



Creating Translation-Ready

by Catherine Deschamps-Potter and Scott Bahr

Delete or shorten sections that simply aren't relevant to your target audience. Not only will the translation be more readable, but you'll also save money by reducing the number of words that need to be translated.

While distributing marketing materials beyond a company's home borders can help build brand awareness and increase profits, having those materials translated into various languages can be frustrating. Translation typically occurs at the end of the production process, and with deadlines looming, time and patience are often in short supply. Problems may crop up at the most inopportune times, often the result of file, font or art issues with the source-language desktop publishing files.

Following are some suggestions that can help communicators smooth the translation process. Our strategy requires that you start planning for translation before the document is produced in its native language, specifically through the creation of a multilingual template. Developing multilingual templates can lead to lower translation and desktop publishing costs, and can facilitate the creation of more readable, culturally sensitive documents for your target audience. The tips below

will help you build translation-ready templates in any language.

Write for the world

In any language, of course, marketing and advertising material is highly sensitive to style. Translators try to provide a translation that mirrors not only the content but also the style of the source document. When you are designing and writing documents for a global audience, it is important to effectively communicate your message.

Write in an active, not passive, voice. Use short, clear sentences. Eliminate regional colloquialisms and other informal vocabulary that may not translate well. If you use acronyms, spell out the full term the first time you use it—what is obvious to you may baffle a customer in Beijing or a sales associate in Buenos Aires.

Quite often, documents containing specific domestic market information or disclaimers are included for translation, even though a reader in Italy won't care about the paragraph that discusses California clean-air regulations. Try to look at your

document from the perspective of an international reader, and delete or shorten sections that simply aren't relevant to your target audience. Not only will the translation be more readable, but you'll also save money by reducing the number of words that need to be translated.

The synergy of translation memory

It is likely that a significant amount of your documentation is repetitive in nature. Right now, you may want only a marketing brochure translated. But perhaps early next year, your company will start placing multilingual content on the corporate web site. Some of that content will be repeated from document to document.

Virtually all translation agencies today use translation memory software to help them manage repetitive text. Translated text is imported into a linguistic database and then made available for future projects. As more of your company's materials are translated, the linguistic database grows, and your translation costs decrease.

Follow these tips to ensure that the content and layout of your materials carry your message around the world

Marketing Documents

A rainbow of cultures

Carefully consider your use of color in marketing materials destined for use in other parts of the world. Perhaps you are already aware of some cultural differences when it comes to color. For instance, in Asia, black is a color of celebration, while white is the color of mourning. Red symbolizes life and vitality in China. Purple has negative connotations in many cultures and should be avoided when designing color documents. The chart below illustrates some cultural ramifications of color.

RED	In China, red is a symbol of celebration and luck.
YELLOW	Throughout Asia, yellow is associated with the sacred or imperial.
BLUE	Blue is a “safe” color for most cultures. In the Middle East, it implies strength and safety.
PURPLE	In Europe, purple symbolizes royalty and death. In other parts of the world, purple has very negative connotations.
WHITE	In Japan, white carnations symbolize death.
BROWN	In India, brown is the color of mourning.
GREEN	In tropical countries, green often symbolizes danger. In India, green is associated with Islam.

—C.D.-P. & S.B.

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Ask your translation agency’s sales representative how translation memory tools can benefit your organization.

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ager. Glossaries help translators better understand your company’s products and marketing concepts; they also serve as the foundation for translation memory databases. Add a “notes” column to your glossary, too, where you can explain any obscure or company-specific terms.

Creating glossaries requires a

little effort, but it can make a big difference in the quality and consistency of the finished translation. If you update glossaries incrementally, maintaining them will seem painless.

Think beyond borders

If you do not know the difference between a kilogram and

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a decimeter, you might think that the world beyond your shores is interested in your English/imperial measurements. You would be wrong. English measurements should be converted to metric equivalents for use outside the United States, and only metric measurements should appear on the translated document.

Also, Canadian, American and Mexican writers should remember that toll-free telephone numbers do not work outside of North America. Provide an alternative number or other customer service options, such as an e-mail address, for your consumers in other parts of the world.

Layout logistics

Remember to let your documents breathe. Most people in

the United States consider an English-language brochure with 10-point type readable. But if the brochure must be translated into Italian, the amount of text expansion may cause formatting problems. (Text expansion refers to the number and length of words in the translation; rarely will translations match up exactly.) Faced with copy too long for the allotted space, the graphic designer really has only two options: Shrink the point size of the text, or shrink the leading. The result? Your Italian-based sales representative will be handing out brochures that are crammed with small print—and your marketing message will barely be visible.

Romance-language translations (Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese) are usually about 25 percent longer than

the English source text. Conversely, if a document is being translated from German into an ideogram- or character-based language like Chinese, the amount of text will contract. You or your graphic designer should consider these variances when you set up the document and pagination properties.

Allow only minimal hyphenation when setting your preferences, and eliminate narrow columns that might force awkward line breaks when translated into other languages. This is particularly true of German and Slavic languages; many words in these languages are quite long, and narrow columns will force oddly justified or hyphenated words.

Finally, use easily understood icons and illustrations. If your layout contains callouts, con-

sider placing the quotes in a table format underneath the artwork, instead of cramming them into separate text boxes. The document will be easier to read, and the agency's desktop publisher will not have to modify your existing artwork.

Sending files to the translator

Revision marking and language coding are easy ways to avoid mix-ups, especially for "same language, different country" situations, such as Brazilian and European Portuguese. Create a code that will make document tracking easy and understandable.

When your documents are complete and ready for translation, make sure that they are "clean" before you submit them to the translator. If they were

created using Microsoft Word, turn off "track changes" and accept or reject all revisions. Generate PDF files of your completed documents; this will be extremely helpful to your agency's desktop publisher. He or she can use the PDF files to ensure that fonts and illustrations are appearing correctly in your translated files.

In most cases, you should submit all original source files when you wish to receive a project quotation from a translation agency. This may take a little time up front, and it may seem like a lot of effort when all you want is a quick quote, but by doing so before the production process starts, the agency will have time to address questions or problems with your file, and the quote will be more accurate—always preferable for both

client and translator to discovering problems midway through the project.

Review the translated piece

Ask your international employees and distributors to review translations of key terms. After all, they will be using the materials to sell your products and will likely appreciate the opportunity to offer feedback. Your agency can use translation software to ensure that the preferred vocabulary is used. The result will be more effective and consistent translations.

Planning and preparation can make a big difference in the price and quality of your translated documents. A little foresight can go a long way toward making it a more pleasant endeavor. **CW**

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