

How to avoid destroying your translation budget



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Commoditisation is sweeping through every industry as products and services are made as uniform, plentiful and affordable as possible to make them more attainable - just think how cellphones have converged on features, size and form factors with similar products competing at similar price points. In the language services industry, translations are also frequently bargained down to the lowest cost per word.

But as the demand for global collateral grows, translation services have become much more than just changing copy into another language. Recreating a product manual of 50,000 words in three new languages involves a magnitude of work to manage the project, solve technical snags and assure quality. These specialised capabilities don't come standard with a cut-rate price per word.

You get what you pay for

The question of 'how much is all this translation going to cost?' always comes up right at the beginning of any localisation campaign.

Different teams have different expectations when it comes to translation budgets, but cutting corners around services can mean trouble and more costs down the line. Every piece of collateral has to be perfectly translated, especially if you're breaking into a market. Or, you could stumble before you're even out of the gate.



Source: [123RF](#)

Yet, many businesses have been in this situation: A localisation project is completed, the translated material is rolled out and suddenly it becomes painfully obvious that the project has to be redone. Maybe there's a mistake on a digital ad or a billboard. Maybe your technical documentation contained typos. Poor quality and cheap service often go hand-in-hand and with translation it's no different.

So what can companies do to prevent these mistakes in the future?

Proof, rinse and repeat

One of the most integral parts of translation is proofreading. That means having a second translation team proofread all the localised material to check for errors - ideally as part of the translation process, rather than at the tail end of the traditional translate, edit, proof approach. If your company cuts corners and decides not to opt for an additional round of content

checking, there's a higher chance for a mistake to get past the first round of localisation and end up in the market.

It's important to compare the costs of high quality translation with the incremental costs of an inferior result. Low-quality translation can leave a poor first brand impression and end up costing a lot in sales and customer loyalty. Customers can get frustrated and abandon the brand altogether. Advertising campaigns worth millions of dollars can fall flat (just consider HSBC's ill-fated 'Do Nothing' campaign).

If you've already translated a campaign and need to have it re-evaluated, find a language partner you know you can trust. Leave extra room in the budget for this additional cost. In some cases, teams might have to wrangle extra funds for a localisation campaign, if it goes beyond the original budget that had been set aside.

Test and debug software

Just like a second round of proofreading, Quality Assurance testing is an additional cost for the budget, but is well worth the effort to make sure the end product provides a great experience and that the translated software interface or programme doesn't fall short or frustrate the customer. Some global language service providers offer Quality Assurance testing for clients.

This is particularly useful when you're doing something like translating a context-sensitive user interface or a particular piece of software. Native testers would check the language for any errors, as well as make sure the programme runs smoothly, the interface is intuitive, and there are no glitches that disrupt the customer experience.

Invest now to save later

When it comes to pricing, translation services run the gamut. Independent translators might come cheap, but they also don't have access to the automation technologies that can help streamline and standardise the process. Additionally, they often don't have the technological or industry expertise to design and create the collateral for specific audiences.

All of this can lead to subpar translation and a higher cost than the money you initially managed to save on the project. By setting aside extra budget for proofing, reading and software testing with localisation, you will spend a bit extra today but save a lot more tomorrow - for the project and the brand.

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