



The Secret to Unifying Translation Services Across Departments

eBook

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Intro

2020 was a year like no other. The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we do a lot of things - how we work, how we socialize, and how we interact with the world in general. Out of necessity, our buying habits changed, with consumers shopping online in greater numbers and more frequently than ever before. According to new data from [IBM's US Retail Index](#), the pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital shopping by approximately five years.

The acceleration towards digital isn't unique to the English-speaking world, it's something that's happened worldwide. The "[Can't Read, Won't Buy](#)," survey uncovered some startling statistics that underline the power of website translation and localization.

- 40% of consumers won't buy in another language, only in their native language
- 65% prefer content in their native language
- 73% want reviews of products in their language
- 30% of respondents to the survey said they never buy on English-language sites, and another 30% rarely buy on English-language sites
- 56% either boycott English-language URLs altogether or spend more time on sites in their own language
- 75% of respondents want product information in their native language

Translating your content for a global audience shows that you're open to business worldwide, and fosters understanding and trustworthiness. By taking steps to make your products and services available to overseas consumers, you may stand to gain, both in reputation and financially.

When translating your products and services for a global audience, it can be challenging to make sure that every department or brand is on the same page. In fact, translating company-wide materials such as websites and social media content for multiple regions can be a real challenge.

But it doesn't have to be. On the following pages, we'll examine some tips for unifying translation services to ensure your brand stays consistent everywhere it goes.

Planning

With every large translation and localization project, the planning stage is often one of the most important to ensure consistency across departments.

For larger companies, where translations are needed across multiple departments and diverse collateral (e.g., technical user manuals, product packaging, etc.), planning is crucial to maintain brand consistency.

There are several decisions to be made during the planning phase. First and foremost, you need to identify a person to act as the project manager who will be the liaison to department heads across the organization. You'll also want to choose your language service provider, editors, and proofreaders. Ideally, your project manager should have experience managing complex processes, and he or she should possess strong organizational skills.

Once the project manager has been appointed, this individual should be introduced to all the relevant department heads. To maintain consistency and clarity, all translation requirements should go through the project manager, as he or she will be the sole contact with the language service provider.

Defining the scope of the project and your organization's specific needs is essential, from both an organizational and budgetary perspective.

You should also ask yourself what languages you are planning to translate into. Do all of your materials need to be translated into every language? Are all of your original source materials available and in an appropriate format?

When you are contemplating who to appoint as your language service provider, there are several elements to mull over. Consider how technical or specialized your documents are and whether the company you select has subject matter specialists in your target languages. Also, check with your language service provider to see what additional services their quote includes, for instance, is formatting in the target language included?

Finally, before any translation starts, the project manager needs to check with each department to ensure that the original materials do not need any significant updates. This will save time and money, ensuring that efforts aren't duplicated and that there aren't multiple versions of any documents.

Can Technology Improve Translation Consistency Across Departments?

The technology used by your language service provider is an element that can make all the difference for a translation project. It can help provide a smooth, consistent, and unified translation result, especially when working across multiple departments—resulting in material that is consistently translated and easy to use.



Machine Translation

Machine translations are a quick and effective way to translate structured documents with straightforward text that don't require a high degree of localization. Machine translation is a software-based process that can translate content from one language to another without a human being involved. It's a form of artificial intelligence (AI) that uses a combination of algorithms, statistical methods, and rules to do the translations.

The downside with machine translation is that though it will generally give you the correct words or phrases in your target language, it will miss the nuances that come from different cultural norms or ways of speaking.

A human editor who is a native speaker of the target language must check the machine translation to ensure it is accurate and consistent.



Translation Memory

A translation memory (TM) is a database that stores previously translated sentences, paragraphs, and segments of text. Each new entry in a translation memory includes the original or source language and the translation into the target language. These pairs are called translation units.

Translation memories are used with translation software and computer-assisted translation tools to automatically suggest stored identical or similar paragraphs, sentences, or text segments. Once a phrase, sentence, or paragraph has been translated and added to the translation memory, it often does not need to be translated again.

Using a translation memory increases productivity as the translators don't need to spend as much time translating the words and phrases already in the TM. Inconsistent terminology will also be eliminated, saving time during the editing phase as less reworking will be required.

In a large organization where a project may include content from across numerous departments - from sales and marketing to manufacturing and production - using a translation memory ensures that your key words and phrases will have precisely the same translation when appropriate. This provides a consistent look and feel across both digital and analog materials.

Lastly, if you are having your materials translated in order to launch your product in a new marketplace, using a translation memory will speed up your time to market, getting you new sales in record time.



