

DB International – The technical telephone interview dilemma for A1 level English speakers

Situation:

DB Schenker Rail and Etihad Rail in Abu Dhabi formed a joint venture to build Abu Dhabi's national rail network. The company language in Abu Dhabi is English. The German candidates had to pass a technical telephone interview and prove that they can cope with safety and security issues in a foreign culture in a foreign language

The Issue:

A large proportion of the candidates had not spoken English since their school days and had never worked in English meaning that the technical words for their job were unknown to them. They largely did not possess the confidence to take part in a panel interview in English on the telephone

Background for In-Situ to this project:

In-Situ had successfully accompanied several candidates through previous interviews at Etihad by means of telephone preparation and interpreting so she had the background knowledge. DB International had 3 candidates to put through whose combined level was A1. All positions were different and In-Situ had 5 days to get each candidate up to scratch

Course plan:

In-Situ created a glossary of words, both interview related as well as technical (referring to equipment used in track maintenance and safety) as well as surmising potential questions and creating model answers. We started off learning all the glossary words then addressing potential interview questions an

Tactics:

Total immersion (no translation into German), Role plays (1 candidate was interviewer and 1 interviewee), word games every morning with new vocabulary (Pictionary, taboo, hangman), repetition, holding presentations on their respective jobs, using visual aids and describing them.

Results:

Two out of three candidates are successfully working in Abu Dhabi. The third candidate passed the English part but failed the technical part.