

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Language skills are not enough.
Why business leaders who are innovative
communicators enjoy a clear advantage.



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The soul has been stripped out of the way the business world communicates and it desperately needs putting back.

Powerful communication between people plays a critical role in a company's bottom line. It is not a soft skill, a nice to have or a fluffy optional extra. It's a necessity. Without it, you're toast."

**Miti Ampoma,
Miticom® Communications Training**

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Introduction

Now, more than at any other time in history, if business leaders want to succeed they must put human relationships at the heart of all they do. Their personal and professional success depends on it.

This report explores global trends that are changing how we live, work and communicate. It explains the impact these changes are having on both people and business. And it recommends what you, as a business leader, can do to ensure both your career and your business survive.

“The best of human relationships can, and will, transform businesses for the greater good.”

Miti Ampoma



Communication: a hard or soft skill?

Many people class effective communication as a soft skill. However, there's nothing soft about the ability to communicate in a way that inspires others and leads change; that develops consensus and shared understanding; that creates and maintains valuable connections; and that, as a result of all this, drives consistent and sustainable improvements in performance.

We call people who can do this *Innovative Communicators*. Every leader or prospective leader should make sure they have the English language and communication skills to become an innovative communicator. Those with natural-born communication skills may find this easier. However, perhaps unlike some 'soft' skills, you can learn to communicate in English with confidence, impact and presence, even when English isn't your first language.

Any business leader who puts a genuine focus on integrity and humanity at the heart of their communication will reap the benefits. Let's see how.

Our fast-changing world

Change brings both opportunities and threats. We explain how today's most significant trends are changing the way we communicate, so you can capitalize on the opportunities they bring and mitigate the threats.

Globalisation

Advances in technology and a global approach to business are increasingly creating an international workforce. Firms no longer have a reason to limit themselves by geography so, many companies - even new ones - think globally from day one.

Which means the ability to communicate effectively in English, as the dominant language of global trade, is becoming increasingly important. In fact, English proficiency is now seen as a generic skill, much like IT or numeracy. And for top management positions, many companies expect a near-native level of ability¹.

Technology

Advances in technology are driving globalisation. So it's ironic that we are more connected than ever, but not to each other.

Priority has changed from people, process, technology to technology, process, people. For example, more and more people are choosing to communicate by email or messaging service rather than have a conversation face-to-face or over the telephone. Even HR departments are using artificial intelligence to try and help them better understand how their employees feel about their work. As one person commented: 'You know what would make me happier at work? Actual intelligence.'

Yet, we are built for human relationships. They make us feel valued, help us flourish and feed our success. The most successful leaders recognise this and help their staff connect by using technology to support human relationships, rather than prevent them.

"In our endless pursuit of technology, will we ultimately decry the need and purpose of being human? Will we fail in our duty to ourselves as a species?"

Miti Ampoma, 2018

The changing nature of work

We have a new, global workforce, who often operate from multiple cities. And we have a fluid workforce, where people change jobs regularly. For example, a person in the UK will have, on average, 10-14 jobs in their lifetime. As the global economy gets stronger and people feel more confident about taking a risk and making a career move, this figure could rise. And increase the competition for jobs².

Therefore, if you can communicate effectively in English you have more chance of both beating the competition and recruiting the best staff. While if your English and communication skills are weak you will find it harder to move from market to market, even if you are highly skilled in other ways³.

¹The Language Guide for European Business, European Commission, 2011.

²The Personal Career Management Group 2014. ³Diversity Matters, McKinsey, 2015.

The value of diversity

In our global, interconnected and mobile workforce, diversity has financial value. In their 2015 report, Diversity Matters, McKinsey show that not only do more diverse companies have better financial performance, but that less diverse companies have poorer financial performance.

These results were backed up in McKinsey's 2018 follow-up report, Delivering through Diversity. They found that companies with the most ethnically and culturally diverse executive teams were 33% more likely to outperform on profitability; while companies with the most ethnically diverse boards were 43% more likely to experience higher profits.

These diverse companies use English as their common language. And, to retain their competitive edge, are increasingly seeking the world's top talent.

