



# How to Manage Translation Costs and Work Successfully with Translation Suppliers

## About the author

This white paper was written by Jackie Smith, the sales and marketing manager for SH3, Inc., a 29-year old translation company. The articles were originally published in SH3's newsletter, the *TransLetter*. Jackie has worked closely with translation customers during her 19 years with SH3.

## How to contact SH3

We are happy to answer questions and provide input on language and translation issues. Please call 913-747-0410 and ask for Jackie Smith, Karen Hensley or Jessie Mallicoat. Or send an e-mail to [jrsmith@sh3.com](mailto:jrsmith@sh3.com).

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If you haven't purchased translation before, there's a lot to know. In this white paper, we'll share some inside tips from the vendor-side of the translation business. We'll describe best practices that can help you reduce translation costs while improving the quality of the translations you receive. Plus, we've thrown in a few interesting tidbits of information from the popular "Did You Know?" column of our newsletter, the *TransLetter*.

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*"The translator's work is more subtle, more civilized than that of the writer; the translator clearly comes after the writer. Translation is a more advanced stage of writing."* – Jorge Luis Borges, Argentine philosopher and writer

*"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug."* – Mark Twain, American author and humorist

# Ten Things to Know About Purchasing Translation Services

You may be asked to purchase foreign language translations from time to time, but find you're mystified by the whole process. A little bit of knowledge can go a long way towards a successful outcome. Here's our "Top Ten" list of factors that have a direct impact on price, turnaround time and quality.

**1. Words count – a great deal.** Many factors are considered in the price of a translation project, but the number one item is the number of words to translate. Do what you can to be succinct. Edit text prior to translation, create modules of text that can be translated once and stored for re-use, and try not to be redundant.

**2. Translation memory is a tool that can save you money, but it's not a panacea.** SDL Trados and other translation memory programs are tools translators use to store and re-use translated text. This can save money and time. Some additional things to know about translation memory are: 1) A clean text file of the source wording is required (not scanned pages and not a desktop-published file) and this often results in a "file prep" fee; 2) discounts are maximized when exact text is repeated; and 3) translations stored in translation memory are only as good as the original translation, so be selective when hiring translators.

**3. Electronic files are important.** Not all electronic files are created equal when foreign language is involved. Some interface with translation memory programs or support diacritical marks and foreign hyphenation rules better than others. How you lay out your document also makes a difference. One example – placing words on art (callouts) adds cost due to extra formatting steps. If you'd like some hints about different file types and layout which facilitates translation, talk to your translators.

**4. Changes matter.** Alterations and additions incur revision costs. It's always better to wait until your document is final to start on the translation. And once the content has been translated and stored in translation memory, even simple changes like replacing "dealer" with



**Be succinct; the primary factor in translation cost is the number of words to be translated.**

"representative" within a previously-translated sentence mean it is no longer an exact match, and will be presented for translation revision. There went your discount. (See item 2 above.)

**5. You get what you pay for.** You may try to circumvent the cost of professional translation by going cheap – maybe using a free translation website or the high school French teacher. Neither is a good option. Translation is a craft requiring fluency in two languages, subject matter knowledge, writing and grammatical skills, education, experience, tools and talent. The best translators are paid accordingly, which means there are no "bargain" translations.

**6. Professionals are a better choice than dealers or agents.** True, they know your product and the language, but translation is not their job. They have other important work to do and their livelihood may depend upon sales commissions, meaning that your translation will be near the bottom of the priority list. Plus, they may not possess the necessary skills required for accurate and thorough translation (refer to #5 above).

**7. Haste makes waste.** When you rush a translation project, quality suffers and costs rise. Impossibly-fast

turnaround times do not allow sufficient time to research the subject matter, or do a thorough editing. Give your translator the time required to do it right. You'll be glad you did.

**8. The more information, the better.** It won't cost any more to send reference materials along with the text to be translated, and it will help your translator do a better job. Provide copies of existing translations, glossaries, lists of industry terms, product catalogs – anything that will help clarify what's being translated. Be sure to answer questions promptly when they arise. The more information you provide, the better the translation will be.

**9. Some content is harder to translate than others.**

A standard business letter is one thing; a technical manual for a piece of machinery is another animal altogether. Parts lists are particularly challenging (what exactly is a “brake spider mounting bolt”?)

Advertising and creative text require reflection and extensive editing because what works in some cultures does not work at all in others. Expect to pay more for this type of translation.

**10. You're in charge – don't let your reviewers hold you hostage.** Sometimes a reviewer takes three months to return his comments, when the initial translation took a mere three weeks. Don't let company politics or jam-packed schedules interfere with getting your translation completed. If your reviewer is non-responsive, pick somebody else or forgo a review altogether.

That's our list of 10 important things to know when you purchase translation services. As they say, knowledge is power. Perhaps these tips will empower you the next time you prepare to launch a translation project. ■

## Did You Know?

Computers work from instructions written in “machine code,” composed of ones and zeroes. Various computer languages (C++, etc.) make use of the machine code to write the instructions that create software programs, known as “source code.” Since this source code is the magic behind software, it is usually proprietary and highly protected intellectual property.

