



Energising language training delivery

EDF Energy

EDF Energy, part of EDF Group, has become a familiar name in the competitive UK utilities market. EDF Energy was created in 2003 and now employs around 13,000 staff. The company provides power to a quarter of the UK's population via its electricity distribution networks in London, the South East and the East of England and supplies gas and electricity to over 5 million customers. With its head office in London, it also has large teams based in the North East, South West and South East of England.

French is the official corporate language of EDF Group– although many senior company executives regularly use English for networking and international meetings. On the operational and technical level, however, knowledge of the French language is valuable – as many key employees in France, especially beyond Paris, do not speak English. All executive PAs also need to be bilingual, and those involved with international projects find a working knowledge of the French language very helpful.

With these needs in mind, the Learning and Development team at EDF Energy looked to develop a UK-wide approach to their language training offer to employees – in order that staff could receive a consistent standard of training that was above all fit for purpose. In 2004, they appointed a BLIS Professionals provider, Babel Language and Cultural Consultants, to plan and undertake the training.

There were requirements that Babel needed to keep in mind while developing the programme. EDF Energy needed to align learner achievement with their own language proficiency standards so that abilities could be assessed company-wide. They needed a system which would enable them to prioritise the needs of the learner as well as decide on the tuition type (one-to-one, classroom-based or self-study).

Local line managers are responsible for identifying training needs according to the business case – and organising the individual's attendance. In each case, the training includes a business focus – so they can immediately relate what they have learned to the job they are doing. Training can be offered in a range of languages, reflecting the

company's links with other parts of the EDF Group in Europe and beyond, though in practice the vast majority of training is in French.

Collaboration with Babel has been an overwhelming success. Since their appointment, the provider has trained over 100 EDF Energy staff. Learning and Development Project Manager Kelly Gilmartin was directly involved in developing the programme – and firmly believes in the value of language learning, in terms of working for EDF Energy and beyond. “What a great career advantage it is to have another language as well as English. Knowledge of French really helps not only in daily transactions, but in understanding EDF’s company culture.”

Sue Chew, EDF Energy’s Director of Organisational Development sums up, “We’re exceptionally happy with the service we’re getting from the BLIS Professionals provider, Babel. Their customer service is second to none – and 95% of staff have said that the training they received met their needs.”

Useful addresses:

BLIS Professionals www.blis.org.uk
EDF Energy www.edfenergy.com
Babel Language and Cultural consultants
www.babelgroup.co.uk

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