

## **Kickstart your languages strategy!**

We all know that speaking the language of our customers can help us to build better business relationships but it can be difficult knowing how and when to implement such skills. A recent survey<sup>1</sup> proved that export sales increased by 44.5% for companies with a languages strategy.

Why not kick start your languages strategy by carrying out an in-house audit of language capabilities? By determining what language skills you already have in your workforce, you are one step closer to breaking into that new market or reaching new overseas clients.

The Regional Languages Network (RLN) offers a simple audit template and can advise you on improving your international communications. From their website [www.rln-westmidlands.com](http://www.rln-westmidlands.com) you can access a range of free downloadable resources including cultural briefings and podcasts to help you get to grips with a new language and culture.

The RLN can also help you to source interpreters and translators in your area as well as providing details of language trainers and cultural consultants, whatever markets you are interested in.

If you would like to share your experience of using languages, the RLN is currently looking for business people to work with local schools as part of their Business Language Champions programme.

The programme aims to bridge the gap between school and the workplace and reverse the decline in languages uptake. A company or business person is partnered with a local school and activities are organised to allow students to see the usefulness of languages beyond the classroom.

Over the past twelve months, the RLN has helped increase or maintain languages uptake at nine schools in the region, with many more benefiting from the presentations, language quizzes, company visits and authentic language tasks organised as part of the programme.

If you would like to find out more about Business Language Champions or require further information about the language resources available to you, please contact Frances Pallett, BLC Project Manager, on 0121 329 3297 or e-mail [frances.pallett@rln-westmidlands.com](mailto:frances.pallett@rln-westmidlands.com).

1 - Effects on the European Union Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise (ELAN) - A research study on behalf of the European Commission, 2007.