“Open source” refers to software that is available to anyone who wants to use the product, including modifying or redistributing the source code, although there is normally a license fee. It was originally called “free software” (*free as in free speech, not free of charge*), but the term was changed because it was considered ambiguous. Some of the more well-known open source software programs are Java®, Firefox®, and Linux®. ■





# How Translation Projects are Priced



Sooner or later, you want to know how much your translation project will cost. It may seem a very mysterious business – how is something as intangible as language priced? Why do some documents cost more to translate than others? Multiplying the number of words to be translated by a set rate per word forms the basis for translation pricing, but there's a lot more to it. Many steps are involved in crafting an accurate translation and those items are factored into the overall price. Over the last few years, translation memory technology has added some complexity to the pricing model.

Translation memory technology came on the market about 15 years ago and since then it has been widely adopted in the translation industry. Translation memory software (Trados®, Déjà Vu®, SDLX®, etc.) allows translators to store and reuse translated sentences, thereby reducing cost and turnaround time. Although translation memory can result in reduced translation cost over the long run, it is also a cost driver in some respects because it does not function within publishing programs

such as FrameMaker® or InDesign®. Additional steps are required to get the source text into a compatible file, and the translated text back into a formatted, print-ready file.

Here are some of the factors that are considered in pricing a translation project:

**File preparation cost is estimated.** You provide an electronic file of the document in the original program, such as PageMaker®, InDesign, FrameMaker, etc. (A PDF file will not work for translation.) Preparing this source file for translation involves exporting or filtering to produce a clean text file that can be translated within a translation memory program. The amount of time required to prep the file determines the cost. Some programs lend themselves to this process more than others, therefore costs may vary.

**A rate per word** is established, to cover both translation by an initial translator and editing and proofreading by a second linguist. Each language has a standard range of rates, somewhere between \$.20 per word and \$.40 per word. Spanish is at the lower range of the scale because of the number of available resources. Languages like Finnish and Hebrew are at the higher end.

**You can have a direct impact on translation cost by reducing the number of words to translate.**

Complexity of the text to be translated also affects the rate per word. The more challenging the translation, the higher the rate per word. Parts listings are especially difficult since they are highly specific terms out of context and require a great deal of research. Medical research is also demanding; there are few translators qualified to do this type of work and they command higher rates.



**The number of words to be translated** is calculated through electronic word count. Words that are hidden in art files are added to the word count. The total is multiplied by the rate per word which has been established for this particular project. The more words to translate, the more the translation will cost. This is one place where you can have a direct impact on your translation cost, assuming the text to be translated is new and hasn't been stored in translation memory. By simplifying and reducing the number of words to be translated you can reduce translation costs.

**Translation memory discounts** are applied, if appropriate. When a database of translation has been established, the number of words in sentences that are exact matches is calculated and a discount is applied.

**Digital typesetting (desktop publishing) time is considered.** After the translation is completed and stored in translation memory, it must be placed back into the source program and formatted. This cost is estimated from the amount of time required to make the document publication-ready, including fonts, style, leading, spacing, hyphenation, graphic editing, etc. The more intricate the original layout, the more time is required. Different software programs and different platforms also add to the complexity. Some programs are more language-friendly than others.

**Linguistic and graphic QA time is estimated.**

This covers the time involved for linguists and graphics

specialists to proof the final products before shipping to the customer.

**Project management time** is gauged. Managing a translation project involves routing and checking the project to make sure it's done right and on time, plus coordination of teams of resources. This fee is usually around 10% although it may vary. For example, an unusually high number of client reviews and approvals require more project management time.

**Other factors** may also affect your cost. Alterations that occur after the project is started will add time and expense. Changes made by your in-country reviewers may affect the price, especially if reviewers get "red ink syndrome" and re-write the entire document. There are minimum charges for translating small documents. And rush charges may be added if overtime work is required to meet your deadline.

When the translation business in the U.S. was in its infancy some 25 years ago, calculating the cost of a translation project was fairly simple. In today's technology-rich environment, pricing translation is much more involved. A number of different factors affect the price and must be taken into consideration. So the next time you're tempted to call a translation company and ask about rates, recognize that the number of words to be translated is important, but only part of the picture. ■

## Did You Know?

The Great Pyramid of Giza covers 13 acres and is built of two million limestone blocks weighing more than two tons apiece. Not only is it huge, it is close to perfect in symmetry. According to archeologist John Romer in his book, *The Great Pyramid: Ancient Egypt Revisited*, the sides of this colossal monument are not more than eight inches out of alignment and the interior shafts, several hundred feet long, are no more than a few inches from being perfectly square.

Centuries of speculation have resulted in many theories as to how this pyramid was built so perfectly. As early as 2,500 years ago, the Greek historian Herodotus theorized that 100,000 slaves worked for 20 years to construct it. A radical new theory by French architect Jean-Pierre Houdin was featured in the June 2008 issue



of *Archaeology* magazine, suggesting that the tomb was built from the inside out using internal ramps. But Zahi Hawass, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, is skeptical of any new theories. He comments, "I receive a theory every day." ■

# Writing for Translation

Of course you don't really write for translation; translators are not your target audience. You're writing for global readers that will use your product or service. But translation is the catalyst for communication with that audience. To achieve accurate translation, your source text must be clear and understandable. If your translator can't understand what you're saying, the chances are your readers won't either.