Language skills vs cultural understanding

Having technical ability in a language is not the same as understanding all the cultural norms and idioms that mean you can communicate effectively in it. Indeed, a lack of cultural affinity has been cited by businesses as a reason for their communication failures⁴. And in business, communication failure invariably means commercial failure.

Today, more and more of us work in a global, multicultural context, where people use different languages, negotiation styles and business etiquettes. So business leaders must understand the context and challenges of communication in a global market, as well as recognize and understand cultural diversity⁵.

Impact of ethnic and cultural diversity. Likelihood of higher profits (%).

Most diverse executive teams:



Most diverse boards:



⁴Credit source: The Language Guide for European Business, European Commission, 2011.

⁵ResearchGate, Language tools: Communicating in today's world of business, Polytechnic Institute of Porto.

English as the imperative global business language

Some languages, such as Cantonese, Portuguese and English, are spoken by millions of people in different parts of the world. This makes them global in a geographic and numbers sense. However, as well as being spoken in several countries, English is also used as the worldwide language for business, science, technology and education. This universal use across different contexts is what makes English *the* global business language.

Without basic English skills, your company will have difficulty trading across continents and even beyond neighbouring countries. For example, 51% of European SMEs cite English as the primary language for business communication in their major export markets, with German as the next largest language at 13%⁶.

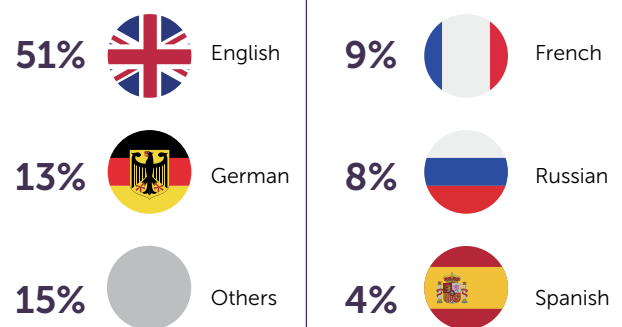
English proficiency is now seen by business as a generic skill much like computing skills or numeracy. It is the most demanded language for a CV and often takes precedent over the language of the company you're applying to. And for top management positions, English at a near-native level is increasingly a requirement

Finally, language skills have a positive impact on exports. SMEs that hire staff with language skills see a 16.6% increase in exports as share of sales; and those that have a language strategy see a 13.5% increase⁵.

"I mean, if I understand the language, I don't understand the meaning. It's not about you speak the language, you'll have to think the language. You will have to know how to use the language. Like, many colleagues, not only Japanese, but from other countries, they speak English fluently, but they don't really understand English. So, that's a different thing"

Respondent, Effects of using English in business communication in Japanese-based multinational corporations, Miina Ojanperä, January 2014

European SMEs export markets: primary language used



Language skills:
% increase on SMEs
exports as share of sales

Staff with language skills:

16.5%

Language strategy:

13.5%

⁶European Commission, The Language Guide for European Business: Successful communication in your international trade, 2011.

Is this your pain?

English isn't your native language, but in your career you're expected to communicate as if it is.

Our clients are highly intelligent, capable people. They're top executives, first-class students and bright, young graduates on a fast-track career path to the top. And yet, at times, they all lack confidence in their ability, feel insecure about their job and even feel afraid for their future.

This is because they're expected to have English skills that allow them to:

- Communicate at work as if it's their native language
- Be interviewed in the language to win a promotion
- Pass an exam or company assessment in the language

These are high-level English speakers, but they still feel their English skills will let them down. Many have invested significant time and money taking courses online and offline, yet they are unable to communicate effectively in the language. And this lack of ability is undermining all the other skills they've worked so hard to achieve.



