

Multilingual workers wanted



Gannett Wisconsin Newspapers photo by Even Siegel

CARLOS BOYTEL, who speaks five languages, owns his own international sales business, Loscar LLC, and is contracted with Coating Excellence International for international sales. He is shown with a bag of pet food, sold in Mexico, that is made by CEI in Wrightstown.

Customers 'expect you will speak different languages'

By Nathan Phelps
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For Carlos Boytel, it's all about making business easier for the customer.

Fluent in five languages — English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and German — he's contracted with Coating Excellence International in Wrightstown as that company's international salesman.

"When you are selling, if you are in the language the buyer speaks ... you make them feel comfortable," he said. "It makes it easier for them. This is all about making it easy for them so you can generate the sale."

Boytel, who owns Appleton-based Loscar LLC, described his business as "an export services company."

He estimates about 70 percent of his contacts with foreign customers are done in a language other than English. Most of his work is focused in Latin American and Europe, but area companies play on the global stage when it comes to business.

"If you are out there selling, they expect you will speak different languages," Boytel said.

Most workers in the United States don't need to speak or write a second

language. But recruiters say some telemarketing, banking, engineering and financial service companies are looking for workers and managers with bilingual skills because of the growing immigrant population in the United States or because they are doing more business overseas.



Nowak

Mike Nowak, president and co-owner of Coating Excellence International, said most international business is done in English, but when it comes to technical aspects customers may use their native language.

"You need to have somebody who can speak the language because it's always easier to explain it in your own language if it's difficult," he said.

Nowak said they also have an employee who speaks Chinese.

Mary Bartlett, talent manager for Arise Virtual Solutions, a call center that provides customer service for about 40 companies nationwide, said about a third of the independent contractors who work for the com-

"(Employers) want someone who can really connect with the customer."

MARY BARTLETT, talent manager for Arise Virtual Solutions

On the Web

American Translators Association: www.atanet.org

pany are bilingual, many of them immigrants or first-generation Americans who grew up speaking the language of their parents' homelands.

"By far the biggest demand we have is for Spanish. I don't see this trend slowing down," Bartlett said.

Dayna Romanick, a national recruiter for Manpower Professional, said the Fortune 100 companies she deals with are asking more frequently for managers who speak Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese and other languages.

And when it is not mandatory for some jobs, being bilingual "is icing on the cake."

Nowak said, "When you get down to two or three candidates and one has language, that's certainly a big plus."

Boytel — a Cuban-born American who has lived in the Fox Valley for the last 25 years — said his range of languages gave him a leg up when carving a niche in the business world when he saw an opportunity to combine engineering and language skills.

"The combination of product knowledge plus the languages differentiate me from other sales people," he said.

While speaking a second language is important to many businesses, the ability to also read and write in another language can be equally important, when companies or institutions are dealing with legal documents or patents.

Kevin Hendzel, spokesman for the American Translators Association, said demand for skilled people who can read and write in a foreign language is up. He attributes the increase to increased international trade and a Clinton administration executive order that requires federally funded agencies to provide bilingual services to clients with limited English skills.

Nathan Phelps writes for the Green Bay Press-Gazette. Gannett News Service contributed to this report.