Computer-assisted Translation

Computer-assisted translation (CAT) software is a database-driven program that facilitates translations. The computer-assisted translation software's database relies upon the translation memory that has stored words, sentences, and phrases that provides translation suggestions and corrections.

For a large project with technical elements that need accurate translation, computer-assisted translation can save a significant amount of time as the translator won't need to spend hours pouring over dictionaries to translate specific words. It can also help reduce errors as it is working in conjunction with the translation memory.

When documents, media, and digital assets from several different departments are being translated, the CAT tool can ensure consistency. Still, it is worth noting that this is just a tool, and the translations should be reviewed and edited by a skilled human translator, as accuracy can sometimes be a problem. This is especially true with slang, colloquialisms, and idiomatic expressions that require an understanding of the context to be translated correctly.

Additionally, as computer-assisted translation software provides a literal word-for-word translation, it has no concept of nuance or the complexities of language. It is therefore generally not great for creative material such as sales and marketing copy.

Translation Glossary

Every business, irrespective of industry, has certain words, phrases, acronyms, and abbreviations used across its documents and media. These words are used in specific ways that may be unique to that particular industry.

An example that illustrates this concept uses the words "screen" and "monitor". Both words describe an output device for a computer. However, if your business operates in the life sciences sector, "screen" would mean to check the patient for a particular symptom, and "monitor" would mean to watch something for a period of time.

Depending on the size and scope of a project, it is helpful to use a team of translators, all of whom have access to your translation glossary. This will ensure that your essential phrases and technical terms are consistently applied in all of your materials, effectively unifying your translations across all departments of your business.

A translation glossary created at the start of your project helps your language service provider work more effectively and consistently across various materials.

The glossary brings together all the unique words and phrases specific to your business or systems and will commonly contain:

- Technical terms that define your procedures and operations
- Words that describe the characteristics of your products or service
- Abbreviations and acronyms used across your digital and analog media
- Catchphrases, mission statements, and taglines that are used regularly across all of your published, customer-facing content

It will also include a list of words that do not need to be translated, including product names, technology names and trademarked items that are unique to maintaining the business' global brand identity.

Your translation glossary should be created with the help of your language service provider and reviewed by a native speaker of the language you are translating into. This ensures that the phrases in your glossary's target language are appropriately translated and reflect country-specific cultural nuances.

Using a translation glossary will help unify translations across departments and satellite offices.

Translation Management Systems

For a large translation project that spans multiple departments or involves translating materials into multiple languages, a translation management system (TMS) is a helpful tool. A TMS will help to unify the entire process across your organization.

A translation management system (TMS) is a type of software that allows for the management and automation of the translation process. It has three main components: computer-assisted translation tools, workflow automation tools, and project management and administration.

The computer-assisted translation tool often includes the translation memory, glossary, and machine translation software. Workflow automation and integrations include such tools as the Application Programming Interface (API), webhooks, and code repository integrations.

The benefits of using a translation management system for large projects include:

- Improved collaboration across the project
- Ensured translation quality
- Increased productivity

Effective Communication

One of the most important aspects of a large-scale translation project is effective communication. There are three areas of communication that are essential for a successful translation project:

- Communication between the project manager for the language service provider and the designated project manager for your business.
- The business project manager needs to communicate internally to ensure that all documents, media, and website copy are up to date and in an appropriate format for the language service provider.
- The language service provider needs to communicate with their translators, subject matter experts, editors, and proofreaders.

However, the most important of the three areas of communication is between the project managers for the language service provider and the business client.

When communication is effective, with regular updates and questions asked and answered, collaboration is easy and pain free.

Having this one point of contact on either side means that any issues can be quickly resolved to allow the project to be completed on time and on budget.

Summary

Unifying translation services across departments in large businesses can be stressful and challenging. With a well thought out plan - that includes your language service provider from the beginning - many issues can be resolved before the project even begins.

In a large business, departments are often somewhat autonomous. They will, however, need to be included in many of the initial decisions, from the appointment of a project manager to the planning of how their materials will be provided to the language service provider.

Once departmental buy-in is achieved, the project manager can handle the communication with the language service provider while reporting back as necessary to individual departments.

Choosing a language service provider who understands the benefits of software and technology for improving productivity, efficiency, and consistency across different materials, while conscious of its limitations, is essential.

Equally important is working with a language service provider that is staffed with experienced professionals who can achieve your desired outcome in the most cost-efficient way. This is usually achieved by using a combination of technology and human professionals to unify translations across your entire organization.

Unify translations across your entire organization. Find out more.

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