



March 2015

Berlitz Branch Newsletter

“Improving workers' lives at Berlitz since 1993”

- Abeno Tennoji - Ashiya - Hiroshima - Kariya - Kyoto Shijo - Kyoto Ekimae - Honmachi - Nagoya Ekimae - Nagoya Kanayama - Nagoya Sakae - Namba - Nishinomiya - Sannomiya - Senri Chuo - Okayama - Toyota - Umeda -

Manager or Menace?

Berlitz Japan operates under the simple structure of a hierarchical organization whereby immediate superiors communicate and command their immediate subordinates. When a superior behaves in an ethical manner within the confines of a clear set of company work rules, this structure can be highly efficient and maintain strong employee relations for the benefit of all. However, when self serving interests and a bending of the rules surface, the hierarchical business model can create an environment of distrust and shady work practices.

Manager or Menace?

The Berlitz Branch does not currently have a clear policy on monitoring the actions of MIs at each Berlitz Language Center but is kept well informed through both positive and negative feedback from members. There is a clear correlation between the high number of grievances coming from members at LCs where a bending of work practices as laid out in the Berlitz Work Rules and associated Policies and Procedures Manual is being implemented on a regular basis.

The relationship between a Manager of Instruction and Instructors can make for an effective and harmonious environment or a sticky pit of putrefaction that can reduce the LC to a fragile house of cards.

House in Order

While dynamics offer a broad spectrum of MIs, here are three typical patterns.

- Balanced individuals with people skills who make a sincere effort to adhere to policy and balance the requirements of superiors and subordinates.
- Generally balanced individuals who over zealously put the requirements of superiors above all else to the detriment of subordinates.
- Misdirected or unqualified individuals who put their own needs first and lose sight of ethics.

We appreciate MIs who maintain a well balanced LC and challenge the less harmonious LCs to reconsider practices with a view to building an environment of fairness and trust.

We challenge upper management to reduce the number of grievances by removing any grey practices (floating contracts, CTL abuse, method allocation dispute) to ensure MIs are not placed in a position where upper level requests are creating unfair practices.

We have always attempted to resolve issues internally but with each new generation of MI, the same issues continue to reappear due to temporary short term fixes. To ensure the new generations of members are kept informed, we shall begin to publicise grievances that are not given the long term fixes they deserve.

Member Benefits

An ex-Berlitz employee has launched Lingua World Cafe in Osaka and offers a 10% discount on all purchases upon presentation of a union membership card.

Access information is on the website: <http://www.linguaworldcafe.com>

The cafe offers delicious coffee, gourmet sandwiches, and craft beer in a kid-friendly and smoke-free cross-cultural space. Our branch union is just one of many that will benefit from this reciprocal arrangement and more are on the way. It pays to be a member.

<http://www.generalunion.org>

On Hold but NOT Forgotten

Background To Recent Events

On October 28th, 2014 instructors received a personalized hand delivered letter outlining a set of changes to their contracts as well as notification of a new Full Time Instructor Contract. The Berlitz Branch union contested the arbitrary changes in collective bargaining on a number of points:

The announcement of arbitrary changes was made public without any preconsultation which we feel violates one of our union and company collective agreements.

The changes were offering an overall pay increase of approximately 2.9% for an extra 12.5% work time and did not resolve linked outstanding issues that were still pending.

A significant number of instructors became concerned that well established work practices; National Holiday Allowance, Sunday Rate, Commutation Allowance, and the introduction of a degrading contract were introduced as part of a clawback action.

After NO progress was made in collective bargaining between the Berlitz Branch members and management, we served notice that a strike mandate was approved with a February 1st, 2015 deadline to

begin the dispute. Prior to the deadline, we are happy to announce that the company took its plans for clawbacks off the table. We're confident that a tripling of membership and a positive strike vote played a big role in having the company rethink its unilateral proposals. Since Berlitz has made this move, union members are continuing to negotiate with the company.

What happens now?

The strike has been postponed, but not cancelled, and we are hoping to win our demands to improve wages and working conditions at the bargaining table.

What can you do?

Members can continue to have a voice through our various modes of communication and are actively encouraged to volunteer for our bargaining committee. This allows all members to direct our actions and be part of the decision making process. The Berlitz Branch is simply you and your colleagues, backed up by General Union members in language schools, universities, and other workplaces across Japan.

Non members will see periodic Berlitz Branch updates offering information on negotiations and actions but the only way to become fully informed and have your voice

truly heard is to become a member. The Berlitz Branch can only negotiate on behalf of union members through a well structured democratic process.

How can non members become more informed?

Contact the Berlitz Branch at

- mcvay@generalunion.org
(Joe McVay – Branch Chair)
- collis@generalunion.org
(Jools Collis – Branch Secretary).

On top of this, we are willing to meet for a consultation in person or online through Skype.

Management has set up an e-mail address for you to send any questions at teach@lc.berlitz.co.jp

The changes management proposed have been taken off the table for now with a view to implementation at a later date after revisions are made through a democratic process that is fully acceptable to all members.

The Berlitz Branch is made up of a broad spectrum of instructors and our views will differ. However, our ultimate aim is to negotiate a balance that all members will be happy with for the long term. We encourage non members to join the Berlitz Branch and become part of the decision making process along with your member colleagues.

Join online now at <http://berlitzunion.generalunion.org>

Pay a campaign dues rate of 1,000 yen to cover the remainder of the month you join plus the whole of the following month and a commitment to make an automatic transfer payment thereafter.

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