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Lost in Translation? How to get your marketing message to an international audience

By Martin Heimann

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Martin Heimann

Did you know that only 28% of the entire European population can read English? This percentage is even lower in South America and Asia. Even the growing Hispanic community in the U.S. still prefers to read in Spanish for the most part. This means that if you want to sell your products and services to these markets, you will need to be able to communicate effectively in their languages.

Naturally, if you choose to expand into international markets, language will be only one of many challenges. You'll be busy with market research, finding distribution channels and dealing with legal and banking issues. Despite all these challenges, don't make translation an afterthought - the consequences could be disastrous.

The U. S. State Department says that U. S. companies stand to lose \$50 billion in potential sales from poor translations. Companies get themselves into trouble with translations that are inaccurate or culturally inappropriate. Professional translations on the other hand will convey a high quality image of your products or services, leverage your marketing message and help you keep your company clear of legal difficulties.

How do you get good translations? First of all, computer-generated translations won't do. Don't take my word for it. Go online, look up a free translation website and then have a few sentences translated into a foreign language. Then, take the translation that was generated, and have it translated back into English with the free service. Read it, and you'll see why it's not a good idea to use computer-generated translations for your marketing messages. Your texts will look unprofessional and less than competent to native speakers.

So if a computer won't do the job, you'll need a person – but who can you trust? There are literally thousands of translation businesses out there, which vary greatly in size, price and professionalism. The translation industry is a highly unregulated market, and common quality standards are hard to find. What makes the problem worse is that, even after you receive a translation, you will probably not be

able to judge its quality, unless of course you speak the language yourself.

So how can you find a trustworthy and reliable translation service? In the age of electronic communications, you need not limit yourself to a local search. Translations can be easily delivered by e-mail, and under most circumstances, you can discuss all project details over the phone. For legal reasons and also for ease of payment processing you might find it more convenient to work with a provider in your country. Most every translation company will provide you a free consultation and a free price proposal for your project. Besides the cost, here's a checklist of things to inquire about:

- 1) Native Speakers: Does the provider work with translators who are native speakers of the languages? There are plenty of fluent, non-native speakers of second languages, but only native speakers have a perfect feel for their language. Working with native speakers will ensure that your translations sound natural to your audiences, and not like a translation from a foreigner.

- 2) Specialist Knowledge: It's not enough to speak the language. The people who translate your material must know your industry. Translating for a technology firm requires different expertise than translating for a pharmaceutical company.

- 3) Location: The best translators are those who work from their native countries. They are up-to-date with current developments and changes in the languages. If you choose a translation firm that has translators in exactly the countries you are targeting, you can be sure that your translations will be linguistically and culturally appropriate.

- 4) File Formats: To avoid extra work and costs, make sure you choose a translation firm that can work with exactly the same file formats you use and require.

- 5) Technology: Find out what kind of technology the translation firm uses. For example, state-of-the-art translation memory tools allow the re-use of previously translated material. For example, if you make changes or update your material over time, you'll only want those changes translated, and not the complete documents.

- 6) Quality Assurance: Ask the company for their quality assurance procedures. Find out if all translated material gets reviewed before it is sent out to you.

- 7) Check references: Find out which clients the translation company has worked for in the past. Call those references and find out how satisfied they are with customer service and translation quality.

Once you have selected a translation provider make sure you work together with them closely in order to maximize the quality of your translations. One rule is to allow sufficient time. Rushing a job always risks compromising its quality. Also, make sure the source material is well written. You can never generate a great translation from a mediocre source text. Provide as much background material as possible to help the translators understand your product-specific context and learn your organization's jargon.

Finally, it's a good idea to remain available for questions and feedback during the translation project.

Good translators are like good students - they will always ask you questions.

Capture new markets with Website Translation

By Gregory

The Internet reaches a worldwide audience, but how far can your website copy actually go? For international appeal your site's content needs to be in the language of your target audience.

The Big Idea

For the sake of illustration let's look at Spanish online users. Recent studies undertaken for the Spanish Research Association by Nielsen NetRatings shows 14.3 million people in Spain are online. In Mexico 12.25 million people are online (source: ITU, Dec. 2003) and within the US there are around 26 million Hispanics online. From these figures we can estimate that there are 72 million Spanish-speaking users online.

If you were able to add these 72,000,000 people to your on-line audience it would make for compelling marketing and the cost per target would be relatively insignificant.

Accurate translation

Whether your website succeeds or fails depends entirely on the quality of the translation. An inaccurate translation can mean the difference between establishing credibility or creating a negative impression. An accurate translation conveys respect and delivers the impact of a first-class service. Beyond the accuracy of translation the benefits of your product need to be articulated in a meaningful way. This requires a higher level of communication - and this is where the challenge lies - translating your entire sales message keeping the meaning in tact and in a style your audience will relate to.

Translation services

To achieve the very best translation of your important material you need to use a translation service and of course one with an established reputation. If you require a multilingual website for global impact, a translation service should be able to provide translations which are both industry and language specific.

Choosing a translation company

You need to feel that the company you choose is working as part of your team – and transparency is the key to long standing relationships and building confidence in the company you choose. It is essential that you chose a translation that is on to of their game. A company with experienced translators should use the latest Translation Memory Tools and by organising teams they should be able to provide you with consistent quality translations at competitive prices.

A truly professional business translation service must offer not just a solid translation service but be able to offer advice and assistance on the latest technical and localisation issues. You should be provided with a dedicated project manager and technical advisors all able to support you fully all the way.

Feeding a translation company with your product details is a good way to make sure every concept is thoroughly understood and that your copy accurately captures the full meaning of your message. That is when your copy can effectively reach a worldwide audience which is the essence of every business

strategy.

provides companies based around the globe with translations in all languages and all

industries. As leaders in the language market they offer an excellent fast and accurate service – helping your business run fluently around the globe.

Capture new markets with Website Translation

How to Read Job Ads

Italian Translation Into English – Days & Months

Should You Translate Your Web Site to Another Language?

How to Communicate with Prospects All Over the World Who Speak a Different Language

Fax Reaper Pro Software

Email Spider Software

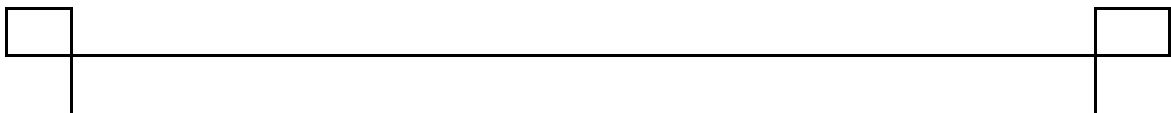
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