

# Create a Positive Customer Experience in Any Language

Earning the loyalty of customers from different backgrounds starts with hiring employees who can convey your company's commitment to inclusive service by speaking their language.

**A**s the American population continues to diversify and businesses expand operations around the world, multilingual employees provide a valuable resource. Their words often generate a customer's first impression of your company and determine his or her willingness to engage in the future. Determining that your multilingual employees are proficient will ensure that they will provide excellent service in all their interactions and is an investment in your company's future success. As the recognized industry leader in language proficiency assessment, Language Testing International (LTI) provides consistent and defensible testing that helps companies make that investment wisely. »

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## ADDING CONFIDENCE TO HIRING

In its early days, a major online marketplace evaluated the language proficiency of call center candidates through conversations with multilingual managers. Yet informal evaluations did not predict acceptable performance training during customer interactions. With only a hiring manager's word that the employee showed adequate proficiency, the legal team faced challenges in addressing these issues.

LTI worked with the company to determine the level of language proficiency needed for success in various jobs. Candidates now meet a threshold of fluency specific to the tasks they'll perform if hired. Both the company and the candidates have gained the security that comes with ACTFL ratings, streamlining the hiring process.

### Establishing consistent fluency standards

In most businesses, language testing methods evolve out of necessity. Some are informal, such as a conversation with a multilingual manager. Others have been formalized based on internally determined standards. It's only in the last 10 years that the value of establishing proficiency expectations and measuring them against a national standard has achieved greater recognition in the corporate sector.



The methodology for this type of testing has been evolving for decades outside of the commercial space. Soon after its creation, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) adopted the mission to develop a "common metric" for describing and testing proficiency that could be used across academic, commercial and government sectors. Since their introduction in 1986, ACTFL proficiency standards and assessment methodologies have increasingly been recognized as the "gold standard" for reliable language assessment.

LTI, the exclusive assessment licensee for ACTFL, conducts more than 300,000 assessments annually in more than 100 languages and more than 40 countries.

Achieving an ACTFL language proficiency rating provides assurance that an employee or job candidate has the language skills necessary to perform their required tasks successfully.

### Task-based proficiency ratings predict performance

What makes ACTFL testing particularly valuable for business is that it measures an individual's ability to effectively accomplish real-life communication tasks. LTI works closely with individual

businesses to establish appropriate minimum proficiency levels for the successful use of language, which are then incorporated into that company's position descriptions, testing protocols and hiring procedures.

Because of its basis in real-world language use,

proficiency testing is critical for businesses that serve customers from different language groups to ensure that the testing is based on what a candidate can do in a language and not based their ethnic background, years of language learning or other factors which are unfair and even illegal hiring biases.

ACTFL ratings cover 10 levels of proficiency, from Novice to Superior, with specific criteria for speaking, writing, listening and reading. By screening job candidates for proficiency in the hiring process, your company achieves a higher level of confidence that customers will have the same experience with your company, no matter what language they prefer.

## Offering multilingual service benefits businesses

Although hiring processes vary widely from company to company, the value of making effective multilingual hires can't be underestimated. In fact, Common Sense Advisory has released research showing that increased spending on translation services correlates to an increase in revenue.

Companies are getting onboard. Research conducted by Whale Path, Inc., exclusively for LTI in March and April 2014 reported that the vast majority of the country's leading telecommunications, retail banking and healthcare services providers offer sales and customer care communications in at least one language besides English. Spanish is the most common, while other languages—such as Mandarin Chinese—are often provided according to the needs of target markets or local populations. Eighty percent of the companies surveyed said that customers expect them to do business in languages other than English—it's no longer considered an optional service.

Across all three industries, survey respondents saw increases in both top line numbers, through sales, and bottom line numbers, thanks to increased efficiency brought about by improved communication. Having multilingual staff was seen as an effective means of building customers' trust in 75% of cases.

Providing fully proficient multilingual services, of course, increases customer satisfaction further. In fact, the *Harvard Business Review* recently reported that 72 percent of consumers are more likely to buy a product if the seller communicates with them in their own language.

When language ability comes up short, though, customer loyalty lags. There are well-known stories of translation missteps that dissuaded customers from engaging with a brand or product—the Chevy Nova launch in Mexico, for example, where “no va” in direct translation means “no go” and predictably didn't resonate with automobile purchasers. There's no question that communicating poorly or incorrectly can be very costly, since customers who feel disrespected or misunderstood are likely to select other providers. In high-liability industries such as healthcare, finance and law, such a misstep could snowball into a customer relations catastrophe.

