



The Inside Word

[Article1](#)
[Article2](#)
[Article3](#)
[Article4](#)
[E-mail Us](#)
[Links](#)


If you take a look at our December issue, you will find in Article 3 a treatise on ethics in the global business culture. Perhaps touched with the patriotism that September 11 found in all of us, it offers a generous view of America's ethical foundation: "duty, virtue, and responsibility have always remained a constant for those of us raised in the United States." Maybe it's time we rethink such a statement. Recent events at energy giant Enron have embarrassed a company, an industry, and a country. The pride we take in defeating an enemy abroad has been tarnished by abuse of the capitalistic system we praise and promote here at home. Accusations of American greed have often been heard by voices outside the U.S.,

but now they echo as shouts within the halls of our own Congress.

There is no doubt that America is the dominant player in world business. Our money lets us sit at the head of the table, and we often use our perch to preach our own agenda. We like to say that even if America didn't invent capitalism, we're the best at it. We can scold other nations that fall behind in the economic race because we're always in front. Now it's time for us to rethink our strategy. Enron matters. Not only to people in Washington and Houston, but to everyone who believes in the American business model and way of life. Cheating and lying belittle a business just as they belittle a man.

ALC is a company that succeeds through the transfer of information. As we move from one language to another, our accuracy and precision ensure that our job is done correctly. A job well done by ALC creates trust between our employees and our customers, and it forms a bond typically found in business, one which relies upon duty, virtue, and responsibility (why do these words sound familiar?). The "information economy" to which ALC most certainly belongs depends upon these business fundamentals in order to survive. America's arrival at superpower status came about because we not only learned to survive at this game; we thrived on it.

Shame on Enron, and all those involved in cooking their books. The destruction of information is wrong and unethical. At ALC the transfer of information is our greatest commodity. We value and appreciate it, because it's what we do. The upheaval at Enron will not inflict the carnage or pain upon America that a group of terrorists managed to do in September. However, we can only hope that each disaster will find a similar result: a resilient nation that will root out the problems and find answers that will prevent such tragedy in the future.

God Bless.

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From Maryland to the World

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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[Article1](#)
[Article2](#)
[Article3](#)
[Article4](#)
[E-mail Us](#)
[Links](#)

ALC's Newest Service:

Telephone Interpretation



Excitement is high at ALC over the arrival of our newest service: telephone interpretation. The newest complement to our full range of translation services, telephone interpretation is capable of providing instant and accurate translation over the telephone. It acts as a private translator that you can use whenever you like.

Telephone interpretation immediately makes any customer multi-lingual. You can instantly communicate in over 100 languages and dialects as soon as you pick up your phone. Simply place a call to ALC and we will

immediately put you in contact with one of our certified translators. In seconds you will enjoy a real-time conversation in the language of your choice using conference call technology. The process is simple, fast, and rewarding.

This is an invaluable business service, as it allows even those who never studied a foreign language to keep in contact with clients all over the globe. Bilingual communication is quickly becoming the norm in customer service, and with ALC's telephone interpretation service anyone can stay ahead of the game and become multi-lingual around the clock.

Instant translation has never been easier. Whether you are placing or receiving calls, ALC gives you immediate access to our full staff of professional translators. Call ALC today and find out how telephone interpretation can make your life easier.

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[Article3](#)
[Article4](#)
[E-mail Us](#)
[Links](#)

EURO: The Currency of Language



The arrival of 2002 brought a brand new change to much of the European continent: the euro. Bills and coins denominated in euros now spend themselves across borders and into cash registers in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, and Finland. The continent was prepared for the new currency's arrival with public information campaigns and a gradual transformation that allowed time for the national currencies to cycle out of existence. The euro was anticipated and expected by Europeans. Another arrival now working its way across the continent was neither invited nor has it been warmly embraced: the English language.

