is part of the world's largest manufacturer and supplier of high performance plastic piping products. It specialises in polyethylene pipe systems for gas and water transportation in the utilities and industrial market. With a worldwide network of suppliers and customers, staff must communicate effectively in a variety of languages, which is why GPS are well placed to help students see the benefits of language skills in the workplace.

This project is part of the Business Language Champions programme, co-ordinated by the Regional Language Network (RLN) West Midlands. It is designed to bridge the gap between school and the workplace and to reverse the decline in the take up of modern foreign languages.

After an initial meeting between the school, company and RLN on 15 December 2006, to discuss potential activities and the practicalities of combining hectic business schedules with school timetables, GPS devised a task for Year 13 students to get their teeth into.

Having recently updated their company profile, GPS were keen to have their new marketing materials prepared in a variety of languages, which they could present to potential overseas customers. These materials provided the basis for translation exercises in German, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian.

Students went on to prepare corporate presentations and voice-over recordings based on the GPS profile, which they presented at an event on 29 March 2007. A photographer was invited and a press release was circulated to the local papers.

GPS are now reviewing students' presentations in the hope that they can use them in a forthcoming marketing campaign.

Though the translation work was at times rather technical, students enjoyed the challenge and the authenticity of the task. Martin Smith, head of modern languages at the Sixth Form College, Solihull commented that students were inspired by something which they could relate to the 'real world' of business:

“Working with GPS gave students the benefit of presenting in a business-like environment and they relished the opportunity to take part in an authentic language assignment. The students feel as though they have passed something useful on to the company and we hope that by taking part in this project, they will realise the importance of languages in the modern workplace and want to pursue their language learning further.”

Anna-Maria Arcidiacono, international sales manager at GPS, who is reviewing student's work, added:

“Languages are incredibly important in our workplace as we are constantly dealing with people whose first language is not English. We are delighted to be helping local students to understand the true worth of having language skills in today's globalised marketplace and would encourage other multilingual companies to follow suit.”

(505 words)

Photograph attached (PDF -

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