

WHY MANUFACTURERS CANNOT FORGO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING

Manufacturing is a prominent pillar of American growth and prosperity. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, every \$1 invested in the manufacturing sector returned \$1.81 to the economy in 2015.



More than 251,000 firms operate in the United States today, making manufacturing one of the largest employing industries.

The [National Association of Manufacturers reports](#)¹ that every \$1 invested in the manufacturing sector returned \$1.81 to the economy in 2015, making it a vital pillar of American growth — and, with over 250,000 operating firms and 24 million immigrant employees, one of the largest and most diverse employing industries in the United States.

This trend will continue as “virtually all of the growth in the U.S. labor force over the next four decades is projected to come from immigrants and their children,” according to a [Brookings Institute report](#)².

Such growth is a double-edged sword for manufacturers. On one hand, they will have a larger pool of immigrant talent; on the other, an alarming number of these immigrant workers will have limited English proficiency (LEP). [The Migration Policy Institute](#)³ estimates that “19 million working-age adults (18 to 64 years old)”,

approximately 10 percent of the eligible working population of the US, lack competent English language skills.

This report addresses the challenges an LEP workforce presents to the manufacturing industry, and looks at solutions to overcome them.

HIGHER OSHA RISKS

A lack of English proficiency is the primary challenge to maintaining and advancing immigrant employees in manufacturing firms, according to a survey from the [National Association of Manufacturers](#)⁴. This gap poses real, practical problems for manufacturing because LEP employees are more likely to:

- Violate OSHA safety regulations, resulting in steep fines and penalties for manufacturers: problems associated with communicating hazards to workers was cited as one of OSHA’s Top 10 most frequent violations in 2015

“Virtually all of the growth in the U.S. labor force over the next four decades is projected to come from immigrants and their children.”

-BROOKINGS INSTITUTE

- Have on-the-job accidents: [researchers](#)⁵ at the University of Southern California found that male Latino immigrants “have the highest average workplace injury rate at 13.7 per 1,000 workers.”

- Experience low morale as language obstacles prevent them from getting the most out of their jobs, leading to downturns in productivity: on average, they earn 39percent less than English proficient workers, according to Brookings.

- Struggle building key relationships with fellow employees and managers, making workers feel isolated and less integrated in the company.

- Are more likely to leave sooner, driving up turnover rate: the total turnover rate for the manufacturing and distribution sector in 2015 reached 14.8 percent, according to [CompData Surveys](#)⁷—resulting in escalating costs of time and money needed to replace departing workers.

- Commit more mistakes as a result of language barriers that get in the way of their training.

Sharpening the language skills of LEP employees is not a commodity, it is a necessity for manufacturers who want to stay competitive and grow.

But where should manufacturers start? Let’s take a look at some possible solutions.



- Struggle engaging with and understanding customers, fellow workers, managers, and department heads.
- Spend more time and effort training in their job protocols and the firm’s policies, further straining the manufacturer’s limited resources.

As a result, US manufacturers “invest approximately \$3,000 in training for each new hire and approximately \$1,500 per employee in training each year” regardless of language proficiency, as reported in the Accenture [2014 Manufacturing Skills and Training Study](#)⁶.

These drawbacks result in poor communication and inefficiencies — costing manufacturers more time, money, and goodwill, which is just one side of the issue. On the other side, the problems are equally frustrating and detrimental for LEP workers as a lack of English skills decreases their efficiency and effectiveness. Manufacturers can see the impact in both subtle and glaring ways as LEP workers:

IMPACT OF LEP WORKFORCE ON COMPANY OPERATIONS

- INCREASED ACCIDENTS
- LIMITED ENGAGEMENT
- LONGER TRAINING
- LOWER WAGES
- FASTER TURNOVER



“19 million working-age adults, approximately 10 percent of the eligible working population of the US, lack competent English language skills.”

-THE MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

CHOOSING THE LOGICAL SOLUTION

One solution is for LEP workers to enroll in English as a second language (ESL) classes outside of work on their own time. Though this sounds good on the surface, there are challenges to regular attendance including “inconvenience of location and time away from work or family obligations,” as published in recent Brookings report.

But, even if these inconveniences were not an issue, outside English classes are harder to attend. Studies show that public funding for adult English education has been unable to keep pace with the demand. Besides inadequate funding, the Brookings report also found that the wait time to enroll in these classes ranged from “a few weeks to over three years.”

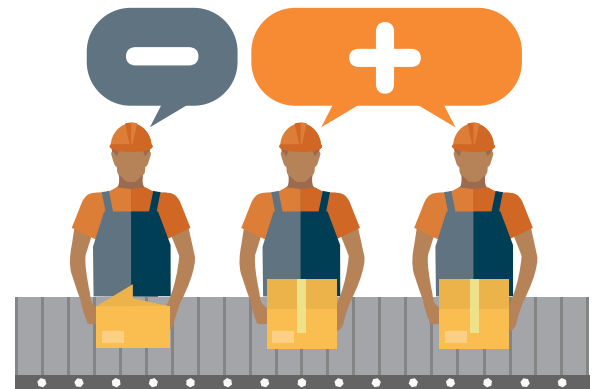
Yet—even if the funding existed and the wait time was slashed—there is little interest in helping manufacturers educate their workforce. The [National Association of Manufacturers](#) found⁸ that “most publicly funded ESL providers have neither experience with nor interest in working with employers to provide training customized to their businesses.”

Put another way: manufacturers appear to be on their own.

