

Language Problems | When a British tries to impress the Spaniards

by Jochen Ressel



Our Austro-British Society's Vice President Alexander Christiani provided an excellent blog article about his Ambassadorial language experiences in the Netherlands. When reading this, it reminded me of a quite lovely and humorous story that occurred during my time working for the London HQ of an international company, and Alexander's article inspired me to share it with you.

Management meeting and the legendary video training

In the late 1990s, our annual European Marketing Management Meeting was held in Marbella, as our Vice President Marketing had a good hand in selecting lovely places to meet – if Nice, Rome or even Helsinki. Besides discussions about pricing, product management and the presentation of new products in various business areas, half a day was reserved for "Presentation skills" as we experienced a lack of know-how from our European marketing managers to present the products to their regional sales and marketing personnel in an appropriate way, even when providing them with all kind of presentations, animations and videoclips you can think of. Therefore, our precious Vice President Marketing selected a high-level expert in London and flew him to Marbella to get our team well trained in holding perfect presentations. A part of the training was planned to be a classic video training, where our colleagues were filmed, and their skills and potential for improvements were analysed in due course.

On arrival of the presentation trainer, he found out that the video camera had found its way to Marbella, but nobody thought about the videotapes, which made our valued Vice President undertake a pleasant walk through Marbella to find an appropriate shop. Before leaving the hotel, he asked the receptionist what one calls a videotape in Spanish. He replied it is called "videocinta", but as he needed an empty one, he simply could ask colloquially for a "trapa virgen", meaning a "maiden/virgin tape".

So, our Mr Vice President, a real British Sir, convinced to be well prepared, made his walk to a shop, entered it and replied full of pride to the shop manager on his question "A la orden?": "Un virgen, por favor!" This was the point where the Spaniard was unsure if our Vice President selected the right shop for his request.

Have you experienced something comparable? Please let us know! We are looking forward to your comments!



About the author

Jochen Ressel is the Secretary General of the Austro-British Society. He worked several years for a UK company and its HQ in London. Currently, he holds the position as COO of SoccerCoin, a FinTech company active in the field of sports.

The opinions expressed in this article are entirely his and reflect in no way the opinions of the ABS.