That's why language proficiency blends the knowledge of culture and effective communication—across at least two languages among multilingual speakers. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that some 21 percent of the country's population—and growing—spoke a language other than English at home as recently as 2011. The need for marketplace communication competence in languages other than English is clear. The 280-plus languages currently spoken in the United States are a prime indicator of future customer needs and business opportunities.

### A POSITIVE GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

**When a company sees the opportunity to increase sales in a specific ethnic market, native language service becomes a necessity. That was the lesson a Fortune 100 financial company learned as global growth triggered friction between customers and agents.**

**As employee salaries were increasingly tied to multilingual fluency, objective testing became critical. But the company also had to balance the cultural perceptions of its diverse hiring pool with the need for early identification of task-based proficiency.**

**LTI has developed a variety of testing solutions that allow the company to test candidates at the most appropriate time in the hiring process, with results that increase the consistency of customer experience around the world. That's a positive for everyone involved.**

## THE POWER OF THE PLUS+

One of the nation's best recognized interpretation services requires interpreters to be fluent in English and at least one specialty language—and able to flawlessly navigate legal nuances. Using an in-house writing test and existing certifications to evaluate candidates didn't correlate to successful spontaneous interpretation in the courts.

Now, using ProFluent+ from LTI, the organization can allow prospective interpreters to take both the English and specialty language tests from home when it's convenient for them. LTI helped set benchmarks for the level of language ability needed for legal interpretation.

As a result, prospective interpreters experience a streamlined vetting process. And the organization's clients, partner agencies and court contacts have an objective assurance of fluent interpretation.

## ProFluent+ identifies fluent candidates efficiently

The need to find qualified, fluent multilingual employees to serve this diverse and growing audience has prompted changes in test administration options. Ten years ago, companies brought candidates into physical test facilities to assess their skills. This procedure required time, effort and significant overhead costs. Now, online technologies now offer recruitment teams faster, less expensive testing options that require less administrative oversight.



That's why LTI has introduced ProFluent+, which combines the latest technology with the internationally recognized ACTFL OPIc™ speaking assessment. Companies seeking bilinguals can now direct candidates to the ProFluent+ site to register online to take the test when and where it's convenient for them.

LTI's ProFluent+ platform provides a live, remote video proctor to verify the identity of the candidate and monitor progress through the test, just as your company's proctor would in a live test setting. With the exception of remote proctoring, the assessment is presented and recorded in exactly the same way LTI's traditional computer-delivered tests take place in a proctored lab setting. And the language assessments offered through ProFluent+ are evaluated by the same ACTFL trained, certified raters.

ProFluent+ provides a simple, cost-effective and consistent way to evaluate

your candidates' language proficiency using the best of today's remote testing practices and technologies. It even allows multilingual individuals to arrange and pay for their own assessment and ACTFL proficiency credential proactively, so they come into your hiring pipeline

prequalified. It's one more way LTI is helping your company provide high-quality service to multilingual customers to earn their business and maintain their loyalty.

## How can ProFluent+ from LTI improve your business?

Call us at **888.852.3171** for a free consultation or visit [languagetesting.com](http://languagetesting.com) to learn about other language assessment solutions.

# Adding Convenience and Security to the Hiring Process

The changing face of business has made remote testing an appealing option for companies and candidates alike, especially since the advent of new security technologies.

**C**andidate evaluation is an integral part of the hiring process in many fields—whether to measure behavior, critical thinking, language proficiency or a host of other skills. While these tests play a critical role in ensuring that organizations hire the most qualified people to fill open positions, they can also add an administrative burden and cost to the hiring process. As the recognized leader in language proficiency assessment, Language Testing International (LTI) has firsthand experience helping companies overcome this challenge through the use of remote proctoring technologies that make language testing more convenient without compromising the security of the process. »

**Adding convenience and security to the hiring process**

## CONVENIENT TESTING IS A PLUS FOR CANDIDATES

Call center candidates at one Fortune 500 financial services company may have to commute as far as an hour in each direction once they land a job. But their driving starts early: The organization's high-touch recruitment and hiring process requires several on-site assessment sessions.

Because the company is competing for talent with numerous similar centers in the same geographic area, any improvement in the candidate experience is an advantage. The opportunity for job applicants to skip just one trip to the center by using ProFluent+ to complete their language proficiency assessments from home has the potential to help the company stand out from its competitors and attract qualified new employees.