You can expedite the translation process and keep costs down by cleaning up your English text before it's translated. Careful preparation will save many hours in translation time. Here are some best practices to follow:

**Make clear statements.** Follow good grammar rules, use active voice, and be brief. Keep your text clean and understandable. Limit your choice of vocabulary and, especially in technical writing, be consistent with what you call things. Don't describe a part as a "pressure valve" in one sentence, and a "regulator" in the next. Consistency will minimize user confusion and save on translation research time.

**Be careful with noun strings.** A good rule of thumb is no more than three nouns in a string, and that may be too many. A long noun string is hard to decipher and translate. For instance, "black electrical cable connector" – is it a black cable or a black cable connector? This is a subtle difference but it can change

the translation. In the English language, a writer adds nouns ad infinitum, stacking them up one after the other. In many other languages this results in long, awkward text strings. For instance, "Broadcast Nozzle Selection Guide" in Spanish becomes "Guía de selección de boquillas para aplicaciones al voleo."

**Include must-know information; eliminate nice-to-know.** Translation is priced by the word. Taking out the fluff keeps translation costs down. Don't state the obvious, such as "First, turn on your computer." Drop the marketing blurbs from your manual; the user has already bought your product. It's not necessary to translate California Proposition 65 unless the translation is for the U.S. Eliminate the list of American service centers when you're translating for other countries.

## If your translator can't understand what you're saying, the chances are your readers won't, either.

**Avoid business jargon.** Brian Fugere, Chelsea Hardaway and Jon Warshawsky collaborated on a book entitled *Why Business People Speak Like Idiots*. The content is humorous, but it makes a very good point. According to the authors, "Jargon, wordiness and evasiveness are the active ingredients of modern business-speak." Phrases like "global mindset," "long-pole item" and "channel management system" may leave translators in a mental fog.

**Watch out for acronyms and abbreviations.** Translators spend a great deal of time searching for clarification of acronyms. Is "MIN" an abbreviation for "minute," "minimum," or does it mean "Mobile ID number"? Does "ETA" mean "estimated time of arrival," or "emergency tire assistance"? Spell out the full meaning, or provide a clarification for the translator's reference.





**Leave out clichés, cultural and sports references.**

You've heard this before but it bears repeating. Don't reference holidays, sports, geographic nicknames and idiomatic phrases. Some examples: Wall Street, garage sale, test drive, Thanksgiving, the Big Apple, two-minute drill. These have no parallel meaning in most other cultures.

**Provide reference and context.** You enhance the accuracy of your translation by providing reference and context for out-of-context phrases, such as software strings or labels for machinery. Is "Screen," a verb or a noun? Does it mean "to screen out particles" or does it refer to a machine part, such as a filter, or possibly your computer screen?

**Use metric units.** If your audience is outside the U.S., all units should be in metric with no exception.

Follow SI (International System of Units) standard abbreviations for metric units. If you're not familiar with them, you can find good information on various websites, including Wikipedia.

Think of your audience when you're composing a document for global readers. Keep your materials clear and easily understood. Edit text before translation to eliminate acronyms, clichés, lengthy noun strings and business jargon. Make sure you've included metric units. You'll save on translation costs and both your translators and readers will thank you. ■

**Did You Know?**

Unicode is a character-encoding standard which allows non-Latin languages like Chinese to be published in off-the-shelf programs. What this means to you is that translating your brochure or manual into Japanese or Russian will be less expensive in the future.

To this point, non-Latin alphabets have always required special fonts and programs, and some required special operating systems, adding to the complexity and cost of publishing in those languages. Now a growing number of programs such as Adobe InDesign and FrameMaker 8.0 incorporate Unicode to simplify formatting.

The Unicode Consortium, a nonprofit organization comprised of industry members, was responsible for

developing the standard which originally supported 65,000 characters but now has been expanded to more than 1,000,000 different characters. See [www.unicode.org](http://www.unicode.org) for more information. ■

交の二階から飛び下りて  
一週間程腰を抜かした事  
がある。なぜそんな無闇  
をしたと聞く人があるか  
も知れぬ。 - 夏目漱石

# What's Taking So Long?

## Planning for translation turnaround time

There's no doubt that some parts of our daily lives are speeding up. It used to take several days for a client's electronic files to arrive by mail; now the files are downloaded almost instantly from the Internet. Want to get the latest news? No need to wait for the morning newspaper – check any number of different websites to find out what's happening in real time around the world.

Recent polls of translation buyers have revealed that for many, fast turnaround time is considered a key factor in evaluating translation service providers. But even though technology now offers translators some assistance, there's no getting around the fact that translation is still an art requiring human skills and careful thought and can only be produced at a certain rate without sacrificing quality. In addition to the creative nature of the translation itself, translation agency personnel go through many steps to ensure that your document retains the look and feel of your original, and follows your specifications.

