

# English works

Top jobs only  
for those who  
know the  
language well

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**PETALING JAYA:** It does not matter if you are top of your class or have a string of degrees, that dream job will not be yours unless you can speak and write well in English.

Feedback from local and international employers shows that verbal and written communication skills in English remain the most sought-after attribute in prospective employees.

According to a recent Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) survey, it is the most important trait employers look for when recruiting graduates.

The MEF Salary Survey for Executives 2010 revealed that 68% of the companies surveyed named communication skills as the top quality required in job applicants, followed by working experience (67%), interpersonal skills (56.2%) and passion and commitment (55.7%).

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said globalisation had changed the nature of jobs, making communication skills, specifically in English, a valuable asset for today's worker.

He added that this was an essential criterion even for professions traditionally seen as "backroom" staff such as engineers, technical personnel and scientists. "It is especially so for those working in multinationals and bigger

# Bosses: Working knowledge of English a much needed asset

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firms," he said.

"Today, our clients are worldwide. In factories, for instance, engineers are a different breed from the past," said Shamsuddin.

"Now, they have to be involved in various aspects of business and interact with clients."

Shamsuddin expressed concern that many local graduates today could not speak or write proper English, saying this was a reason why they faced difficulties getting jobs in the private sector.

Kelly Services (M) Sdn Bhd managing director Melissa Norman concurred, noting that six in 10 graduates who attended its interviews could not communicate effectively in English.

The company is one of the top headhunters in the country.

Norman said it was important to master English as it was widely used among the business community, both in Malaysia and internationally.

The Kelly Global Workforce Index

survey released in 2010 listed "communication skills" as one of the top five most desired skills within the corporate sector.

"We have encountered local graduates who are weak in spoken and written English and have limited vocabulary," said Norman.

"These candidates can only manage to secure jobs in small-medium enterprises and small businesses."

Various industry and business leaders also warned that the decline in English was affecting Malaysia's global competitiveness.

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers President Tan Sri Mustafa Mansur said the young ones who could not communicate in English were unable to negotiate the best deals in business transactions or investments.

"We need to send people out to market our products, negotiate deals or get contracts signed. If they cannot communicate well in English, we will lose out," he said.

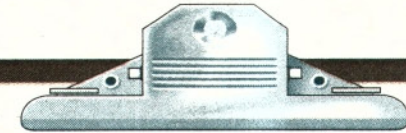
Pemudah co-chair Tan Sri Yong Poh Kon pointed out that, contrary to popular belief, it was important

for civil servants to have a good command of English due to a growing borderless world.

"The standard of English also affects the quality of the public sector as civil servants have to interact with international citizens and the business world as well as articulate Malaysia's stand on issues to the international community. These include negotiations on important agreements such as trade agreements."

Noting that the quality of English in the country had declined over the last two decades, former Human Resource Minister Tan Sri Fong Chan Onn warned that the country would lose out to its neighbours that did not teach English in schools previously.

"Thailand, Indonesia and China are making efforts to improve their English through their education system," he noted.



## Have you got what it takes?

Most sought-after traits in graduates