## Global business is driving changes in employment practices

The Internet and accompanying technological developments have created a global society and marketplace for products and services. These advances also provide organizations with new workforce strategies.

Companies can more easily reach and support potential clients internationally. They can also target specific ethnic markets within the U.S. that have grown through ongoing and increasingly diverse immigration. Offering services in customers' native languages is becoming the norm, necessitating the hiring of bi- or multilingual workers to meet demand.

Mobile technology is also having a profound impact on today's work environments. Twenty years ago, it was rare for employees to work outside of the main office, and challenging to manage and collaborate with workers in different geographic areas. Now, the ability to complete work remotely and in real time is widely accepted and even expected in some fields.

Together, the ease of reaching specific ethnic populations and the advancements surrounding the Internet and mobile technology have had a profound effect on language proficiency assessment. Companies now feel the need to assess language proficiency using testing methods that conform both to best practices in hiring and to modern business technology standards. Testing by computer was the first step—offering the same test remotely, along with its accompanying credential from the American Council on the Teaching

of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), was the next. However, this testing method isn't without challenges.

## Security tops the list of remote-testing priorities

Among the leading concerns surrounding remote testing is the issue of assessment integrity and identity assurance. Not only is it critical to ensure that candidates take their own tests—it's also important to be sure they don't have help and that they can't share materials with others during or after their test.

Research from Canada's Athabasca University shows that both remote identity verification upfront and remote proctoring worked into test designs successfully prevent compromising the integrity of tests. Based on a theory of mutual trust and verification, they serve as a "system of checks and balances" that ensure the organization's testing remains credible and reliable.

Yet, testing doesn't happen in isolation. Candidates view the experience through their own lenses. For example, researchers at George Washington University found that continuous monitoring, while effective at preventing cheating on tests, is also seen by potential candidates as much more invasive than one-time identity verification and may even raise anxiety levels in some individuals.

As a result, it remains imperative for organizations to know their candidate population and select testing methodologies that are amenable to those candidates whose skills are being assessed. The question of whether remotely proctored testing is a viable

option, however, has been put to bed, and it is increasingly being utilized in the enterprise space.

### Simplifying the hiring experience attracts candidates

As much as the security and identity verification aspects of remote testing pose challenges for businesses, the opportunity to streamline the application and vetting process earns kudos from career candidates.

In 2012, software-as-a-service provider iCMS found that 46 percent of candidates rate their experience applying for jobs as poor to very poor. There's no doubt that many factors and individual interactions weighed into that number. However, the company identified that candidates universally welcome a hiring process that is "accessible, fast and easy, engaging, and personal."

In today's consumer-driven world, creating that type of experience requires businesses to move at the speed of the candidates they seek, using mobile job applications and remotely proctored skill assessments, providing routine updates on progress toward hire and, essentially, respecting the candidate's time and investment as much as the company does its own.

### ProFluent+ provides a secure remote testing option

LTI has helped companies balance the issues of testing security and candidate

convenience for years with its selection of language tests, available both online and by phone. Now, ProFluent+ from LTI brings this assessment method to the next level, adding remote proctoring and secure identity verification.

Candidates take the test at a time and place that is convenient for them, on a secure website where a live proctor verifies their identity and monitors them by webcam during the test. This technique helps prevent testing security breaches. Additionally, the technology behind the platform protects the integrity of the assessment materials themselves.

While ensuring testing integrity, ProFluent+ uses the same ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer® (OPIC) that is already used successfully in live-proctored settings. The test is recorded and assessed by trained, certified raters, and candidates earn an ACTFL credential that validates and quantifies their language ability. Candidates have a more convenient assessment experience and companies are assured of accurate, secure results to help them make a hiring decision.

Candidates have a more convenient proficiency assessment experience, and your company can be assured of accurate, secure results to help you make a hiring decision.

## ADDING PREQUALIFICATION TO THE PROCESS

One senior aeronautical manufacturing executive and long-time LTI client explains that the assessment world tends to most readily adopt intuitive changes that lead to a faster hiring process and cost savings.

Consider adding ProFluent+ to your protocols as an alternate means of taking the OPIC test to streamline the process and ease the administrative burden in your human resources office.

You can also work with LTI to add a "ProFluent+ Preferred" designation to your job postings, encouraging candidates to prequalify for open positions—saving your company money and making the hiring process more convenient for applicants. LTI offers a secure portal for corporations to verify the results of credentials submitted by ProFluent+ test-takers.

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