

How to Save Time & Money on Translations

20 Tips - Checklist

1 Resist the temptation to do it yourself...

Speaking is not writing. Oral fluency does not guarantee smooth, stylish writing, especially in another language!



2 ...Or to do it Internally (in-house)

A common misconception is that using internal company resources to work on a translation is "free." It's not. You'll still have to invest your time, staff and resources to get it done...



3 Don't go for the cheapest supplier

When a translation company provides very low prices, you should stop and wonder why they are able to do this. While high prices do not necessarily guarantee high quality, below a certain price level you are unlikely to receive a text that does credit to your company or its products. Just think about the following for a minute:

How many pages can a translator produce an hour?

How much time do you expect him or her to spend crafting the text that will promote your product or service?

How much time did your team spend producing the original? Do you really want all that work go to waste?



4 Be realistic and plan ahead

Plan your translation project in advance. As you will see below, you can avoid many misunderstandings and save plenty of time and money if you plan ahead. Don't rush it if it's not absolutely necessary. And don't leave it until the last minute. Translation is not simply the "type-it-out-in-another-language" stage that can be done a couple of hours before publication.



5 ASK YOURSELF: What is it for?



For publication, for information, for internal communication, for a gist what kind of translation (and budget) do you need?



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Specialists will often refer to accurate yet unpolished work as for-information translation. It can generally be produced faster and more cheaply than for-publication work.

However, if you are trying to sell or persuade, or if image is important to you, it will probably not be enough.

6 STOP & THINK: Does it really need to be translated?

Translate only relevant sections of existing documents, or produce shorter documents in your own language and have these translated.

In 1999, a financial institution in France trimmed a 500-page user manual down to 230 pages with the help of an expert translator, who identified redundancies and sections that did not apply to foreign clients – before starting the translation proper.





7 Edit down

Edit your text to make it shorter or simpler. In doing so, you can make it easier for people to read and get your message over more effectively. Plus you will save a lot of money on translation...



8 Tell the translator what it's for

Be sure to tell your translator what your text is for, so that s/he can prepare a foreign-language version with maximum impact for that particular audience.



9 Ask the supplier for translation samples

Ask for samples of documents they have translated – not just client names, but specific texts they have produced and are pleased with. Then go through them and see if you're happy with the quality of their work.



10 Finalize your text before starting the project



Avoid making changes to the source files after you have placed an order. Doing so will slow down your project and incur additional costs. Instead, complete all creation and approval before submitting for translation. The more versions you have, the more likely it is that errors will creep into the final version.



11 Avoid minimum charges



Whenever possible, try not to order very small jobs to avoid minimum fee charges. Instead, combine several small tasks into larger jobs. You'll save a fair amount of money in the long run.



12 Take advantage of volume discounting



Be sure to ask the provider if they offer large volume discounts. Also, if you have a number of projects that collectively add up to a large volume, why not request them all at the same time and ask if they can apply the discount to the whole batch?



13 IMAGES: A picture is worth a thousand words



Only use text when you have to, or when it is the most effective means of getting your message across. Using pictures and diagrams can help you save money and get your message across to a wider audience more easily.

In 2001, Heathrow Airport moved 60.4 million travellers from all parts of the world through its four terminals using internationally-recognised pictograms.

IKEA uses mainly word-free diagrams to guide customers through kit assembly. 80% of instructions are pictures only; the remaining 20% require text to communicate safety aspects.





14 FILE FORMAT

A simple tip that can make a big difference to the overall cost of your project: send editable text to your translation supplier (not a PDF). It will save you both time and money.



15 LEVERAGE Translation Memory TECHNOLOGY

Ask if the supplier applies Translation Memory software in the process to reduce the cost. If you use a Translation Memory, you'll reduce costs for repeated content and for content which is the same as or similar to previously published material. Brand consistency will be vastly enhanced too.



16 FORGET ABOUT MACHINE TRANSLATION

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“These services are passable for travelers or for those wanting to translate a letter from a distant cousin. I definitely wouldn't use them for business or anything that remotely requires accuracy.”

Wall Street Journal



17 Don't Set Unreasonable Deadlines



By avoiding tight schedules you will save money and get better quality translations. No one likes working under too much pressure but it is especially important in the translation industry. Rushed translations are usually low quality and twice as expensive as they need to be fixed time and time again.



18 Avoid rush fees



When you submit a project to your translation service provider, set reasonable deadlines to avoid incurring rush fees and receiving sub-standard quality.



19 Consider Daily Human Output

When setting deadlines, consider that a human translator can usually translate about 2,000 words per day and a proofreader can proofread about 4,000 to 8,000 words a day.



20 Finally... Be Sensible and Flexible

When possible, it's always a good idea to add an extra day or two to your project schedule. This will give the linguists more time to work and will help ensure a better quality translation that doesn't require expensive fixes later.



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