

Case study

BUSINESS LANGUAGE CHAMPIONS
a project supported by the DCSF through CILT

L'Oréal and Overton Grange School. Because languages are worth it.



Ralph Lauren, Giorgio Armani, Diesel. What do these high fashion brand names have in common? They are all fragrances marketed by L'Oréal, the number 1 beauty company in the world. Established over 100 years ago and with 290 offices in 130 countries around the world, French-owned L'Oréal is a global brand name in its own right, and understands the importance of languages and cultural knowledge in communicating with its customers.

Sylvia Sidhom, French teacher at Overton Grange School in Sutton, discovered the Business Language Champions programme online and, following the launch event, was paired with L'Oréal. From her own marketing background, she realised that this company and its activities would make a strong impression on her language students, who are able to study French, German and Spanish at GCSE and A Level. Alex Snelling, recruitment director at L'Oréal in Hammersmith, at the same time realised that these students were potential future employees, and that they needed to understand better how languages could boost their career.

Learning about advertising and marketing

With assistance from Ann Murray, a consultant brought in by L'Oréal especially for the partnership, an event was organised in February 2008 for 28 Year 9 students, who crucially had yet to make their GCSE options decisions. An icebreaker helped to ease the students in, putting themselves first of all in alphabetical order by name. They then found out each other's birthdays in French and asked each other how important they thought languages were, grouping themselves according to the answer. Following this, students launched



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into a quiz on L'Oréal. What sort of jobs are available? What languages do employees speak? Which celebrities have been in adverts?

Next they learned about advertising, essential to the marketing of the products created by L'Oréal. Having filled in missing words in an original French language advert, they set about translating the messages into English (an approach often taken by the business themselves), with great results. James, a former graduate trainee, then joined them to talk about how his languages had helped him at work and play. Finally, over a working lunch, students were tasked to make French language posters to advertise a sample L'Oréal product they were given – with the first pick of free sample goodies going to the winning team.



A new insight

Following the day, the students left buzzing, thanking their hosts and even asked about work experience there. As with many Business Language Champions partnerships, seeing the workplace at first hand made an impression in

itself, but more than anything they gained a new insight into language skills as well as the marketing and advertising industries. As one student succinctly put it, "I thought that the day was very good because I learned many facts about L'Oréal and languages in the workplace."

Alex Snelling of L'Oréal commented, "Our company offers international career opportunities for which we need talented, multilingual individuals. We were very pleased with the event we held with Overton Grange School which gave staff and pupils alike a great insight into our business." Teacher Sylvia Sidhom added, "The day went better than we could ever have imagined. The students were so energised afterwards – we expect it to have an impact on their GCSE choices."

Director of Regional Language Network London, Jane Collis, said, "Our programme needs businesses of all sizes, but it's great to have such a well known brand name directly involved. We're really pleased that students, teachers and L'Oréal staff got so much out of it."

Find out more



www.loreal.co.uk

www.overtongrange.sutton.sch.uk

For more on Business Language Champions in London, visit www.rln-london.com/champions