If you haven't worked with a translation agency before, you may not realize that a number of different people perform tasks that contribute to the final product, each of which takes some amount of time to accomplish. A project manager clarifies details and schedules personnel to make sure that the final product is complete and delivered at the agreed-upon date. Desktop publishing professionals prepare the electronic files for translation, and then refine the page formatting after translation, so that the translated document retains the original layout while accommodating the unique characters and expanded wording of a different language.

Translating and editing naturally comprise the greatest portion of the time necessary to provide a quality translation. Each new document involves a unique mix of terminology and content. The translator must interpret the meaning and re-create it within the context of a separate language; this requires a significant amount of thought and research. On average, experienced translators can work at the rate of approximately 2,000 words per day depending on subject matter and complexity. Following the initial translation, a linguistic editor further refines the translation, comparing it to the original text for content, looking for consistency and



**...you may not realize that a number of different people perform tasks that contribute to the final product, each of which takes some amount of time to accomplish.**

grammatical correctness. Additional checks after the translation is formatted ensure the correctness of your translated document.

Other factors can affect turnaround times, especially the availability of key translators. Good translators are in demand and are frequently booked ahead. Like most professionals, translators have specializations. If your project requires the expertise of a translator with specific knowledge of your subject area, there may be a short delay until the translator can complete his current assignment and start on your translation.

Sometimes the translation is reviewed by your in-country personnel before it is finalized. This can take a few days

or a few weeks, depending upon your reviewer's schedule. Either way, the translation doesn't move forward until the reviewer returns his suggested changes.

There is no hard and fast rule for estimating turnaround times, but being aware of the process will help you plan ahead. The more words in your document, the longer the translation will take. When translators are pressured to drastically compress turnaround times, quality suffers. You can work with your translation provider to alleviate last-minute requirements which invariably lower quality and result in problems down the road.

Here are some things that you can do to be proactive:

1. Check with your translation vendor in advance to determine an average turnaround time for the translation of your document, and build it into the schedule.
2. When your document is nearing completion, contact the translation company to inquire about their workload and let them know you are sending them a project in the near future.

3. Be sure to provide everything the translators need when you submit the document for translation, including the electronic source files (InDesign, Quark, FrameMaker, etc.), art files, fonts, a PDF file and reference pieces.
4. Be available to answer questions and respond promptly. If you're going to be out of the office, designate a backup who can answer questions and make sure somebody is checking your e-mail.
5. If you have a qualified reviewer, make certain he's available to review the translation and is able to return it in a reasonable period of time. ■

## Did You Know?

We get lots of it every day, enough to clog up our e-mail inboxes and cause considerable frustration. It's spam and most of us are just plain tired of it. But why is it called "spam"?

The name derives from a Monty Python television skit, which took place in a restaurant where everything was served with SPAM (the canned meat from Hormel), no matter what was ordered. Thus, "spam" came to mean heaps of something that you never really wanted in the first place. The Hormel folks have taken this in stride, although they prefer the abbreviation UCE, or unsolicited commercial email. Their website states that they are officially opposed to spamming.

Some people actually buy the products advertised in spam messages, at an estimated rate of 0.1 to 1 percent. This sounds low, but consider that 2.3 billion spam messages are sent every day and you can see how spammers could turn a profit. Spam is more than annoying; it's also costly to businesses. One study by Nucleus Research estimated that dealing with unsolicited e-mail costs an average of \$1934 per employee per year with the average employee receiving nearly 7500 spam messages per year. ■



# Translation Memory Technology

## Facts and Misconceptions



Translation memory software is a standard part of most translation companies' processes. What we call translation memory software actually consists of two basic components. The first is a sentence database containing source language sentences as one field and target language sentences as a second field. The next component is a search engine that can scan the database for identical matches or "fuzzy" matches (close but not identical).

Due to a great deal of attention by the trade press, translation consumers are also becoming knowledgeable about translation memory. Along with this recognition, some misconceptions have developed about how translation memory works. Here are some typical examples:

**"Can your translation database create a glossary of my terms?"** None of the translation memory programs will generate an "automatic" glossary. If a client requires a glossary, terms can be extracted and then translated to

create a glossary. But in our view, translation memory reduces the reliance on glossaries.

One-to-one word lists are rigid while language is flexible. Our approach has always been that, for meaningful translation, a translator must have context. Using a "concordance search," translators can search the translation memory database for specific terms, check the context, and match it if appropriate.

**"Can the database match up different sentences with the same meaning?"** No.

A translation memory is a sophisticated database of stored phrases and their corresponding translations. Translation memory programs do not have the ability to interpret words, or look for similar connotations.

When a unit is presented for translation, the program automatically looks for a sentence with matching words, and inserts the foreign equivalent if a match is located. For example, these two sentences have the same meaning: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life," and "The remainder of your life begins with today" – but translation memory will see them as different statements. This is a good reason to be consistent with your writing, and not revise frequently used sentences if you want the maximum discounts.

**"Since my translator uses Trados, I don't have to worry about quality."** Translation memory can store bad translations just as easily as good ones. Quality is even more important when translation memory is utilized because poor translations may be used over and over again. Always evaluate a translator's qualifications carefully.



