



PPG Industries is one of the world's leading coatings, specialty products and services companies, serving customers in the construction, consumer products, industrial and transportation industries.

The company has 125 manufacturing facilities and equity affiliates in more than 20 countries, but some of its most dynamic growth is occurring today in China.

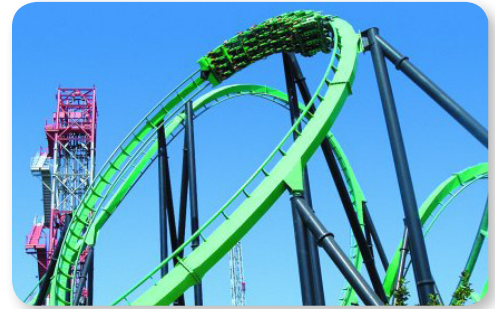
PPG is, in fact, one of the fastest growing companies in China, due in large part to the expansion of the construction and consumer goods industries there. Not only has the need for office space exploded in China, but as the Chinese people increase their earning power, they are also spending more on items such as mobile phones, cars, and homes.

The challenge for PPG was to effectively handle this growth. In order to do so, PPG needed an aggressive talent-management strategy to attract, develop, and retain employees. Also important to PPG's success was ensuring that employees became productive as quickly as possible. On a daily basis, employees need to interact with colleagues and team members from other countries to share information and best practices. As the company's official language, English enables this efficient collaboration. Developing and improving the English communications skills of its Chinese employees therefore became critical to PPG's success.

“Teaching English online is not merely a training program; it is a major strategic initiative at PPG. PPG emphasizes cross-cultural communication, and if we are going to be able to work together and learn from each other, then we must be able to communicate in a common language.”

—Bernie Khalid,

Director, Talent & Organization Development, PPG Asia Pacific



Industry

Manufacturing

Summary

To support its rapid growth in China, PPG needed an aggressive talent-management strategy to attract, develop, and retain employees. A critical component was developing and improving the English communication skills of Chinese employees to support global collaboration and communication.

PPG required a solution that could be delivered online and taught English in the context of realistic business situations. The company implemented the GlobalEnglish Corporate Learning Service™ (currently known as GlobalEnglish Edge™) and has seen a significant improvement in the ability of employees in China and staff at headquarters to collaborate and share information efficiently.

“ The GlobalEnglish Corporate Learning Service works for PPG because it provides a vast base of information that is completely relevant to the daily work of our employees. It really can be called business language training, because employees can so easily apply what they learned directly to their work. ”

– Nina Wang,
PPG Human Resources Director, China

The Approach

The company required a solution that could be delivered online and that taught English in the context of realistic business situations. “We initially chose to pilot the GlobalEnglish program because it provided a robust mix of online material and instructor interaction. We decided to continue with GlobalEnglish after 92% of our pilot group rated the program positively,” said Debra Simeone, Manager, Blended Learning for PPG. “Perhaps the most significant feedback was that 61% of the pilot participants reported they were using their new English skills on the job after only six weeks of study. That was powerful!”

Within a few months after implementing the GlobalEnglish Corporate Learning Service, PPG began to see positive results because of its deft implementation of the program.

Best Practices for Implementation in China

- **Secure executive sponsorship:** Chinese employees are highly respectful of authority, and they take any directive—or even a suggestion—from senior management very seriously. Because PPG’s program rollout included specific communication from senior management, participation was immediately high.
- **Engage management:** The learning team at PPG promoted the availability of the GlobalEnglish program to managers and asked managers to nominate employees for participation. Once the program was launched, managers received monthly activity reports to keep them informed of their employees’ progress. The learning team also encouraged managers to acknowledge improvement in their employees’ communication skills. This kept employees motivated and ensured high rates of usage and retention in the program.
- **Share progress reports with employees:** PPG provided each learner with regular reports that documented their usage and improvement in the key skill areas. This provided employees with significant motivation to continue learning.
- **Keep executives involved:** The learning team kept the executive sponsors informed of the progress of the program through regular face-to-face meetings and virtual updates. Executives demonstrated their ongoing support of the program to learners through features in e-newsletters and personal interactions with the participants. This turned out to be a powerful tool for keeping users engaged in the program.
- **Deploy training broadly:** PPG made the GlobalEnglish service available to a diverse group of employees at all levels of the organization, from administrative and manufacturing to sales and marketing. As a result, the company’s ability to communicate effectively in English has improved, with more employees able to contribute to the future of the business.

The Benefits for PPG

- **Growth in market share through customer confidence:** PPG customers have reported a higher confidence in the company and its products because they are able to communicate more easily with employees in many different geographic regions and job roles. In this competitive market, customer confidence has created a distinct advantage for PPG.

- **More efficient knowledge transfer:** Employees in China are now better able to participate in meetings and teleconferences, and they can write documents and email more quickly and clearly than before. This has dramatically improved the transfer of knowledge between staff at headquarters and employees in China. Ultimately, employees are getting up to speed faster and PPG can make more strategic investments in talent development that fuel growth and don't merely help the company keep up.
- **Better management:** With improvement in their own English skills, managers are better able to set expectations, provide feedback to employees, and share strategic directives from headquarters. In addition, employees of English-speaking managers now better understand what is expected of them and feel more engaged with the company. These improved skills are enabling the company to grow tomorrow's leadership from within.
- **Improved R&D:** PPG has already begun to see improvements in its R&D efforts because it is now able to draw from a greater pool of talent that represents a broader array of experience. Staff at headquarters in the U.S. can now depend on their Chinese colleagues to accurately articulate the market situation in China, explain customer needs, and recommend better applications for technology.

PPG's Leaders of Tomorrow

PPG's strategic investment in online English training has made it possible for the organization to begin growing tomorrow's leaders from within key markets such as China. Three PPG employees in China had the following to say about their improved communication skills:

"I work with customers all around the world, including the U.S., Germany, and Mexico, and now I find that I can fully understand what they are saying. Before it was more difficult."

—Richard, Key Account Manager

"My writing skills have really improved and I am able to read and write emails much faster. Even my boss gave me feedback that my writing was better after only a few months of study."

—Fiona, Technical Lab Supervisor

"The GlobalEnglish service is easy to understand and has helped me in my job. My speaking and listening are improving. And my reading is better too. I write better sentences and my manager says my emails are better."

—Nettie, QC Lab Supervisor