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# 100

Annual Trade Review

**America's Top  
Imports and Exports  
in the Integrated  
Global Supply Chain**

**Creating Translation-Ready  
Marketing Documents**

A portrait of Charles O. Holliday, Jr., a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

Charles O. Holliday, Jr.,  
Chairman of the Board  
and Chief Executive Officer,  
DuPont, One of America's  
Top Traders



# Creating Translation-Ready Marketing Documents

**Expert tips to help get your message across.**

By Catherine Deschamps-Potter and Scott Bahr

**D**istributing foreign language marketing materials can increase profits and brand awareness, but the translation process is often a frustrating one for marketing communicators. Translation, by its very nature, comes at the end of the process, and time and patience are often in short supply as deadlines loom. The translation process is often an afterthought, and problems and challenges may crop up at the most inopportune times. Very often these are the result of file, font, or art problems with the source language desktop publishing files.

Below we offer some suggestions to marketing professionals who have not had much exposure to the translation industry. Our strategy requires that you start planning for translation *before* your source language document is cre-

ated, specifically through the creation of a *multilingual template*.

When we talk about a multilingual template, we are referring to the creation of a translation-ready document in your native language, whatever that language may be. Creating multilingual templates can lead to lower translation and desktop publishing costs and facilitate the creation of more readable, culturally sensitive documents for your target audience. The tips below will help you to create *translation-ready templates* in any source language.

## **Content: writing for the world**

Marketing and advertising material is, of course, highly sensitive to style in any source language. 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 even more important to communicate your message in an effective manner.

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 phrase the first time you use it—what is obvious to you may baffle a customer in Beijing or a sales associate in São Paulo.

Quite often, source-language documents containing specific domestic market information or disclaimers are sent for translation, even though a user in Italy doesn't care about the paragraph that discusses California clean air regulations. Try to look at your English documentation from the perspective of an international reader, and delete or shorten sections that simply aren't relevant to your target audience. Since prices are estimated based word counts, by doing so, you are saving money due to a lower source language word count, while concurrently making the translation more readable for your intended audience.

## **The synergy of translation memory**

Right now, your managers may want only a marketing brochure translated. Perhaps early next year, your company will start placing multilingual content on your corporate web site. It is likely that a significant amount of your content is repetitive in nature.

Virtually all translation agencies now use translation memory software to help leverage repetitive text. Translated text is imported into a linguistic database and is then available for future projects. As more of your documents are translated, the linguistic database grows, and your translation costs decrease. Ask your translation agency's sales representative how the use of translation memory is benefiting your organization.

## **Glossaries**

Even the best translators may have difficulty translating a key marketing concept or a catch phrase. Cautionary tales abound—only our discretion (and our lawyers' advice) prohibits us from sharing some of them with you.

Compile glossaries of key terms, and share them with your translation agency's project manager. Bilingual glossaries not only help translators understand company-specific terminology, they also serve as the foundation for translation memory databases. It is also helpful to create a "notes" column in your glossary—here you can explain any obscure or company-specific terms.

Glossaries help translators better understand your products and marketing concepts. 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 on an incremental basis, maintaining them will seem painless.

### Metrics for marketing professionals

If you do not know the difference between a kilogram and 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 overseas markets, and only metric measurements should appear on the translated document.

### Telephone tip

Canadian, American, and Mexican writers should remember that toll-free "800" numbers do not work outside of North America. Provide an alternative number or other customer service options for your global readers.

### Layout logistics

#### *Let your documents breathe*

Most people in the United States consider an English-language brochure with ten-point type readable. When this brochure is translated into Italian, the amount of text expansion may cause formatting problems, so the desktop publisher really has only two options: he or she can shrink the point size of the text, or shrink the leading. The result? Your Italian-based sales representative is handing out brochures that are crammed with small print. And it is your marketing message that is barely visible.

Romance language translations (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese) are usually about 25 percent longer than the English source text. Conversely, if a document is being translated from German into Chinese, the amount of text will contract. You or your graphic artist

should consider these variances when you set up your 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 or Eastern European languages; many words in these languages are quite long, and narrow columns will contain oddly justified or hyphenated words.

### Carefully consider color

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.

<b>Cultural Differences of Color</b>	
<b>Red</b>	<b>China: symbol of celebration and luck.</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	<b>Asia: sacred, imperial.</b>
<b>Blue</b>	<b>Middle East: strength and safety. A "safe" color for most cultures.</b>
<b>Purple</b>	<b>Europe: royalty and death. In other parts of the world, purple has very negative connotations.</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>Japan: white carnations symbolize death.</b>
<b>Brown</b>	<b>India: the color of mourning...</b>
<b>Green</b>	<b>In tropical countries, green often symbolizes danger. In India, green is the color of Islam.</b>

### Illustrations and callouts

Use easily understood icons and illustrations. If your graphics contain callouts, consider placing them 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.

### Document and revision tracking

Revision marking and language coding is an easy way 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.

**For instance:**  
**widget model 456**  
**Portuguese (Brazil)**  
**Last revision: May 2004**

### Sending files to your agency

Make sure that your English documents are "clean" before you submit them to your translation agency. In Microsoft Word documents, turn off "Track changes" and accept or reject all revisions. Generate .pdfs of your documents; this will be extremely helpful to your agency's desktop publisher. He or she can use .pdfs 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 quotation from your translation agency. Gathering all your files takes a little time up front, and may seem like a lot of effort when all you want is a quick quote. But by doing this before the production process starts, your agency will have time to address and questions or problems with your file, and your quotation will be more accurate. This is much preferable to your agency experiencing problems in the midst of production, when time is short and deadlines are looming.

### After the translation

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

In summary, 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 towards making it a more pleasant endeavor. **wr**

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