**Why aren't translation memory matches free?**

A “match” is a phrase that was translated previously and is retrieved from the database for a new document. Some customers wonder why it's not free. Translations pulled from memory are discounted considerably – 50% to 70% seems to be the industry norm – but they are not free for two good reasons.

Before any text can be translated, a usable text file must be created. Desktop publishing software files – FrameMaker, PageMaker, Quark XPress, etc. – must be converted to “clean” text files without extraneous line breaks or tabs, with all text in one file (including callouts for graphics) and all the embedded format codes must be protected. This preparation adds to the project's cost.

Another consideration is that “100% matches” may not always be accurate, due to the complexities of language. It is important that each document be edited and proofread in its entirety to assure accuracy. This step is always important for quality control, but particularly so when the translation is partly generated from translation memory.

**“The other translator said I could save 35% to 40% because he uses translation memory.”** Don't be deceived by generalized claims for big discounts. Provide complete electronic files and ask for a firm quote on several documents. Every client's project is different, and there's no way to guarantee a percentage of savings without thorough analysis.

Many factors determine the amount of discount: consistency in your writing style, your publishing program, the complexity of your page layout, the number of words to be translated, and the number of different documents to be translated. Translation projects are complex, and translation memory has added steps. Get some real numbers before believing pie-in-the-sky claims.

**Is it a cure-all for every translation challenge?**

Translation memory is a powerful software tool that stores translated phrases for reuse. It saves the time and expense of translating the same sentences over and over and encourages consistent use of terminology. It is an expensive tool best used by professional translators who can check the quality of the final documents.

Translation memory software does not do the actual translation; it stores the translations done by human translators. It can't interpret or evaluate the material. It can't assure quality translation – only a professional translator can do that. And it can't guarantee a big cost savings unless a number of other factors are in place. ■

**Did You Know?**

You may have noticed accents such as ^ or ~ on letters in translated documents. These are known as *diacritical marks*. Diacriticals are more than funny little squiggles; they are important letter variations which differentiate between similar letters, for example resume vs. résumé.

English speakers are not used to seeing diacriticals and may be tempted to ignore them when working with foreign words. But leaving them off is the same as misspelling. To remind yourself of how important they are, think “diaCRITICAL.”

According to noted word authority Anu Garg, the word *diacritical* is derived from Greek “*diakritikos* (distinctive), from *diakrinein* (to distinguish) and from *dia-* (apart)



+ *krinein* (to separate).” Some examples of unique diacritical marks are ő and ű in Hungarian, and ł and ę in Polish. ■



# Managing the In-country Review Process

Translators are well-versed in many subjects, but even the most experienced translators may be unfamiliar with some of the preferred terminology for a particular industry, especially for new clients. For that reason, a linguistic review of the translated text by in-country agents or employees can be valuable. Many customers feel that a check by someone who speaks the language and is familiar with the subject matter offers an extra level of comfort.

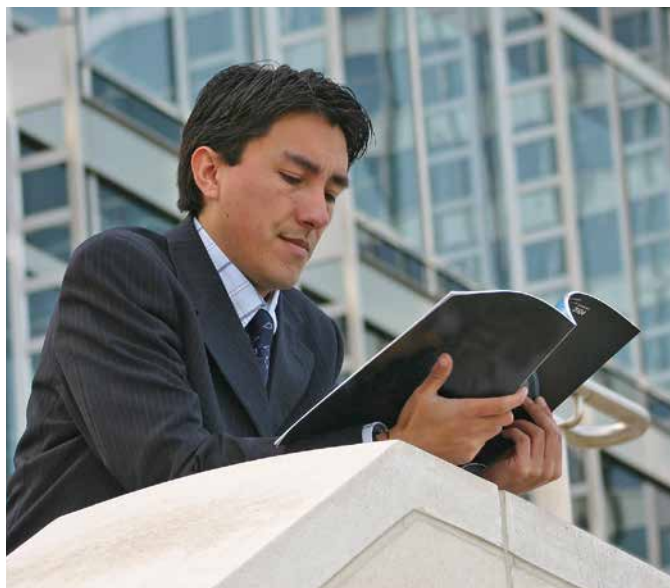
A linguistic review can also become a roadblock to getting the translation done. Terry Thomson of Prisma International says “the review process is one of the biggest headaches that most companies encounter in the translation process.” Every translator has a story about reviews that went badly because of long delays, lack of communication, or hostile reviewers. To make this a win-win situation, it’s important to set up the process for the best possible outcome.

## Think it through

Explain to your upper management why the in-country reviews are important and ask for their support. This will add credibility to your requests. Otherwise, it’s just you asking for a favor from another employee or agent who already has a full-time job. With management on board, your reviewers will be much more interested in participating.

Your choice for reviewer is critically important and should be given careful consideration. The reviewer must be a native speaker of the target language and also must possess a high level of fluency in English. A review can go astray when the reviewer does not fully grasp the original content that is being translated. The reviewer should also possess in-depth knowledge of your products or services and be familiar with the customers who will be using the documentation.

