



Over the past 10 years, Emirates NBD in the United Arab Emirates has evolved from serving the Middle East region exclusively to becoming a global player in the banking industry.

This expansion was the result of the UAE government's goal of making the country the "financial capital of the Middle East." The government also initiated a strategy commonly known as "Emiratisation," which aims to fully incorporate the UAE people into the economic process and to transfer skills and knowledge from expatriates to UAE nationals. As part of this strategy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs set a series of goals, which included a 25-percent Emiratisation rate for all banks in the UAE.

In order for Emirates NBD to meet this goal, however, it needed to improve the English communication skills of its employees. UAE students were not learning enough English at school, so it fell to the bank to help its employees improve on the job. "It is important for the UAE people to be leaders, but they can't do that if they can't speak to the world," said Heyam Farrington, Senior Manager of Nationalization at Emirates NBD.

"The financial industry is very competitive and if we wish to have international clients, our employees must be able to speak the language of business—English."

—Heyam Farrington,
Business Communication Manager, Emirates NBD

"Our English skills weren't what they needed to be," continued Farrington. "I would visit our retail division and watch our tellers interact with English-speaking customers, and it didn't go well. They might know the words, but they weren't able to produce the language quickly enough or reply immediately to a question.



Industry

Financial Services

Summary

When the government of the United Arab Emirates set out to make the country the financial hub of the Middle East, Emirates NBD was challenged to improve the business English communication skills of its employees. Partnering with GlobalEnglish, the bank implemented a blended solution that has increased the efficiency and business impact of its English training program.



“ The GlobalEnglish program was of great benefit for me, as it improved my writing, speaking, and listening skills. I am able to send emails in a very professional style, prepare reports, and communicate easily with my colleagues who are of other nationalities. ”

– Nawar Eizzeldin Diab,
Procurement, Emirates NBD

Although they had excellent skills in their jobs, they lacked confidence with their English and because of this, the customers did not have confidence in them.”

A Blended Solution

While the UAE is becoming a global economic player, the country has retained many of its cultural traditions. Classroom training is still the preferred method of many UAE nationals. However, Emirates NBD needed an online solution to lower costs and reduce the amount of time employees spent away from their jobs. So the bank chose an approach that reflects the UAE’s blend of old and new methods: classroom instruction combined with online technology.

Selecting a Vendor

“I was looking for two key things when choosing our online provider. One, I needed something that would teach business English, not just general English. I needed a service that was more relevant to work nowadays, not like the literature course books or audio courses. And two, I wanted something modern that used new technologies to be more interactive. GlobalEnglish gave me all of this. I was particularly impressed with the GlobalEnglish *Talk with the Teacher* online classrooms. I knew immediately that this exciting feature and the entire service would help our students,” said Farrington.

The Student Experience

Emirates NBD was so impressed with the GlobalEnglish Corporate Learning Service™ (currently known as GlobalEnglish Edge™) that Ms. Farrington and her team based the entire English program on the GlobalEnglish curriculum. Students are placed into one of three levels (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) using the GlobalEnglish Placement Test, and then must complete one online GlobalEnglish course level each month.

Results

EAQUALS Accreditation

Emirates NBD has exceeded their own expectations with the online English program. Among their many accomplishments, they was the first organization in the Middle East to earn EAQUALS accreditation. To receive this designation, Emirates NBD had to pass an inspection that included 162 specific points related to teaching, curriculum, standards, legal requirements, truthfulness, and quality control.

Increased Impact

Emirates NBD was able to increase the number of employees trained each year by over 300% with no increase in cost. With the classroom English training program, the bank could only train 60 employees a year because the curriculum required six hours of classroom time each week and four months to complete. Expanding the program was not an option because of a lack of instructors and classroom space. With less dependence on the classroom, Emirates NBD can now train 720 employees a year for the same amount of money it was spending on classroom training.



High Satisfaction and Improved Completion Rate

Eighty-five percent of the students successfully complete the program—an improvement of 50 percent over the classroom program. Farrington attributes this success to a higher level of satisfaction. “Part of the reason we have been able to increase our graduation rates is because people like the curriculum better and like the flexibility of studying at home, so they study more,” she said. “Also, more people are joining the program because it requires less classroom time and they are seeing the improvements of their fellow employees.”

Improved Performance

After practicing business English in realistic business situations for six months with the blended GlobalEnglish program, employees experienced significant improvements in word selection and sentence construction, and their confidence when communicating in English on the job.

“The improved business English communication skills are helping improve our customer service because our tellers are now more confident when talking to customers,” said Farrington. “They are speaking more accurately and more fluently. They are comfortable now discussing the details of an account in English and are resolving problems for the customers more quickly. Most importantly, this has improved customer confidence in Emirates NBD.”

Daniel Shapleigh, Business Communication Trainer with the bank, agrees: “The amount of improvement made by the trainees from the GlobalEnglish online English course is tremendous. Even high-level students find things that are new to them or re-discover old grammar rules or vocabulary that they have forgotten. This gives them confidence and encourages them to continue building their vocabulary and practice their grammar structures. All of this, in turn, leads to confidence in the workplace and to better work performance. They feel proud that they can conduct business in a foreign language and help their business to prosper.”