



SHOP TALK # 10: When You Get the Call.....

Initial phone inquiries about workplace education services almost always catch us off guard. It helps to have a set of questions near the phone when the call comes, to take notes, and to use discretion in determining how much information to gather over the phone. Try never to end the call without scheduling a follow up meeting with company management, frontline supervisors, employee representatives, and other decision makers. Leave the employer with the impression that he/she has definitely made the right connection in seeking your assistance with work-based instruction.

1. What kind of work are employees/associates with limited English skills performing?
2. What have you observed that suggests English language instruction is needed?
3. You mentioned communication problems between employees/associates and supervisors; can you provide an example?
4. Has this been a concern for some time or is it the result of a recent change (in job requirements or hiring practices, for example)?
5. Are job expectations changing? Are there industry-specific regulations that must be met? Has new equipment been introduced? Are employees missing opportunities for promotion?
6. Do there appear to be conflicts due to language or cultural barriers? Can you provide examples?
7. How are employees/associates expected to use English skills in the workplace? (reading, following directions, signage, communicating with supervisors, co-workers, or customers, writing, documenting work, etc.)
8. Are there safety concerns? Is language interfering with productivity, quality control, ability to interact with customers, other employees, safety issues, inspections?
9. What kind of written materials do employees need to understand? (training manuals, policy and procedure manuals, signage, other workplace materials)
10. How are communication problems currently being handled? Are you using an interpreter?
11. Do you feel that aside from the language barriers, the employees have the skills needed to succeed in their work?
12. What incentives would there be for these employees to participate in onsite English language instruction?
13. Are there particular topics you would want to have addressed in instruction? What is it you want your employees to learn/be able to do?
14. Who within the company probably has the best understanding of employees' training needs?
15. Who on your staff should be involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of any training provided?
16. I think we can address your concerns. I'd like to schedule a meeting with you and key staff soon to gather additional information about the company's needs; When would that be feasible?
17. It would also be very helpful at some point to tour your facility, sit in on new employee orientation, or have the opportunity to observe employees at their workstations; Would it be possible to arrange for one or more of these opportunities at a later date?
18. When we meet could you have available some samples of printed materials employees come into contact with in their work?
19. Is there any information I can send you before our meeting on ____?
20. How did you learn about our services?

*Have you requested professional development through the GREAT Center serving your area?
Professional development is available for both administrators and instructional staff.*