



## **Tips for Saving Money on Translation**

***Beware of false economies:***

- ***Translation software***
- ***Bilingual employees***
- ***Cheapest translators***

**T**here are a lot of false economies in translation. Relying on translation software, using bilingual employees who are not professional translators, or finding the cheapest translator—these are three of the most common ways that companies try to cut costs. These methods can be fine when the accuracy and fluency of the translation are not important; but they are dangerous when a bad translation can get you into trouble or a humorous translation can leave potential business partners and customers with a poor impression.

Translation software can sometimes successfully convey the gist of a document, but the translation will be stilted at best. Using a bilingual employee may also be adequate for everyday purposes, but think of this: How many English-speaking people do you know who can't write well in English? Merely knowing a language does not mean that a person can provide a smooth, grammatical, or accurate translation. Besides, that bilingual employee presumably has other duties that will be neglected to make time for the translation—or the translation will take forever.

The cheapest translators are probably cheapest for a reason: their language skills may be mediocre; they may not have any expertise with the terminology of your industry; or they may not have the technical skills and software to work with your native files or to apply the latest money-saving language translation technology. Furthermore, you will need to have their work proofread by yet another linguist.

When a translation must be accurate, or when it is important that the translation present your company or organization in the best light, using a professional translation agency is the best course. That doesn't mean that there are no techniques that you can use to minimize your translation costs.

# 1

## Use a Translation Memory

A translation memory (TM) is one tool that a translation agency should use and that can help you save substantial amounts on translation costs over time. A TM is a database of the translations that have already been done for your company. New material to be translated can be compared to the TM, and any repeated material can be pre-translated based on the old translation. The translator just has to do a review. The translator charges reduced rates and, at the same time, the TM ensures accurate and consistent use of terminology across translations.

# 2

## Write for Translation

If you are preparing materials specifically for translation, follow the rules in our white paper **“Tips on Writing for Translation.”** In particular, don’t be verbose—translators charge by the word. Be consistent in your phrasing—translators should also charge reduced rates for repetition, even within your initial document.

# 3

## Pick Your Content

You probably don't need to translate everything on your website or all of your marketing materials or support documents for every market. For instance, a prospect who comes to your website may want basic information about your company, but may not need the full company history, staff listing, etc. Consider carefully what material needs to be translated into a specific language, especially when you are just starting out.

# 4

## Avoid Text in Graphics

Text embedded in graphics will also have to be translated and replaced in the graphic. You won't just need a translator; you'll need someone with the graphic expertise and design software to localize the graphic. Give some thought to whether you can replace these graphics with alternative copy. If the graphic does have to be localized, it will be easiest and cheapest to work with the native graphic files, such as Photoshop or Illustrator files. Make sure that you get the native files for any graphics from your designer and save them so that you can make them available to your language service partner. (See our white paper, "**Tips on Graphic Design for Translation.**")

# 5

## Recycle Content



You probably often use similar language to describe your company and its products or services in your marketing materials. If you've just been cutting and pasting between documents, consider formalizing this existing re-use of content by preparing modules of text that can be easily plugged into various contexts. Some companies have turned to content management systems that allow for single-sourcing options and terminology management. These systems allow you to store blocks of text and easily locate and re-use them for printed and on-line documents.

Even if you don't want to invest in a single-sourcing option, you can still begin to save blocks of text that you expect to re-use and get people used to drawing on that source when they create new documents. When the text has been translated once, it is in the TM forever and never has to be translated again.

For the same reason, avoid making minor "improvements" to your re-used text in new documents. If you do so, the TM will see the new wording as at best a partial match or possibly no match at all, and you won't get the same discounts. You will certainly want to change your material occasionally, but consider whether the improvement in the English source is worth the extra charges when it comes time for translation.

# 6

## Finalize Before Translation

One of the most common reasons for translation costs to mount is that customers make changes to the source after translation has started. Sometimes late changes may be unavoidable, but often the changes are made because the original document wasn't thoroughly proofread before it was sent off, or it wasn't reviewed by everyone who needed to sign off on it.

After you have sent materials for translation, you want to keep changes in the source content to a minimum. If substantial changes are made to material that has already been translated, you will be charged for the changes as new translation. If you find that changes have to be made, get the new files to the translation agency as quickly as possible. The farther along in the process—from translation, to proofreading, to quality control—your translation is when you make changes, the more work those changes will cause, and the more additional charges you will face.

If there is layout or desktop publishing involved in the project, changes to the source text after layout is completed may increase costs dramatically as you are hit not only with new translation charges, but also with hourly charges for any changes to the layout.

The same warnings apply to software code to be localized. The localization agency should be working directly with your code, so changing the code—whether to rewrite text or to fix bugs—may lead to problems in the localization project. Make sure your application is fully tested and finalized before you send it off to be localized.



# 7

## Convert Measurements

Most countries in the world use metric units, so chances are any measures of volume, distance, or dimensions in your documents will have to be converted in your translated documents. It's cheaper for you to simply provide metric equivalents for all measures (or even to include them regularly in your English versions) than to have translators spending the time converting the measurements.

# 8

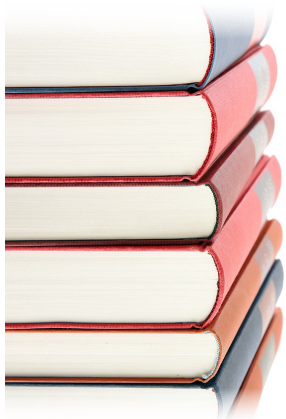
## Group Small Jobs Together

Since there are generally minimum fees for translation, it is better to group small jobs together where possible rather than submitting them for translation individually. Also, the more content that is translated at the same time, the greater the likelihood that there will be repetition and matches with an existing translation memory.

# 9

## Consult

When you're considering translating company materials, especially if you have no experience with translation, it is always a good idea to consult with a translation agency before beginning the process. The agency's representative can help in determining what material to translate and can review materials to point out content that poses potential problems for the translation process. You may be able to work out solutions before you even start translation, saving time and money.



### **Further Reading**

**“Tips on Writing for Translation,” MTM LinguaSoft White Paper**

**“Tips on Graphic Design for Translation,” MTM LinguaSoft White Paper**

**“What Is a Translation Memory?,” MTM LinguaSoft blog (Mar 6 2014)**



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