



How to Create Translation – Ready Marketing Documents

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

By Catherine Deschamps-Potter

Catherine is vice president of sales and marketing at ICD Translation.



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

Below are some suggestions that can help communicators make the translation process as seamless as possible. Our strategy suggests 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, faster turnaround times, 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, 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 would not care about the paragraph that discusses clean-air regulations in California. Try to look at your document from the perspective of an international reader, and delete or shorten sections that are simply irrelevant 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 one marketing brochure translated. But perhaps early next year, your company will start placing multilingual content on the corporate website. Some of that content will be repeated from that original document.

Today, virtually all translation agencies use a cloud-based translation management system to help them manage and utilize repetitive text. Within the cloud, you are able to view the translations in real-time and track the progress of your translation projects. Most important, translated text is imported into the translation management system and made available for future projects within your own translation memory. As more of your company's materials are translated, the translation memory grows, and your translation costs decrease. Ask your translation agency's sales representative how a cloud-based translation management system can benefit your organization.

Delete or shorten sections that simply aren't relevant to your target audience.

Even the best translators may have difficulty translating a key marketing concept or catchphrase. Compile glossaries of terms and share them with your translation agency's project manager. Glossaries not only help translators better understand your company's products and marketing concepts, but they also serve as the foundation for your translation memory. Additionally, you can add a "notes" column to your glossary, where you can define any obscure or company-specific terms.

Creating glossaries requires some effort at first, but can make a big difference in the quality and consistency of the finished translation. If you



update glossaries as you go, maintaining them will be painless.

Compile glossaries of terms, and share them with your translation agency's project manager.

Think beyond borders

English/imperial measurements should be converted to metric equivalents for use outside the United States, and only metric measurements should appear on the translated document. If you have tables with product dimensions in English/imperial measurements, be sure to format your tables in columns instead of inline. Columns in tables allow your translation agency to convert measurements more efficiently and accurately. Make sure to discuss your measurement and conversion requirements with your translation project manager in the early stages of project planning.

Canadian, American and Mexican writers should also 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 email address, for your consumers in other parts of the world.

Layout logistics

Remember to include enough white space in your documents. Most people in the United States consider an English-language brochure with 10-point type readable and acceptable for publication. If the brochure is translated into Italian, the number and length of words may increase after it is translated into another language in a phenomenon called text expansion. Text expansion may cause formatting problems during the desktop publishing phase.

Faced with copy that is 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 crammed with small print—and your marketing message barely 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 or graphics containing labels or other text, consider placing the quotes in a table format underneath the artwork or creating a legend, instead of cramming them into separate text boxes. Most important, make sure all text in graphics or illustrations are live and can be edited. The document will be easier to read, and the translation agency's desktop publisher will not have to modify your existing artwork, saving you time and money.

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 translation agency. 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 translator and desktop publisher. They can use the PDF files to ensure that the context of the document is accounted for, and 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 time up front, and may seem like a lot of effort when all you want is a quick quote. However, doing so before production starts, the agency will have time to both discover and address questions or problems with your file, and the quote will be more accurate—always preferable for

A Rainbow Of Cultures

Be aware of cultural differences when using color in marketing materials for use in other parts of the world. In Asia, black is for celebration, while white is for mourning. In China red is for life and vitality. Purple has negative connotations in many cultures and should be avoided.

RED	China = celebration & luck.
YELLOW	Asia = sacred or imperial.
BLUE	Is a "safe" color for most cultures. Middle East = strength and safety.
PURPLE	Europe = royalty and death. Other parts of the world = very negative connotations.
WHITE	Japan = death.
BROWN	India = mourning.
GREEN	Tropical countries = danger. India = Islam.

both client and agency—to discovering problems halfway 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, especially because they will be the ones communicating directly with the customers.

Your organization can use a cloud-based translation management system to ensure that the preferred vocabulary is used. We strongly recommend reviewing and editing translations before the desktop publishing stage, prior to laying out the final document. Cloud-based translation management systems make review during this critical time a breeze. 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 and successful endeavor. **ICD**

Original content published in *World Trade*, 2004 and *Communication World*, Sept-Oct 2006. Updated 2016.

ICDTranslation
Translate to Evolve.