



Close Essential Skills Gaps Through  
**LANGUAGE & CULTURAL  
TRAINING**

**LTC**  
LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

Employee retention and skills gaps remain some of the top concerns for talent development professionals. This challenge is felt most strongly in industries where retention is consistently low, such as hospitality. The challenges grow when your workforce is multicultural and lacking in essential skills, such as fluency in English and business communications.

Hospitality is an incredibly diverse industry with 12 percent of workers being foreign-born, according to the Pew analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2010-2013 American Community Survey. Many talent development specialists in the industry find it difficult to engage, retain, and develop culturally diverse talent, some of whom may struggle with their English communication skills or immersing themselves in an American work culture.

## THE PROBLEM

Ariadne Samaniego, director of resort education and learning for Sheraton Vistana Villages in Central Florida, experienced similar challenges within her own staff and worked with her executive team to find a solution. The answer came to them from their sister resort, Sheraton Vistana Resort. In response to their diverse talent pool and client base, Sheraton Vistana Resort offers language training to their associates to improve communication skills and offer new opportunities.

The team at Sheraton Vistana Villages considered this option for some time before deciding to act. The primary challenge was finding the right program for their specific needs. “The approach at Sheraton Vistana Resort was more of a school-based curriculum,” said Samaniego.

“We wanted to find something that was more geared toward business communications.”

## THE SOLUTION

A chance meeting with Martin George, CEO of LTC Language Solutions, helped to pinpoint what they needed. LTC’s customized and purpose-driven language training program was a great fit because it offered solutions to the specific challenges Samaniego’s team members were facing in their day-to-day jobs.

For client-facing positions especially, she has noticed a difference in her associates since beginning the program. “We are focusing on helping associates personalize their interactions with guests,” said Samaniego. “I see them practicing their English and becoming more confident.”

Not only were client relationships and service priorities with the program, but also associate retention. The turnover rate in the hospitality industry is astoundingly high, reported to be 72.1 percent according to a 2015 report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the team at Sheraton Vistana Villages hoped this new program would help to reverse this trend.

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Ariadne Samaniego, Director of Resort Education and Learning at Sheraton Vistana Villages

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In addition, Sheraton Vistana Villages has implemented a series of cultural competency trainings designed for all levels of the organization. These training sessions not only teach strategies and best practices for culturally diverse teams, but also open up lines of communication between management and associates to help foster understanding and trust.

## RESULTS

Associates who have completed the programs have already benefited both personally and professionally. “I have an associate who wanted to be able to help his daughter with her homework,” Samaniego said. “He’s now able understand her homework and help her. He

expresses his gratitude daily for being able to improve his interactions with guests and his children.”

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Investing in the development of associates by improving their linguistic, cultural, and communication competency skills not only aids in their retention and helps to bridge the skills gap, but can promote loyalty and engagement. Employees who feel supported by their employers are more likely to be engaged, which has a direct effect on the bottom line.

Closing essential skills gaps while lowering turnover rates with a single solution offers

organizations a strong return-on-investment. The ability to communicate and function in diverse linguistic and cultural environments benefits employees outside the office, as well creating loyal ambassadors for your organization in the long term.



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LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

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