



March 2016

Berlitz Branch Newsletter

“Improving workers' lives at Berlitz since 1993”

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

Can't get no....Satisfaction

The classic song by the Rolling Stones expresses the recent mood at Berlitz perfectly.

Remember taking the Employee Satisfaction Survey a few months ago? Well, the results send a very clear message!

Overall **Job Satisfaction** is down to only **34%!!!** That's a full **9% lower** than the already low score of **43%** from **last year** (even though we have more employees now). In plain English, and without any distracting numbers, that means the **considerable majority** of employees (Instructors, Staff, and Managers alike) at Berlitz **are not happy with the current situation and operational practices**. But most people knew that already.

Was that really a surprise for Berlitz though? What did Berlitz expect with rising living costs and no adequate equal compensation. On top of that, with trying to take away benefits from their biggest asset, namely the workforce, ongoing grievances, and questionable operational practices such as trying to take away CTL's from instructors without so much as a memo

announcing the changes / new practices to its workforce, could there have been any other outcome?

Don't get us wrong, 34 is a good number. It's a near perfect score on the ACT (an American College Test), but it's certainly not a perfect score for Berlitz.

So, what went wrong?

*First of all, changing/trying to change well-established work practices without getting consent from, or involving employees in the decision-making process never tends to go off very well.

*Taking well-established benefits away from your front-line elements does leave a rather negative impression of employees' worth. People tend to be motivated the most, if they feel they and their contributions are respected, and are adequately compensated by the company.

*There were quite a few grievances about unethical workplace practices recently. Once again, making sure that your employees are treated fairly and with respect, tends to ensure their loyalty. Do the opposite, and, well.... we're in

34% Employee Satisfaction territory.

If Berlitz were to reinvest some of their profits into their true number 1 assets, through actual tangibles the employees (of all levels) would appreciate, we would see a drastic and positive change in these low numbers.... guaranteed.

It's not exactly rocket science, but this simple truth seems to have eluded Berlitz thus far.

As Sir Richard Branson once said: "Success in business is all about people, people, people. Whatever Industry a Company is in, its employees are its biggest competitive advantage".

If you'd like to be part of the change that needs to happen at Berlitz to turn things around; if you'd like to help make a difference; and if you'd like to be part of a community of supportive individuals who generally want to make a change for the better, then contact the Union at:

generalunion.org

Thank you to all members for your support over this very active period.

<http://www.generalunion.org>

CTL Issue Reviewed

In 2015, we reported on the mysterious case of disappearing CTLs, whereby they vanished from instructor schedules - in some cases from long term requests - and 'magically' appeared on an MI's line instead. We also reported there were instances where a CTL was from a non English lesson and placed on an MI's line even though the MI did not speak the scheduled language. We also reported that an MI even chose to add 'No Show' to a confirmed CTL, which displayed all the hallmarks of an attempt to smokescreen a highly unethical practice. To add to these instances, we have seen evidence of an MI scheduling himself for a confirmed CTL on a Sunday; a day in which he does not venture into the LC at all.

This is indeed a new low for an unwritten policy that has been kept from instructors - although not as well hidden as the MI probably hoped. We wonder what students would make of the following being added to their contract agreements:

1. You authorize Berlitz Japan to:

- Add your CTL lessons to the schedule of a Manager of Instruction even if such person cannot teach your language.
- Add your CTL lessons to a Manager of Instruction, who might not be working at the time your lessons take place.
- Use creative scheduling practices to hide that you canceled your lesson from your requested instructor, and thereby, provide additional income to a non instructor staff member, or income to Berlitz Japan, that the requested instructor will never see.

An instructor decided to contact the Berlitz Integrity Helpline to report this unethical business practice and received the following response:

'Initial inquiry with Tokyo HR department resulted in a suggestion that you contact the HR department directly and discuss it with someone there.'

This sums up the usefulness of the helpline, and we publicly ask HR to consider this article as a request to discuss the issue in an open and transparent forum. We ask that Berlitz Japan provide a clear and open explanation about this business practice to both employees and students. It will certainly be of great interest to our long term corporate customers who trust the integrity and ethical standing of the Berlitz brand.

In a 2015 article titled, Manager or Menace, we reported on the diversity of MIs and how their

behavior and characteristics can have a dramatic impact on the language center they have been given responsibility for. We have seen some quality Managers of Instruction become very disgruntled with the working practices at Berlitz Japan, and flee the nest for a new and more meaningful business challenge. These sudden departures often coincide with changes in policy that reduce the MI's salary while increasing responsibilities. Can we infer that this new CTL policy is an HR mandated action for certain MIs to make a little 'out of contract' on the side, to help peg up declining conditions, or to raise LC profitability?

We acknowledge target pressure, but discreet mean practices are not long term sustainable solutions. A one way monologue of directives passed down through the channels has proven not to bring results. We believe earnest reform is in order to rebuild trust and satisfaction.