To regain their confidence and protect their careers they need to:

1. Develop their general English vocabulary
2. Develop their technical English vocabulary in relation to their area of business
3. Develop their conversational English
4. Improve their accent when speaking English
5. Write better in English
6. Better understand written English
7. Better understand spoken English
8. Understand British culture and context

So when they're using the language they can:

- Inspire people
- Present with confidence
- Deliver difficult messages
- Keep pace with what they're thinking
- Improve their relationships with British colleagues
- Represent themselves as well as they do in their native language
- Develop opportunities with new and existing British clients, especially post-Brexit
- Participate fully in conversations, discussions, meetings, training events and conferences

“I can’t convey my real intention”

Respondent, Miina Ojanperä, Effects of using English in business communication in Japanese-based multinational corporations, January 2014

It’s impossible to learn to communicate effectively in a language simply by studying it on a course or series of courses. You may learn to translate one word into another, but you won’t gain the cultural understanding you need to communicate effectively in it, in real-world situations.

These are the stories of some of the people we’ve worked with, who all faced significant professional barriers due to their lack of effective English communication skills.

Gabriel: the story of a C-suite leader

Gabriel was a board-level director for an international company with an annual turnover of more than \$5 billion. He reported directly to the Global CEO and was responsible for winning new contracts across the world. These contracts often had a value of several million dollars.

Gabriel frequently travelled abroad as part of his work, visiting clients and prospective clients in EMEA, the USA and beyond. The business language that united these people from different countries and different cultures was English.

Gabriel’s problem

Gabriel had invested a serious amount of time and money learning English and could speak it with a high level of competence. However, he felt he wasn’t able to communicate effectively in the language on a global stage, with either native or non-native English speakers. As his sales results, and the ultimate success of the company, depended on his ability to use English to communicate and connect with people across different countries and cultures, this was beginning to have a negative impact on both his confidence and his performance.

Added to this was the fact that Gabriel’s company was growing and young people with better English communication skills were coming up through the ranks. Although these younger people were not as skilled or experienced as Gabriel, he couldn’t compete with them in terms of English. As a result, his job was under threat.

The change Gabriel needed

In order to progress and protect his job, Gabriel needed a course that would overcome the language barrier he faced, not just from a technical, translation point of view, but by transforming and cementing his communication skills.

The solution

We devised a bespoke, month-long, immersive programme for Gabriel. The programme included English language, communication skills, communication strategy and British culture. Some learning we did in a traditional classroom style, some involved practical exercises and some was out meeting people and communicating in real-world business situations.

The result

At the end of the course Gabriel said he had learned more in one month than in the previous 20 years combined. Today he feels able to communicate with confidence in English, wherever his work takes him and whatever situation he finds himself in. He still has his job.

Sofia: the story of a next-generation leader

Sofia was typical of many young people today: she was born in one country, living in another and considered herself to be very much a citizen of the world. She was also highly ambitious, driven by a desire not only to succeed on a global stage, but to make a positive and lasting contribution to humanity.

To help her realise her ambitions and work in the international context where she felt most comfortable, Sofia joined one of Europe's largest and most prestigious companies. She joined them on a graduate programme after completing a degree in engineering.

Sofia had considerable commercial and technical skills which she put to good use managing a large number of clients. While she had a very high level of technical English, her communication skills were not as good and she lacked confidence using the language in more formal or challenging situations.

Sofia's problem

As part of her graduate programme, Sofia was expected to change roles in the company every two years. She wanted to make the most of her engineering qualification and move on to become a field engineer. However, to do this Sofia had to pass a wide-ranging company assessment, in English.

The company assessment was conducted in English because it was led by staff from different European branches of the company, who used English as their common language.

It included a presentation, interview, role-play, verbal reasoning, situational judgement and an in-tray exercise of real-life business challenges.



The change Sofia needed

This was a make-or-break assessment for Sofia, that would affect her entire future career. To pass she needed to have both a world-class level of technical English and the ability to communicate effectively in the language. However, although Sofia's company had high expectations of its employees, it gave them no help to prepare for the assessment. It expected them to invest in their English language skills themselves, even though this investment would significantly benefit the company.

The solution

We devised a programme that covered all the components of Sofia's company assessment as well as communication skills and specific English vocabulary relevant to her work. The programme included practical exercises, classroom-based learning and real business-life experiences..

The result

Sofia gained skills and experience that allowed her to concentrate on the assessment itself, rather her English. As a result, she passed with flying colours and was promoted into her chosen role.