It’s also very important for the reviewer to have the time available to spend on reviewing translations. Reviewers can read about 2,500 to 3,000 words per hour; reading 15,000 words of translation (approximately 30 pages of text) is an entire work day. If your reviewer’s days are filled with other responsibilities, it may be hard to find time to review your translations. Often a sales agent is



chosen to do the review, but these people earn their living from sales commissions. Taking time away from sales efforts to review translated documents is naturally a low priority.

When you have someone in mind, discuss the task with him and make sure that he not only has the time, but also the desire to work with you. Does this person want to cooperate as part of the translation team, or does he feel burdened by the responsibility, which can lead to procrastination? You can expect greater cooperation if the reviewer has a stake in the outcome, i.e., he needs the translated manuals to support the product. If your reviewer has a conflicting agenda, such as wanting to control the content of your documentation, you may receive biased input.

## Provide guidance for the reviewer

After you have a reviewer in place, clearly define the parameters in a written list of instructions. Obviously the reviewer should mark any egregious errors, but the main task is to look for industry-specific terms or phrases that do not adequately convey the original source content. Be sure that the reviewer has the source document and stress that the translation is intended to replicate the content. If the reviewer does not have the source document, he may try to “second guess” the translator, not realizing that the translator has simply mirrored what was in the original.

The reviewer should mark his suggestions clearly so the translator can easily locate and incorporate the changes. This can be done by using “track changes” in a Word file or the commenting tools in a PDF file. If the reviewer simply edits the translated document, the translator will be required to spend a great deal of time finding the changes. This adds time and cost to the project.

Any change that a reviewer makes should be double-checked by the translator before inclusion. Sometimes reviewers mark changes that go against the specifications for the project, for instance deleting all of the English measurements when you have indicated that the final document should contain both English and metric measurements. It is always possible that reviewers may change the content or delete text. The translator should verify the changes and incorporate them into the translation memory database. In this way preferred terminology is retained for future translations.

### Don't let it fall into a black hole

Getting your reviews returned within a reasonable amount of time can be a real challenge. This is something the translator has no control over since the reviewer works for you. Discuss the time frame with your reviewer in advance and agree upon a deadline that will accommodate both of your schedules. Once the review has been sent, follow up regularly to check the status.

Sometimes, even with careful planning, the review is not returned within a reasonable period of time. In this case you need to decide how to proceed. It's up to you

to determine what your response will be, but consider your investment in time and expense. It would be a shame to waste that because of a non-responding reviewer. Perhaps someone with more authority can intervene on your behalf. You might ask a different person to review the translation. Or you could publish the translation as is, and save any resultant comments for the first revision. If you have chosen your translator carefully, you should not be afraid to publish a translation without a reviewer's approval.

### “Oh no, the reviewer marked all over the translation”

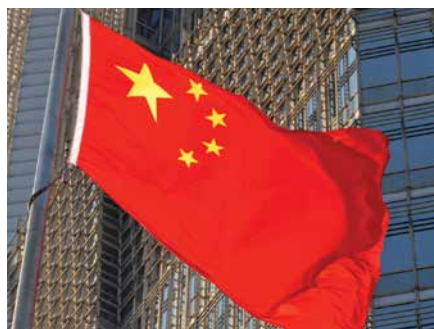
Don't panic if the translation comes back with numerous marks; remember what happens when an English article is passed around for comments. Some reviewers make a lot of changes because they want to do a good job as a reviewer, not because there is something wrong with the translation. It's your translator's job to evaluate what the reviewer has marked and to communicate with you about the changes if there are points of concern.

Your in-country reviewer can become a valued partner in producing accurate, informative documents by introducing industry-specific wording in his native language. Through careful selection of your reviewer, clear communication of time frame and review objectives and continual monitoring of the process, you can anticipate a successful outcome. ■

### Did You Know?

In May 2008, NPR reported that the first news of China's devastating earthquake came through text-messaging. A followup broadcast explained how Chinese messages are entered on cell phones that have English letters on the keyboard. The sender types in a transliteration, at which point all of the possible Chinese characters come up on the screen and the sender picks the most appropriate ones. The commentator remarked that even though this sounds complicated, “millions of Chinese send millions of text messages every day.”

A *transliteration* is a representation of a word by spelling in the characters of another alphabet. The question of transliteration comes up frequently when company names are represented in Chinese. We asked Xiangxiao

