



Leveraging Language and Interpersonal Skills for MSMEs' Global Success

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment, innovation and economic growth. In India, MSMEs hold the potential to expand internationally, given the right set of skills. This article explores the need for language proficiency and interpersonal skills as critical components for Indian MSMEs aiming to break into global markets, with a particular focus on the training offered by The Oriental Dialogue. It highlights how a combination of language and interpersonal skills can pave the way for business success in international trade.





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Contributing close to 30% of India's GDP and employing most of those who would otherwise find it difficult to get any gainful employment, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are essential drivers of the Indian economy who contribute significantly to employment, innovation, and growth. With globalisation, digitisation and these days easy access to IPO on India's stock markets, Indian MSMEs have unprecedented opportunities to venture into international markets. That said, to capitalise on these prospects and make a killing, Indian MSMEs must bridge critical skill gaps that are very evident in its operation.

Language proficiency and interpersonal skills be it while dealing within the country or internationally are increasingly being recognised as vital components for success in global business. By equipping themselves with these tools, MSMEs can overcome language barriers, navigate cultural nuances, and build stronger relationships with international clients, thereby establishing a competitive edge in the global marketplace.

The Growing Global Opportunity for MSMEs

Globalisation has opened up new frontiers for businesses of all sizes, enabling MSMEs to tap into international markets and establish partnerships with foreign clients. The export market is particularly lucrative for MSMEs, with governments and trade bodies offering various incentives to promote cross-border trade. Indian MSMEs have already established a strong presence in international markets, particularly in sectors such as textiles, manufacturing, IT services, and handicrafts, across Europe, the United States and Asia.

Nevertheless, further expansion, especially into East Asia, necessitates a strategic approach that considers cultural nuances and language barriers. The unique requirements of these markets call for MSMEs to be proficient not only in the local language but also in understanding the cultural norms and expectations of potential business partners.

The Importance of Language Skills in International Trade

Language proficiency is a critical tool for MSMEs looking to establish themselves in global markets. Whether negotiating contracts with Chinese manufacturers, collaborating with South Korean partners, or managing relationships with Japanese clients, understanding and communicating in the local language can be a game-changer. Language learning programmes, such as those offered by The Oriental Dialogue, cater specifically to the needs of entrepreneurs venturing into international trade. These programmes help MSME entrepreneurs acquire proficiency in languages such as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean – essential for engaging effectively with these high-potential markets.

For example, a business owner seeking to export textiles to China can benefit greatly from a working knowledge of Mandarin. This not only facilitates smoother negotiations but also helps build a rapport with Chinese counterparts, who place high value on personal relationships. For MSMEs, this trust can be the key to securing deals, expanding operations, and fostering long-term partnerships.

30%

MSMEs contribute close to 30% of India's GDP, playing a pivotal role in the country's economic growth and employment.

Beyond Language: The Power of Interpersonal Skills

While language proficiency is fundamental, it is the combination of language and interpersonal skills that often sets successful entrepreneurs apart in the international market. In many cultures, business relationships are deeply tied to personal interactions. Being equipped with the right soft skills, such as effective communication, emotional intelligence, and cultural understanding, can significantly enhance how MSMEs manage relationships with foreign clients.

For instance, in East Asian cultures, communication extends beyond the spoken word. How one presents ideas, shows respect, and handles disagreements plays a crucial role in business success. Entrepreneurs who understand and can navigate these nuances will have a competitive edge in forging lasting business relationships.

Training programmes that integrate language learning and interpersonal skill development, like those offered by The Oriental Dialogue, focus on holistic communication. They empower entrepreneurs to speak the language and engage effectively in cultural contexts. This integrated approach can make a significant difference when dealing with clients or partners from diverse backgrounds.

How Language Learning Boosts Client Relationships

When venturing into foreign markets, it is not just about making deals—it is about building client relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. These relationships are strengthened when both parties can communicate in the same language and understand each other's cultural norms.

By learning languages such as Mandarin or Japanese, MSME entrepreneurs demonstrate their commitment to the partnership, showing that they value their clients' culture and are serious about the relationship. This level of respect is often reciprocated, making negotiations smoother and increasing the likelihood of long-term success.



7 Steps to Achieve Global Success for MSMEs:

Identify Target Markets: Research potential international markets where your products or services have demand, and assess entry points.

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2 Learn the Language: Invest time in acquiring proficiency in the local languages of your target markets. Whether it is Mandarin, Japanese, or Korean, language skills are crucial for successful business negotiations.

Develop Interpersonal Skills: Focus on soft skills like communication, cultural awareness, and emotional intelligence to build strong, lasting relationships with foreign clients.

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4 Understand Cultural Nuances: Learn the cultural norms and expectations of your target markets. This will help you navigate business interactions more smoothly and foster trust with international partners.

Leverage Training Programmes: Enroll in training programs like those offered by The Oriental Dialogue, which combine language learning with business etiquette and interpersonal skills to give you a holistic edge.

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6 Build a Strong Network: Connect with trade bodies, chambers of commerce, and other MSMEs that have successfully ventured into global markets. Collaborating with experienced players can help you avoid pitfalls and capitalize on opportunities.

Maintain a Long-Term Vision: Expanding globally requires patience and persistence. Focus on building sustainable relationships and partnerships that will benefit your business in the long run.

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The Oriental Dialogue provides MSME owners with the language skills to break down barriers and foster strong client relationships. By combining language proficiency with interpersonal skills, entrepreneurs can better manage day-to-day interactions, solve problems more efficiently, and ensure that they understand the subtleties of international business dealings.

Language Learning as a Business Strategy

In today's interconnected world, language learning is not just a personal asset – it is a business strategy. For MSMEs, investing in language skills can lead to better international partnerships, more streamlined operations, and improved customer satisfaction. Language skills also open doors to new markets, particularly in regions where English is not the dominant language.

By working with The Oriental Dialogue and similar platforms, MSME entrepreneurs can tailor their language training to focus on the specific markets they are entering. This not only helps them overcome immediate language barriers but also enhances their long-term prospects of scaling their business globally.

A Continuous Competitive Edge for MSMEs

Language learning and interpersonal communication skills are vital for MSMEs aiming to expand globally. Global markets require a nuanced approach, where understanding the target country's language, culture, and business etiquette can make the difference between success and failure. Programmes like those offered by The Oriental Dialogue help MSMEs gain the necessary language proficiency and soft skills to thrive in international trade.

Incorporating language learning as part of their global strategy gives MSMEs a competitive edge, helping them enter new markets and forge deep, sustainable relationships with foreign clients. As the world becomes more interconnected, equipping MSME entrepreneurs with the tools to communicate effectively across borders is not just an advantage – it is essential for long-term success.