Blue Sky and Far Ocean: the story of a global venture

The company we'll refer to as Blue Sky (to protect its identity) is a major British company with a long-established history and rich heritage. Blue Sky was setting up a new global business in partnership with an international company we'll refer to as Far Ocean.

The new company was to take over third-party administration services for Blue Sky. This involved 1200 people transferring to the new company from Blue Sky, with just 200 people remaining.

Their problem

This was a complex process. The leadership team had to establish a new partnership and create a new, multi-national organisation that would operate globally. In doing this they needed to retain the rich heritage in the British parent company while at the same time allowing the new, global company to flourish. This called for significant cultural diplomacy and a delicate balance of power.

Leaders and managers from all the companies involved needed to communicate a vast amount of information, including some difficult messages, both internally to staff teams and externally to customers, partners, suppliers, executive authorities and the press.

To make things even more challenging, none of the leadership team had been responsible for anything like this before.



The change they needed

The success of the venture depended on Blue Sky, Far Ocean and the new company all having confident and capable staff to lead and deliver a clear communication strategy. As none of the existing staff had any relevant previous experience they needed:

- Help to develop an internal communication strategy
- Help to develop an external communication strategy
- Training in how to deliver both strategies

The solution

We worked with the relevant people from all three companies to agree their priorities, identify their key audiences and develop their key messages. The next step was to identify the best method for communicating each message to its relevant audience. Before these strategies could be enacted, we also put in place processes to measure and monitor their success, and action plans to manage and mitigate risk. Finally, we wrote key messages and trained leading staff to deliver them.

The result

As a result of this careful planning and preparation, the new company was launched with the minimum of disruption to the staff affected and with no misinformation or leaks. The leadership team also gained new skills and insights into what company-wide, effective communication looks like and the lasting benefits it brings.



When communication fails

“At the heart of all effective communication lies a focus on integrity and humanity.”

Miti Ampoma

For an organisation - any organisation - to survive a major crisis with its reputation, market value and leadership team intact, it must have an effective communication strategy. And to execute this strategy, it must have leaders and managers who themselves have effective communication skills.

The recent PR disaster affecting Facebook illustrates this perfectly. In March 2018, Facebook came up against the Cambridge Analytica data harvesting scandal, which affected 87 million of the company's users. From the news first breaking, it took almost five days before Facebook spoke.

When they finally did, their approach lacked empathy and failed to make a real connection with people. Odd, for a platform that prides itself on its ability to do exactly that. As one commenter noted after Mark Zuckerberg, the company's founder, mentioned apps three times in quick succession, "It wasn't apps that did this, it was people."

At one point Facebook lost more than \$80 billion from its market value. Mark Zuckerberg's personal wealth fell by \$14 billion. And the affects were felt across tech stocks, bringing down the value of other companies in the fall-out.

On a more sombre note, in the UK in May 2017, poor communications led to confusion among emergency services and meant fire crews did not arrive at the scene of the Manchester Arena bombing for more than two hours. This illustrates, far more seriously, the impact of unclear language and ineffective communication.

When communication succeeds

By contrast, effective communication mitigates risk and enables you to respond appropriately. It means your response will be clear and therefore immediately understood. And it means your response is more likely to make the right, human, connection.

When facing a crisis, if your lack of communication skills mean you can't respond quickly and effectively, the stakes are high. Both for your organisation, for others, and for you personally.

By now you understand the need to develop effective English language communication skills. You have the desire and commitment to act. So what do you do next? Turn the page.



The Innovative Communicator Accelerator Programme

When communication succeeds

You are, or you aspire to be, a successful business leader. So you need people to believe in you and what you say. Sometimes you need to be passionate, urgent, compelling and convincing. You need to capture people's attention – and hold it. For this to happen, they must be able to understand you, immediately.

But when you speak in English, you sometimes find that what you say isn't what you mean. You feel as if you're simply translating words, rather than communicating an idea, feeling or understanding. You feel as if you're not connecting with people.