As the European Union grows in strength and numbers, the challenge of fast and accurate communication among the member nations has brought about an interesting side effect for those interested in language: the emergence of English as the "lingua franca" of the EU. Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper recently reported that the emergence of English as the European language was giving the English government undue influence over policy proposals while French was being "left in the dust." The proliferation of English is hardly the Brits fault; American media is now commonplace all over the globe, Hollywood is certifiably the world's movie studio, and almost any web search requires some command of English. People from India to Brazil adopt English as a means of advancement in society, and in the business world there is no dispute that English reigns supreme. However, to societies that have held their mother tongue dear for centuries, the emergence of English is a scary prospect, yet one that continues nonetheless.

If giving up your currency touches off the nationalistic sensors of people, imagine what losing a language could do to national pride (and to commerce in translation!). Human society constantly undergoes change, and as the world becomes more tightly knit it seems natural that a common tongue will rise to facilitate communication. After all, languages first started being exchanged as merchants sought new markets for their goods. Here at ALC we're happy to provide the finest in translation and interpretation service until that day when the world speaks as one.

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[Article1](#)
[Article2](#)
[Article3](#)
[Article4](#)
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[Links](#)

Ettiquette & Behavior in Great Britain



With the rise of American global dominance in media and business, the famous British reserve is on the decline. Formal tradition is still reserved for spots like the theater, the opera, the church, or a family reunion at Buckingham Palace, but on Main Street you will find much of the casual breeze that the Yanks have given to the world. Unless you're being featured in the tabloids, kissing on greeting is still considered a tad Continental for the majority of Brits (God forbid they look like the French!); however, if you're into bucking the trend or looking chic, two or three air kisses seems preferred. In most social encounters a friendly handshake does the trick.

The British can never say please or thank you too often, and to thank a host for hospitality, a phone call and/or thank-you card is always appreciated. Perhaps it's better said that the lack of a phone call or thank-you card will not be soon forgotten. A golden rule in Great Britain: when in doubt, apologize (even if you have nothing to apologize for).

Appointments: Business lunches are still all the rage, often running well into teatime. Tea has not yet been appropriated as a business meal. Breakfast meetings are possibly a little avant-garde for the stuffier professions, but are increasing in popularity nevertheless. Punctuality is now, and always has been, important to the British. Note, punctuality is now, and always has been, important to the British.

Customs: British customs barely differ from those in the United States or Canada. If in doubt, err on the side of formality. It's advisable to use surnames until invited to do otherwise. Business cards are generally exchanged at the end of a meeting. It is not assumed that spouses will attend business dinners unless pre-arranged, and if you proffered the invitation it is usually assumed that you will pick up the tab. If you are the visitor, however, it's good form for the host to do the taking. Alternatively, play it safe and offer to split the check.

The English are not as rushed as we Yanks. They appreciate directness, but they usually don't "cut to the chase" the way Americans do, particularly in a lunch or tea situation. A bit of social banter is appreciated.

Talking about money is okay for price negotiations, but you never talk about salaries. Asking a question like, "So Charles, how much do you make in an average year?" is completely rude. Americans are very open about money and very prudish about sex. Europeans tend to be exactly the opposite, although the Brits are a bit less open than their continental neighbors. Don't chew gum -- that is their stereotype of uncouth Americans. Don't brag about how the U.S. makes the U.K. look like a blip on the global screen, or even how much better our TV is, or coffee, etc. Don't assume you are always going to shake hands. It isn't always done in a business (or social) situation. The safest strategy is to waiting for the Brit to make the first move. By extension, don't slap or pat anyone on the back or jostle them in a friendly way. It is simply not the done thing.

Keep your voice down, the English tend to speak in more modulated tones than we noisy Americans.

Dress: Men should wear jackets and ties to meetings -- just as they do in North America. Women's power dressing is not quite such a cult here, but the British probably expect it of you, so wear a suit if in doubt.

Gifts: If you're visiting a family home, a simple bouquet of flowers is a welcome gift. If you're invited for a meal, bringing a bottle of wine is appropriate. If you wish, bring some candy for the children -- they'll love you for it.



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