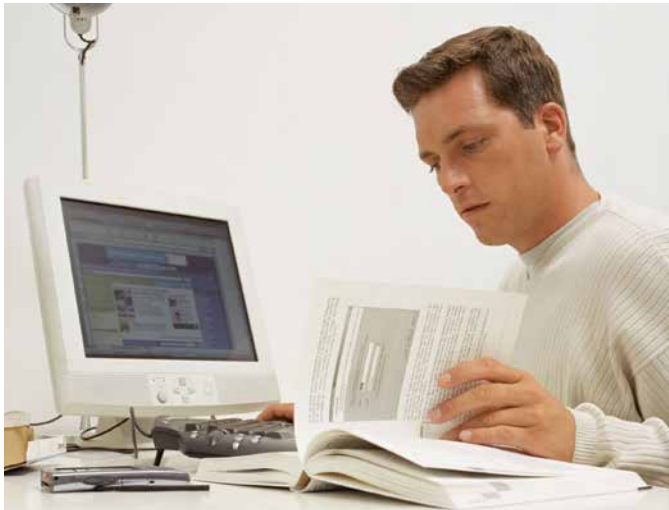


Dong, a respected Chinese translator, how a company name such as “Temporacin” would be transliterated. He responded, “Most

translators will use Chinese characters to represent as closely as possible the pronunciations of the four English syllables (tem-po-ra-cin) respectively.” He added, “Since there is a surprisingly large number of homophonic characters in the Chinese language, care should be taken in choosing characters for transliteration so that they don't accidentally form funny or even ridiculous phrases.” ■

# Tips for Translating Websites

More than 1.6 billion people around the globe were connected to the Internet in March 2009, with new subscribers logging on every minute of every hour from every corner of the planet. Approximately 41% of web surfers are in Asia, 25% in Europe and 16% in North America. If your company has global customers, it makes good business sense to localize your website. Following are some key issues for consideration.



## What's to be translated?

Websites contain a wealth of information and are structured with many different file types – HTML, BMP, GIF, JPEG, PDF, ASP and others. Because of this complexity, you need to clarify the scope before you begin this process. Are you going to localize the entire site, or create an abbreviated version in each language? Consider each of these components:

- Website content in HTML files. Review all content carefully; some may not be targeted at international audiences.
- Graphic images with embedded text – for instance, headlines created in unique fonts and placed as images, or illustrations with embedded text.
- Navigation buttons such as “About Us” (usually BMP images)
- PDF documents like user manuals and brochures
- Dynamic forms
- Flash, streaming video, multimedia

Take some time to plan for translation and think it through – what you decide will have a significant impact on cost and site maintenance. Once you've identified the scope, you need to provide the content in an electronic format that translators can work with.

Up-front planning will have a significant impact on cost and site maintenance.

## Web page content

The majority of the content on web pages is composed in HTML files. There are several approaches to translating this body text:

- 1) You can provide the HTML files to the translators in the corresponding folder structure. Once translated, the HTML files are ready to be compiled into the various language sites. Some clients are reluctant to release HTML files but translators utilize software programs to protect HTML tags during their work, assuring that the translated files will display correctly.
- 2) You provide the text in an Excel® file or Word table, then copy and paste it into the website after translation. This creates more work for you and introduces the possibility of errors when placing the text. If you decide to follow this procedure, it should be mandatory for your translators to check the site before it goes live.
- 3) A third alternative is to provide access to an administrative site where the translators work directly in a secure on-line file. This requires additional steps to store the translation in translation memory, but some customers prefer this approach.

## Graphic images

Any text which is part of a graphic image requires separate electronic files. Provide the editable source files (from the original electronic publishing program in which the graphic was created) for the translator's use.

## PDF files

Websites often contain documents in the form of PDF files. If you decide to translate these documents, the translator will need the source files to do the translation. A PDF is essentially an electronic hard copy and is a last resort for performing translation.



## Dynamic forms

Provide ASP files or other files that contain the text for these forms. Flash®, streaming video Converting these items into the local language often involves audio and/or video manipulation in addition to translation.

Coordinate with your translators and the production house to accomplish this conversion.

## Now you're ready to translate

Translating web pages has much in common with the translation of other documents – it requires the expertise of a professional translator. Writing in “The Global Content Management Challenge,” EContent magazine, October 2007, Jessica Dye says, “The biggest challenge in global content management is also the oldest – translating it into different languages. The temptation to use a free online translation might be great in this age

of instant Google gratification, but those literal word-for-word renderings don't even pass muster for a high school homework assignment, let alone a high-stakes business transaction.” Make sure your translator has the expertise and understanding to do a professional job and you'll be much happier with the end result.

During this process, work with your translator to assure a quality translation by answering questions and providing all necessary electronic files. There will undoubtedly be some clarifications along the way; this means that your translator is trying to do a good job for you. Once the translation is in place, have the translators do a “final check” on a secure site before going live to make sure that languages are displaying correctly. One company discovered that their webmaster had inadvertently placed Italian text within a Spanish-language website. Don't let that happen to you. ■

## Think Before You Localize Web Content

Is your company ready to support global business?

Answering these questions before you start can help you avoid some common mistakes:

- First and foremost, is your company ready to support the business you may generate from your localized website? Can you take orders in languages other than English? Can you provide language specific customer support? Will your forms and interactive databases support non-Latin characters?
- How will navigation be accomplished? Will you add an introductory page with navigation buttons for each language? Do you need to reconfigure the structure of your website and page templates to accommodate this change? Navigation is often overlooked when languages are added, creating frustration for foreign visitors.
- How will you manage revisions? Consider the time involved in obtaining translations and revising the content in several different languages whenever a change occurs. Translation management systems are now available which will detect content changes and automate the revision process. These software packages can be fairly expensive but may be worth the investment considering the resulting efficiencies. There are a number of different products on the market, all with different options and price tags; due diligence is called



for when selecting the right product for your needs.

