

Create a Positive Customer Experience in Any Language

Earning the loyalty of customers from different backgrounds starts with hiring employees who can convey your company's commitment to inclusive service by speaking their language.

As the American population continues to diversify and businesses expand operations around the world, multilingual employees provide a valuable resource. Their words often generate a customer's first impression of your company and determine his or her willingness to engage in the future. Determining that your multilingual employees are proficient will ensure that they will provide excellent service in all their interactions and is an investment in your company's future success. As the recognized industry leader in language proficiency assessment, Language Testing International (LTI) provides consistent and defensible testing that helps companies make that investment wisely.

HIRING FOR PROFICIENCY

In its early days, a major online marketplace evaluated the language proficiency of call center candidates through conversations with multilingual managers. Yet informal evaluations did not predict acceptable performance during customer interactions.

LTI worked with the company to determine the level of language proficiency needed for success in various jobs. Candidates now meet a threshold of fluency specific to the tasks they'll perform if hired. Both the company and the candidates have gained the confidence that comes with ACTFL ratings.

Establishing consistent fluency standards

In most businesses, language testing methods evolve out of necessity. Some are informal, such as a conversation with a multilingual manager. Others have been formalized based on internally determined standards. It's only in the last 10 years that the value of establishing proficiency expectations and measuring them against a national standard has achieved greater recognition in the corporate sector.



The methodology for this type of testing has been evolving for decades outside of the commercial space. Soon after its creation, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) adopted the mission to develop a “common metric” for describing and testing proficiency that could be used across academic, commercial and government sectors. Since their introduction in 1986, ACTFL proficiency standards and assessment methodologies have increasingly been recognized as the “gold standard” for reliable language assessment.

LTI, the exclusive assessment licensee for ACTFL, conducts more than half a million assessments annually for over 120 languages and in 40 countries.

Achieving an ACTFL language proficiency rating provides assurance that an employee or job candidate has the language skills necessary to perform their required tasks successfully.

Task-based proficiency ratings predict performance

What makes ACTFL testing particularly valuable for businesses is that it measures an individual's ability to effectively accomplish real-life communication tasks. LTI works closely with individual businesses

to establish appropriate minimum proficiency levels for the successful use of language, which are then incorporated into that company's position descriptions, testing protocols and hiring procedures.

Because of its basis in real-world language use, proficiency testing is critical for businesses

that serve customers from different language groups to ensure that the testing is based on what a candidate can do in a language and not based on their ethnic background, years of language learning or other factors which are not objective and may even be considered illegal hiring biases.

ACTFL ratings cover 10 levels of proficiency, from Novice to Superior, with specific criteria for speaking, writing, listening and reading. By screening job candidates for proficiency in the hiring process, your company gains a higher level of confidence that customers will have a consistent experience with your company, no matter what language they prefer.

Offering multilingual services benefits businesses

Although hiring processes vary widely from company to company, the value of making effective multilingual hires can't be underestimated. In fact, Common Sense Advisory has released research showing that increased spending on translation services correlates to an increase in revenue.

Companies are getting on board. Research conducted by Whale Path, Inc., for LTI in 2014 reported that the vast majority of the country's leading telecommunications, retail banking and healthcare services providers offer sales and customer care communications in at least one language besides English. Spanish is the most common, while other languages—such as Mandarin Chinese—are often provided according to the needs of target markets or local populations. Eighty percent of the companies surveyed said that customers expect them to do business in languages other than English—it's no longer considered an optional service.

Across all three industries, survey respondents saw increases in both top line numbers, through sales, and bottom line numbers, thanks to increased efficiency brought about by improved communication. Having multilingual staff was seen as an effective means of building customer trust in 75% of cases.

Providing fully proficient multilingual services, of course, increases customer satisfaction further. In fact, the Harvard Business Review recently reported that 72% of consumers are more likely to buy a product if the seller communicates with them in their own language.

When language ability comes up short, though, customer loyalty suffers. There are classic stories of translation missteps that dissuaded customers from engaging with a brand or product—the Chevy Nova launch in Mexico, for example, where “no va” in direct translation means “no go,” which predictably didn't resonate with automobile purchasers. There's no question that communicating poorly or incorrectly can be costly, since customers who feel disrespected or misunderstood are likely to select other providers. In high-liability industries such as healthcare, finance and law, such a misstep could snowball into a customer relations catastrophe.

That's why language proficiency blends the knowledge of culture and effective communication. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that 21% of the country's population—and growing—spoke a language other than English at home as recently as 2011. The need for marketplace communication competence in languages other than English is clear. The 350-plus languages currently spoken in the United States are a prime indicator of future customer needs and business opportunities.

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPANIES AND STAFF

When a company sees the opportunity to increase sales in a specific ethnic market, native language service becomes a necessity. That was the lesson a Fortune 100 financial company learned as global growth triggered friction between customers and agents.

As employee salaries were increasingly tied to multilingual fluency, objective testing became critical. But the company also had to balance the cultural perceptions of its diverse hiring pool with the need for early identification of task-based proficiency.

LTI has developed a variety of testing solutions that allow companies to test candidates at the most appropriate time in the hiring process, with results that increase the consistency of customer experience around the world. That's a growth opportunity for everyone involved.

THE CONVENIENCE OF REMOTE PROCTORING

One of the nation's best recognized interpretation services requires interpreters to be fluent in English and at least one specialty language—and able to flawlessly navigate legal nuances. Using an in-house writing test and existing certifications to evaluate candidates didn't correlate to successful spontaneous interpretation in the courts.

By using remote proctoring from LTI, the organization allows prospective interpreters to take both the English and specialty language tests from home when it's convenient for them. LTI helped set benchmarks for the level of language ability needed for legal interpretation.

As a result, prospective interpreters experience a streamlined vetting process. And the organization's clients, partner agencies and court contacts have an objective assurance of fluent interpretation.

LTI helps identify fluent candidates efficiently

The need to find qualified, fluent multilingual employees to serve this diverse and growing audience has prompted changes in test administration options. Previously, companies brought candidates into physical test facilities to assess their skills. This procedure demanded time, extra effort and significant overhead costs. New online technologies now give recruitment teams faster, inexpensive testing options that require less administrative oversight.



That's why LTI has introduced remote proctoring, which combines the latest technology with the internationally recognized ACTFL OPIC™ speaking assessment. Companies seeking bilinguals can now direct candidates to the remote proctoring site to register online to take the test when and where it's convenient for them.

LTI's remote proctoring service provides a live, remote video proctor to verify the identity of the candidate and monitor progress through the test, just as your company's proctor would do in a physical test setting. A remotely proctored assessment is presented and recorded in exactly the same way as LTI's traditional computer-delivered tests in a lab environment. The language assessments LTI delivers via remote proctoring are evaluated by the same ACTFL trained and certified raters.

LTI's remote proctoring service provides

a simple, cost-effective and consistent way to evaluate your candidates' language proficiency using the best of today's remote testing practices and technologies. It even allows multilingual individuals to arrange and pay for their own assessment and ACTFL proficiency credential proactively, so they

enter your hiring pipeline prequalified. It's one more way LTI is helping your company provide high-quality service to multilingual customers to earn their business and maintain their loyalty.

How can LTI's remote proctoring service improve your business?

Call us at **800.486.8444** for a free consultation or visit [languagetesting.com](https://www.languagetesting.com) to learn more about our language assessment solutions.