Business Language Champion – Case Study

Smith & Smith PR, a public relations agency based in Manchester city centre, actively recruits staff with language skills and also funds ongoing language training for its employees. With 40% of its full-time staff fluent in at least one European language aside from English - the business has French, German, Spanish, Italian and Hebrew in-house - the agency sees language skills as important from the recruitment stage onwards.

Since focusing more closely on language skills at the recruitment stage and encouraging staff to learn new languages, with funding and time *in lieu* offered by the company, the business has been able to win work that will see them deliver high quality pan-European PR campaigns, placing them ahead of competitors in international PR. Smith & Smith's clients now include Brulimar, one of the UK's leading designers and manufacturers of licensed glasses frames, for whom the agency have been delivering a tailored campaign into the French optical trade media amongst others. Account manager Susan Tonge, who is fluent in French, has travelled to Paris on solo press trips for the client and has been involved in Brulimar's trade shows worldwide.

In summer 2008 Smith & Smith PR became a Business Language Champion for RLN NW, linking up with Flixton High School.

Following a July visit to the school by Smith & Smith account manager Susan Tonge, who spoke to pupils about the importance of studying languages and how they help her in her own job, a group of around 20 female pupils visited Smith & Smith's offices to see languages in action.

During the office visit, the pupils had a Q&A session with agency managing director Nathan Smith as well as a real-life taste of languages helping people do business when Spanish-speaking account executive Charlotte Cornwell arranged a feature in a Spanish magazine with a journalist over the phone. Charlotte, 22, landed a job at Smith & Smith straight after graduating from Manchester University, with her language skills playing a deciding factor – Charlotte studied American and Latin American Studies with Spanish, and has fluent Spanish plus the cultural experience of two extended study trips to Madrid and Puebla, Mexico.

Websites: Regional Language Network North West: www.rln-northwest.com Smith and Smith PR: www.smithandsmithpr.co.uk
CILT: www.cilt.org.uk