■ Remember that the format of phone numbers, measurements, dates and currency must be appropriate for the different regions of the

world. Also, toll-free 800 phone numbers won't work from other countries; include standard phone numbers as well.

- Pay attention to small details. One company showed a map of dealer locations in South America, with Colombia spelled Columbia (a common misspelling). Geographical boundaries change frequently; keep world maps current. Don't forget the metric system if your text contains units of measure.
- Websites frequently contain advertising copy, which is a translation challenge. Concepts like “just-in-time delivery” may not be understood in some cultures. Straightforward copy is much easier to translate accurately.
- Some countries have laws that require factual proof of any claims that are made in advertising. Germany, for example, does not allow advertisers to make statements such as “World's Finest Widget” without proof to back up those claims. ■

# Going global with product information

## The devil is in the details when it comes to translation

Bob, the technical writer, was asked to obtain a Portuguese translation of an Operator's Manual after his company sold a machine to a Brazilian customer. He got the name of a reputable translation provider from a business associate, and sent them a PDF of the manual. "That's taken care of," he thought to himself. "Now I can work on other projects."

The translation company responded with a list of questions and clarifications and Bob began to grow impatient. Why can't the translator "just do it"? But with a little bit of understanding, he came to appreciate that some of those details could have a big impact – not only on the quality of the translation, but on the safe and efficient use of the product. In this article we'll discuss some items that need to be resolved before translation can begin.

### Source files!

Source files are the original electronic files in which the document was created, such as FrameMaker, InDesign, Quark, Illustrator, etc. Translators need to work with the source files in order to do the translation, using a PDF file for verification. Since Bob did not include them

in his initial correspondence, this was the first request he received.

### The metric system

Global documentation requires metric measurements. Always include metric measurements in your documents if you're selling your products outside the U.S. Luckily, Bob had included metric units in his manual.

### Software – hard issues

Machinery today is extremely sophisticated, incorporating a number of computerized functions. Operator's Manuals provide step-by-step operating instructions for the computer controls, including screen shots of the display. Translators ask if the user interface is "localized" because the computer screens and screen prompts in the manual must mirror what is displayed on the machine to avoid operator confusion. In Bob's case, the display messages were in Portuguese, so Bob provided screen shots of the Portuguese displays, and a list of the translated messages.





If the screen displays are only available in English, display messages should be left in English in the manual, followed by a translation in parentheses for the operator's information. The manual can be revised if the software is localized at a later date.

## Labels – what does it say on the machine?

Next, Bob was asked about some warning labels and control panel labels shown in the manual. He sent the translators copies of the foreign decals which had already been translated so they could be replicated in the manual. Again, those two instances should be in synch. If the labels are not translated, they should be shown in English in the manual, or translated and produced along with the manual. This is cost-effective and solves the problem of matching text.

## Acronyms

Bob had lots of acronyms in his manual, which required some explanation. Who would know that “LAP” means “Latin America and the Pacific”? All companies have their own acronyms which present a unique challenge for translators and foreign audiences. The best rule is to avoid acronyms. If you must use them, provide explanations.

## “Please clarify what that means”

Bob had quite a few lengthy noun phrases in his manual, some of which were difficult to decipher. For example, what is a “changer driver motor assembly lead”? Also, the parts lists contained abbreviated, out-of-context terms

like “FAS PIN” which were also a bit mysterious. Bob provided clarifications that were immensely helpful.

## To review, or not to review

Sometimes customers are not sure if they want an in-country agent to review the translation, but it's a good idea to think about it in advance. The reviewer's changes should be incorporated into the translation before the final formatting to avoid the additional expense of making changes in the formatted manual. Bob advised the translators that their Brazilian agent would be reviewing the translation and it was planned into the overall project schedule.

## What about U.S.-only information?

A Proposition 65 statement and U.S. Department of Labor regulations were mentioned in Bob's manual. He decided that it was an unnecessary expense to translate those items since they are not valid outside the United States. He also replaced the company's toll-free phone number with its standard phone number for global customers.

## The payoff – customer satisfaction

Bob initially resented the time it took to answer the translator's questions and provide additional information. But he soon came to realize that this attention to detail would yield benefits in a better translation, and in turn, happier customers. The details that he provided helped his translators create a first-class work. ■

## Did You Know?

The game of MONOPOLY® was invented in 1934 when the United States was in the midst of the Depression. The financial situation was grave, and the fantasy of getting rich from real estate investments had tremendous appeal to many people.

Today, MONOPOLY is sold in 80 countries and 26 languages, including Croatian. More money is printed every day for MONOPOLY than for the U.S. Treasury, amounting to about \$50 billion in one year's time.



Here's what “Boardwalk” is called in:

France – Rue de la Paix

Germany – Schlossallee

The Netherlands – Kalverstraat

The United Kingdom – Mayfair



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7101 College Boulevard, Suite 500  
Overland Park, KS 66210  
tel: 913.747.0410 • fax: 913.747.0417