

Language and globalization "englishnization" at rakuten essay sample

[Economics](#), [Globalization](#)



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1. Why did Mikitani think Englishnization is absolutely critical to the company?

Rakuten has been growing rapidly in the recent years. To maintain this level of growth and become the number one Internet Services Company in the world, Mikitani believed it was crucial to globalize Rakuten, especially in the context of a shrinking Japanese economy and as expansion plans are concentrated outside Japan.

To expand the company Mikitani believed that a unified business language was crucial.

His decision to make English the official language of the company helped:

Speed-up post merger integration of acquired companies in all parts of the world. (Priceminister, Buy. com etc.) International communication

Hiring of new employees all around the world

Promote a more direct way of communication

Reduce the hierarchical structure and power distance that arises from the Japanese language Sharing best practices with speed and ease

Today, about 30% of new staff are non-Japanese.

Another reason Mikitani launched Englishnization is to contribute to expanding Japanese people's worldview as he considered Japan to be a conservative island nation.

2. How do you evaluate Mikitani's strategy to achieve Englishnization? What would he have done differently?

The strategy taken by Mikitani to achieve Englishnization is quite aggressive. It is forcing employees to learn English in a limited period of time (1 year and a half). Employees could be fired if they don't achieve good enough scores at the TOIEC exam. It is also forcing them to do all work in English, from meetings to emails.

- The strategy is efficient because it has a clear goal (score) and a timeline. Knowledge of English is put into practice directly with employees having to use English in their day-to-day work. - The rationale for " englishnization" is properly explained (Mikitani's book) - Employees are properly monitored and tested.

Mikitani raised employee's salaries so they could pay for English lessons themselves. This do-it-yourself approach is maybe too overwhelming for employees. Giving them more guidance and providing them teachers and English learning trips would have helped ease the process and make them feel less abandoned and anxious.

Another concern was that employees didn't find time to take English classes and that with this whole program productivity was declining. Helping employees to accommodate their schedule would have helped them combine learning English and their work. 3. Is Englishnization really necessary for the employees working for domestic operations? Is Englishnization worthwhile inspite of the loss of productivity?

I believe it was a necessary measure even for employees working for domestic operations for the following reasons:

It could help for sharing best practices with another country Rakuten is inevitably a global company and English will be needed at some point The long term goal is to become a global leader and English will be necessary It allows for international talents to work in Japan

It's a new way of doing business, maybe a gain of efficiency in the long run? (English language is more assertive and direct) It was Mikitani's desire to change the corporate culture. It is not only for English, Mikitani wanted to have bicultural employees.

Loss of productivity is only temporary. As employees feel more and more comfortable with English they will regain their productivity. In the long-term as Rakuten wants to be a global leader, it was a necessary sacrifice.

Half of Rakuten's Japanese employees can now adequately engage in internal communication in English, and 25% communicate in English with partners and coworkers in foreign subsidiaries on a regular basis. (from an internet article)