

Celebrate at work

EUROPEAN DAY



You don't have to wait until Christmas for a party. Get colleagues involved on the European Day of Languages by celebrating at work!

Here are just a few ideas for activities, these activities suggest specific languages but be creative and don't forget to let us know how you get on by e-mailing edl@cilt.org.uk.

Continental breakfast briefing

Start as you mean to go on, with a continental breakfast briefing or meeting. Arrange a delivery of croissants, Danish pastries, pumpnickel, cold meats or cheese as well as coffees from around the world or ask each staff member to contribute something. Decide on one or more languages that are important in your working environment or market and conduct the briefing/meeting in that language, using a chart of key words if necessary.



Chinese take-away lunch

Practise your Chinese and have a tasty meal at the same time. Speak to your local take-away in Chinese – they are sure to be impressed! When the food arrives, discuss how delicious the meal is before heading on to different topics, work-related and otherwise. Alternatively, take your celebration to your local restaurant and try out your languages skills on the waiting staff as well as each other. Learning how to say 'please' and 'thank you' is a great start for colleagues new to the language, so why not help them out so they can order their favourite dish?



Italian wine-tasting hour

There is no ignoring the fact that Italy produces some very fine wine, so why not celebrate with a wine-tasting competition. Get staff to taste a variety of wines and discuss the relative merits of each in Italian before giving each one marks out of ten, adding up the score to find the most popular. Next ask the tasters to guess the type of wine and give a bottle (or more) of the top wine to the winner and if they are feeling confident they could be encouraged to make an acceptance speech.



Eurovision song contest/karaoke

Most people love singing, so this is the perfect way to entertain (or indeed torture) colleagues while using your language skills. Ask staff to perform their favourite foreign language songs or relive the Eurovision Song Contests of the past, with the commentary in another language. Ask teams of judges with a common language to distribute points once all songs have been performed and award a prize to the winner.



Salsa lesson in Spanish

Salsa is taking the UK by storm – don't get left behind! If you have a dancer in your midst then enlist them for a lesson, otherwise contact one of many local instructors that can be found in the phone book. If your teacher speaks Spanish, ask them to conduct the lesson in Spanish, otherwise use a member of staff to interpret – you'll find the steps have Spanish names and you are sure of a great time!



Share your experiences

While mistranslations and cultural gaffes are very serious issues in the global market and the world of work, some misunderstandings can be very amusing. Invite colleagues to share their experiences of fun misunderstandings whether linguistic or cultural. Colleagues can be quizzed on the potential source of the misunderstanding or be given a number of possibilities from which to choose as well as being asked to vote on the most amusing.



Teach a friend a language

Build mutual respect between employees in multilingual environments, develop team spirit and above all have fun teaching a colleague. This can be done in a single day, or set up several days or weeks in advance of a final performance.

Ask them to teach a colleague a conversation of about two minutes. Give the pairs time to prepare and rehearse their dialogues. Set a time for the dialogues to be performed in front of a live audience, and have someone judge them.

Send a multilingual e-greeting

Engage colleagues in a real communicative activity by getting them to send a virtual greetings card in a foreign language to another colleague or to us (edl@cilt.org.uk). There are many sites which allow you to do this free of charge, we suggest the following:

French	fr.greetings.yahoo.com
German	de.greetings.yahoo.com
Spanish	es.greetings.yahoo.com
Italian	it.greetings.yahoo.com
Brazilian Portuguese	br.greetings.yahoo.com

Plan a language audit

Take the first step towards a corporate action plan on 26 September and plan an audit of the language skills of your workforce. Use the National Language Standards 2000 to assess staff skills, introduce the process on the Day with staff self-assessment against a basic summary of the Standards and record them in an *Adult European Language Portfolio*.

Identify strengths and weaknesses in your workforce and develop a strategy to exploit strengths and develop areas of weakness. Aim for an increase in language skills capacity by the European Day of Languages 2004.



www.cilt.org.uk/edl

Organise a debate



This activity for more advanced learners forces them to use the language for a real purpose. Divide learners into teams. Choose a controversial subject and decide which team supports and which team opposes the motion.

Bring together as big an audience as possible, drawing particularly on those who understand the target language. Ask the audience to be prepared to put simple questions to the teams in the target language.

Host a quiz

Use our European Day of Languages Quiz or write one of your own to get staff thinking about and using languages. A quiz can take place during a morning coffee break, at lunchtime or as the highlight of a language-focused evening.



Alternatively, get staff to log on to the Internet and complete an on-line quiz of their choice. There are many sites which host such quizzes, for example, www.funtrivia.com.

Run a competition

Caption competitions allow staff to be creative in any language. Select an amusing picture or cartoon and circulate it to colleagues, inviting them to come up with a fitting caption in a foreign language.

If there is a wide range of languages spoken in your company, you may wish to establish different categories (language, level, section etc). Winning captions can be published in newsletters or posted on the Intranet.

Variations on the above include:

- Mexican tapas evening
- Martial arts in Japanese
- French film night
- Share examples of how other cultures do business
- Collate pictures of unusual foods eaten abroad
- Record favourite songs in a foreign language.
- Send CILT a postcard
- Send a greeting to key contacts and stakeholders
- Organise an international poetry challenge
- Test your level (see www.bbclangues.com)