It doesn't have to be this way

You can learn to communicate well using the English language on our Innovative Communicator Accelerator Programme. The programme is based on the principles that you only learn to communicate like a native English speaker when you combine English language learning with:

- Communication skills training
- An understanding of the cultural context of the English Language, and
- Relevant knowledge of business change

On the course you won't simply learn to translate from your native language into English. Instead, you'll learn to communicate effectively in real world situations and speak clear, relevant English with confidence, impact and presence.

By the end you'll be able to communicate in a way that develops meaningful relationships with your colleagues. That drives performance. And that creates sustainable financial growth.

Find out more [here](#)

The Innovative Communicator Accelerator Programme: course outline

:: MODULE 1:

Exploring the 'authentic' me

:: MODULE 2:

Leading with influence and integrity

:: MODULE 3:

Driving commercial advantage



Our vision for the future

We've seen how good human communication is more important than ever, in a business world where technology and process have come to dominate at the expense of bringing out the best in people. We all respect and respond well to clear, honest communication we can trust. At the heart of that communication there needs to be a genuine focus on integrity and humanity.

Our vision is to create a world full of game-changing communicators who deliver meaningful solutions.

Our flagship training, the Innovative Communicator Accelerator Programme, focuses on communication skills as opposed to the process of translation so you learn to communicate globally, in a business context.

The Innovative Communicator Accelerator Programme is based on the principles of the book:

THE INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATOR

– putting the soul back into business communication, by Miti Ampoma.

"An inspiring and practical guide to really effective people-communication in a modern business climate crying out for it."

Mike Harris, Founding CEO of first direct bank and Egg Banking plc, founding Executive Chairman at Garlick and ex CEO of Mercury Communications

"Pushing your own boundaries is vital if you want to develop your communication skills"

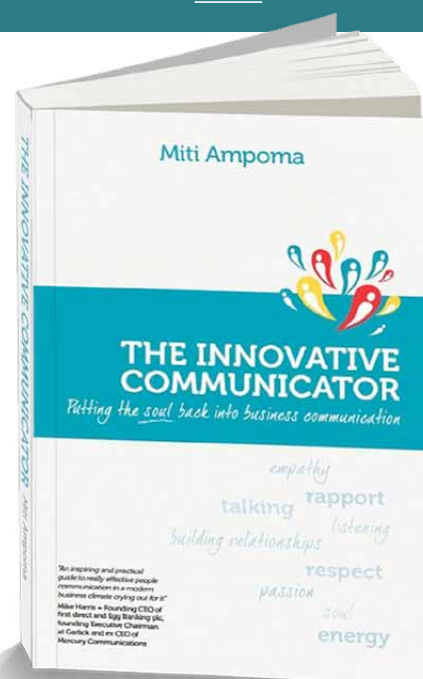
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As you become more comfortable in your communication skills, you'll do more, speak up more and become more visible. You'll become better known, better understood and more influential. Because people approach you more, you'll learn more. You'll build a loyal team around you.

You'll be using the positive power of effective communication to generate lasting success with integrity and humanity.

You'll have become an Innovative Communicator.

Buy your copy of
THE INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATOR
[here](#)



Report authors

Miti Ampoma

Miti Ampoma is an award-winning business communications professional, experienced English language skills trainer, journalist and coach. She helps FTSE 100 companies develop effective and dynamic communications programmes. And she helps individuals transform their skills so they can communicate with impact, integrity and heart.



Miti is the founder of Miticom Communications Training, creator of the Innovative Communicator movement and author of the acclaimed business book, ***The Innovative Communicator: Putting the soul back into business communication.***

Sarah Russell

Sarah Russell helps businesses, organisations and individuals communicate clearly, connect with people and sell their product, service or idea. Creative and skilled at capturing exactly what you need to say, Sarah's writing both packs a punch and has heart.



Prior to setting up her business, Sarah spent 20 years working in the public sector. This is when she honed her skills in plain English, learned how to make the complex simple and developed the empathy necessary to connect with people.

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There has never been a better time for people in business to reconnect through meaningful communication to what matters most to them and to each other, for the greater good.”

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Miticom Communications Training**

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