

Where to Start: Building a Workplace English Program

While employers realize the importance of retaining and promoting talent, they often leave speakers of other languages out of their internal talent development programs, simply because they lack the English skills to successfully participate. However, by the end of 2030, all 73 million Baby Boomers will reach the retirement age of 65 years old, and 97% of net workforce growth in the U.S. will be made up of immigrants and their children. Employers realize the importance of retaining and promoting talent, which is why so many organizations are focusing more effort on reskilling and upskilling incumbent workers. However, immigrants and English Language Learners (ELLs) employees are often kept out of training programs because they do not have the English skills necessary to successfully participate.

BENEFITS TO BUILDING A WORKPLACE ENGLISH PROGRAM

Research shows that the most effective language courses are those with content that ties back to learners' real-world needs. Workplace English programs not only provide one of the best contexts for language learning—empowering the workforce of the future with the language skills they need to advance their careers—but also returns benefits back to the organization.

- Training for incumbent workers costs are 85% less than recruiting new workers.
- Support your organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts.
- Develop, engage, and retain high-potential employees.
- Eliminate English language skills as a barrier to career advancement.
- Develop bilingual employees who can reach a more diverse audience of customers and clients.
- Promote bilingual employees to supervisory and training roles.
- Enhance workplace safety and company culture.
- Improve team communication and employee morale.
- Open up new and often overlooked talent pools with career advancement opportunities.

OPERATIONS CHECKLIST FOR WORKPLACE ENGLISH PROGRAMS

Use this checklist as a beginner's roadmap of how to get a workplace ESL program off the ground.

- Identify employees who would benefit from English skills.**
Knowing, specifically, who your organization would offer this program to can tell you a lot about the type of program(s) needed for success.
- Identify program champion or manager.**
An organization needs an internal person who cares whether or not the ELL program is successful and is responsible for the outcome—whether they are in a supervisory or very integrated role.
- Decide if training should be done at home, at work, or both.**
Decades of research show that a blended approach works best, whether done at home, at work, or both. Use technology for what research has demonstrated that software can do best, so people can do what humans do best.
- Ensure employees have access to mobile devices or computers.**
Access to these devices can make or break a learner's ability to successfully complete the program.
- Determine metrics for measuring success.**
Examples include:
 - Improved performance and morale
 - Recruit participants for a new training or apprenticeship program
 - Develop and cross-train employees
 - Employee benefit usage
 - Number of employees promoted

EnGen is a language upskilling platform for organizations, educational, and government institutions that want to improve their talent pipeline while providing economic mobility, civic participation, and a better quality of life for workers, immigrants, and refugees.

Is your organization ready to take the next step in creating a successful English Learning program? [Our team can help.](#)