Another approach is for manufacturers to have interpreters on staff—a costly ongoing expense. For all their expertise, interpreters are not necessarily trained in the policies and procedures of the manufacturer. They could actually turn out to be an unintended obstacle in the chain of command.

Given these hard truths, the most logical, efficient, and money saving solution for improving the skills of LEP workers is for manufacturers themselves to provide the means for language instruction.

Although this might seem to be an onerous burden for manufacturers to shoulder, the reality is just the opposite.



PUTTING CONTROL IN YOUR HANDS

Rosetta Stone has harnessed the power of technology with the practicalities of the manufacturing sector to offer a suite of advantages that benefits both company leaders and workers.

Perhaps most important are products that provide anytime/anywhere language training. Manufacturers have the freedom to set up their training schedules to meet the needs of their company and their workers.

Put another way: you can set up language training during company hours that do not interfere with production schedules.

Language instruction programs can be selected that are appropriate for the competency of each worker. Workers are individually challenged at just the right level— ensuring efficient use of learning and company time. Instead of a rigid one-size-fits-all curriculum, learning can be tailored to workers’ individual needs. The program also provides selected lessons & content that are specifically related to the manufacturing industry.



“On average, limited English proficient workers earn 39 percent less than English proficient workers.”

-BROOKINGS INSTITUTE

Through a combination of live tutoring and speech-recognition technology that delivers instant speech feedback, workers can build their communication skills and speaking confidence in the most efficient and time-saving way possible.



REAPING THE DIVIDENDS

Imagine if your entire workforce spoke and understood English well—then you’ll begin to get a sense of the inherent value of investing in comprehensive online language training. Gains for manufacturers are easy to see. For example:

- Your risk of incurring OSHA violations and penalties would be dramatically slashed. Workers proficient in English would easily contribute to safer working conditions, with a commensurate reduction in insurance rates, fewer claims filed, and a lower potential of litigation expenses.

- Your work environment would become more conducive and harmonious. Workers who clearly understand and communicate with each other are much more likely to pull together cohesively as a team.
- Workers who feel included will assimilate faster into your company’s workforce and into the overall culture of your company.
- Providing comprehensive language training demonstrates your willingness to give your employees greater access to tools for their success. You’ll instill deeper loyalty in your workers, resulting in higher retention rates.
- You’ll also be a leader in the manufacturing sector when it comes to labor relations. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, “For organized labor, representing the interests of workers increasingly means negotiating contracts that include English language instruction in the workplace.”
- An investment in online language training is actually an investment in the future success of your company. Helping your LEP workers advance will turn them into long-term assets, allowing you to stay more competitive at a lower cost.

BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN LANGUAGE TRAINING

- LESS RISK OF OSHA VIOLATIONS
- MORE HARMONIOUS WORKPLACE
- FASTER ASSIMILATION BY EMPLOYEES
- GIVES WORKFORCE TOOLS FOR SUCCESS
- LEADS TO HIGHER RETENTION RATES

“Training new employees is 75% more expensive than retaining existing employees. The cost of training foreign-born employees is even higher.”

-LANGUAGE ADVISORS NETWORK GROUP

BOOSTING HUMAN RESOURCES

A workforce proficient in English language communication benefits almost every area of your manufacturing operation.

It’s no surprise that recruiting and onboarding LEP workers is a big challenge for Human Resources. According to [Language Advisors Network Group](#)⁸, “Training new employees is 75% more expensive than retaining existing employees. The cost of training foreign-born employees is even higher.”



Comprehensive language training can solve those challenges. Workers who have an above average grasp of English can help HR managers meet federal regulations, company guidelines, and job-specific requirements more efficiently.

Although we’ve focused primarily on language training for frontline workers, online language learning can also improve managers’ ability to communicate with their employees. Managers and department heads who are trained in cross-cultural awareness are better informed and prepared to engage with domestic and foreign suppliers and customers—clear advantages in our interconnected world.

IMPROVING RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As with any new initiative, comprehensive language training requires an upfront commitment of time and money on the part of manufacturers. There’s no question that it will take time for your workers to sharpen their language skills and additional funds to set up the program.

However, the return on investment in terms of safety and efficiency gains alone will more

than make up for the initial costs. The built-in value for manufacturers who opt for online learning instead of face-to-face teaching are readily apparent:

- **Flexibility:** You can set up a program that meets the needs and schedules of both your company and the individual workers.
- **Personalization:** You can easily tailor a program to meet the specific requirements of each worker for more effective learning.
- **Immediate feedback:** Workers learn better and faster when they get results right away, spurring them to accelerate their learning.
- **Scalability:** The ease and versatility of the technology allows you to ramp up online learning across multiple locations, facilitating the success and training of your workforce.
- **Analytics and assessment:** You’ll get timely, relevant data to help you monitor the progress of the program and your workers, allowing you to deploy your resources for the best possible outcome.

GET ANSWERS FROM ROSETTA STONE

Manufacturers who invest in a comprehensive online language program will slash their inefficiencies, reduce their training costs, imbue loyalty among their workers, cut the risk of OSHA and safety violations, and stay more competitive in a global and diversified workplace.

To learn more about strengthening on-the-job communication go to: <http://businesshub.rosettastone.com>

Or, if you’re ready to discuss how our solutions can help you drive business performance, contact Rosetta Stone at <http://corporate.rosettastone.com/consultation> and one of our language experts will get back to you promptly.

RESOURCES

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