

## **Who needs an English-language journalist in France?**

**By Richard Woodruff**

**All too often, big international companies are guilty of publishing poor, incorrect or ungrammatical English. The result is that their communications alienate rather than seduce the target audience.**

For some reason, many French companies are quite happy to invest extensive time and money in researching, developing, and writing communications in their native language – but English-language content is frequently left as an after-thought or a last-minute rush job. Or else it is entrusted to a non-native speaker and/or a non-professional writer: someone who may have very good English, but is unable to understand the subtleties of language as intimately as a qualified Anglophone journalist.

### **Making the right impression**

Unsurprisingly, such a lacklustre approach does little to impress the target audience. Mistakes or poor English come across as unprofessional. Poorly-phrased or unclear sentences are frustrating. And missing words or punctuation can be completely misleading. I once watched an English-language video, produced by a French company, where an omitted word completely changed the whole meaning of the communication. Instead of promoting a new product, the video effectively denigrated it, making the product seem worthless. Such a glaring fault would never have occurred if an English-language journalist had been on the shoot.

### **Creating a cultural connection**

Clearly, though, Anglophone journalists do more than simply assure the accuracy of language. Like all journalists, they strive to produce efficient, effective copy. Sentences that get to the point. Quickly. And, if necessary, they produce English that is easy to understand – even for foreigners. Another important skill is the ability to understand and effectively use cultural references. Johnny Hallyday means little to most English people, but Cliff Richard is a household name in his native Britain. In other words, English-language journalists find the most effective way to intrigue, interest, and connect with an international audience.

### **Communicating to the world**

In today's rapidly developing business world, the need to communicate in English is increasingly important for companies of all sizes, across all industries. And, as we say in English: if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well.