



# ASPIRING TO INSPIRE

*Christian Neske explains why he is so keen to share his love of languages through the Inspiring the Future project*

Words: Andrea Ball

Christian Neske, who was born in Germany, works at Bank of America Merrill Lynch's offices in London



**Christian Neske**  
Fixed Income  
Sales Trader

**C**hristian Neske has been working at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in London since 2005. He was born in Germany, where he lived and worked before moving to the UK. He also spent two years studying for a Masters degree at a university in America, but it was a trip to a US high school as a teenager that inspired Christian to explore a career in languages.

"I would still be living in Germany if I hadn't been exposed to another language and culture, and the sense of excitement that experience generated in me," he says. "It gave me the impetus to continue with learning English,

which has opened so many doors for me, most of which I did not even know existed."

Christian also speaks a little French and Spanish, but is not as fluent as some of his colleagues at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, who converse with clients from all over the world.

"It's a really exciting environment to work in, with the hotchpotch of different languages being spoken in the aisles where I sit – every sentence is peppered with English idioms, of course. While I can converse at a very basic level in both French and Spanish, I am only able to successfully negotiate in German and English, rather than three or more languages,



Students find out more about the link between learning and the world of work

## CHRISTIAN'S TYPICAL DAY

Christian's day in the office starts at about 7.45am, an hour later than his clients, who work predominantly in Germany and Austria. "As I work from London covering German-speaking investors, languages – in my case at least two – are a necessary requirement," he says.

Christian compares his work with that of a market stall holder. "I sell services to clients speaking one language (German), whereas the rest of the staff on the stall with me – the traders and researchers – speak another language (English)," he explains. "In order for a successful transaction to occur, I need to be capable of switching back and forth between two languages quickly and accurately, otherwise my clients end up with apples instead of oranges."

"Instantly translating is a fun challenge for your brain and a part of the job that I love," says Christian, who is surrounded by other traders speaking different languages. "English, French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Swedish and German are the languages typically heard on the trading floor."

Talking to students as a volunteer for Inspiring the Future



## PROFILE

### Christian Neske

German-born Christian Neske works in the Global Markets division at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in London. He is a Fixed Income Sales professional, who works mainly with German-speaking investors in Germany and Austria. Christian is also a volunteer for Inspiring the Future, an organisation that connects schools and colleges with employers and people from the world of work.

as many of my colleagues do." He adds, "While you may not be able to actively communicate with your colleagues, you feel better if you know roughly what they are talking about," he explains. "Understanding parts, or maybe even chatting in a third language, enables a deeper cultural understanding and can be hugely gratifying."

### THE JOY OF LANGUAGES

Christian believes it's a fallacy that young people with English as their native tongue find it harder to learn a second language than young people in the rest of Europe. "I think it's partly due to a lack of exposure to the benefits – and indeed the

joy – of speaking more than one language," he says.

A desire to tackle this misconception was one of the reasons Christian decided to volunteer for Inspiring the Future. Bank of America Merrill Lynch has been the lead corporate sponsor and a key strategic partner of Inspiring the Future since 2012. Employees are encouraged to sign up and get involved in attending events at schools, as well as events onsite in London and at the firm's offices around the country.

"Research has shown that interaction with employers raises

*"Research has shown that interaction with employers raises young people's aspirations"*



Christian spends his day talking to German-speaking investors





Volunteers explain why learning a second language is so useful in the jobs market

***“I would still be living in Germany if I hadn’t been exposed to another language, and the sense of excitement that experience generated in me”***

young people’s aspirations and helps them to understand the link between learning in school and the world of work, as well as motivating them to improve their academic performance,” he says.

“My first experience volunteering with the organisation was in 2015,” remembers Christian. “Some primary school students came into the bank as part of Inspiring the Future’s Primary Futures campaign. My colleagues and I were there to take part in a speed networking

event. It is probably safe to say that becoming a fixed income sales professional is not top of the jobs list of most 10-year-olds, so I knew I had my work cut out.”

Christian detailed the many work opportunities that exist at a bank and explained to the children why languages, numeracy and literacy are key skills for the world of work. “It was such a thrill meeting curious, lively, chatty and interested students and hopefully passing on my passion for language learning to some of them,” he says.



● **Inspiring the Future:** To find a volunteer from Inspiring the Future to speak at your primary or secondary school or college, visit [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)

## WHAT IS INSPIRING THE FUTURE?

Inspiring the Future connects primary and secondary schools and colleges with volunteers from the world of work. Volunteers of all levels, from apprentices to CEOs, and from professions ranging from archaeology to zoology, pledge an hour of their time to go into a school near where they live or work to talk to young people about their job and the career path they took.

Children can see the relationship between what they are learning and the possibilities it opens up for them in later life, meaning they are likely to be far more motivated to achieve.

Short careers talks, or insights, normally take between 20 minutes and an hour, including a Q&A session for students to ask questions. Schools and FE colleges may also host careers fairs which normally involve 20-30 professionals from different sectors, with students moving round in a marketplace set-up, and these normally last about an hour.

For more information, visit [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)