HOW TO TRANSLATE MARKETING TEXT

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Your Starting Point

When writing copy that will ultimately need to be translated, you need to keep two very important factors in mind. Firstly, try to write the text in as neutral a style as possible – we don't expect all brand specific terminology to be excluded – that would only act to weaken your communication platform, but excessive ambiguity of over-embellishment will not translate readily.

By avoiding confusing terminology (raining cats and dogs), slang or colloquialisms (brass monkeys), humour or analogies that are not completely obvious, you ensure you text is easily translatable into another language.

If you can't avoid some or all of the above you must be prepared for the fact that when your source text is translated there may be instances where the text is either not translatable or you will need to accept that it will need to be reworded, sometimes quite radically to be understood.

Managing Expectations

If you expect us to get it 100% right first time prepare to be disappointed. And this isn't a cop-out on our part! Again, remember the review cycles when the original copy was being discussed and created; this will also be the case with the translated text.

Where possible, it's useful for us to talk directly with local offices who might be involved in the approvals

– this means there is no loss in communication clarity. For instance, a typical workflow cycle will be:

ORIGINAL COPY

Translation agency

∨∨

Creative/Advertising agency

∨∨

Client company

∨∨

Client company local office

TRANSLATED COPY

That is quite a chain, and sometimes communication breakdowns can occur. If the chain is shortened so usually are project timescales.

Be prepared for us to have questions. Sometimes quite a few. Until we get under the skin of the terminology and the brand values we will be taking time to acquaint ourselves... please be patient and give us as much information as you can.

Translation vs Copywriting

The first thing you need to do is ask yourself whether you need a translator or whether, what you actually need is a copywriter working in the target language. A translator is cheaper, but their remit is quite narrow, they are trained not to re-interpret a text, merely to mirror it in another language; using all the correct style, terminology, grammar and phraseology to make it fully understandable in another language, but NOT take a creative stance on the text.

If you require a high-level reversioning of your source text you really need to consider either having your translated text copy edited by a specialist or, for best results, using a target-language copywriter from the outset.

This will ensure that all the valuable brand-carrying nuances that you have worked so hard to create with your English-language copywriters that potentially might be lost, will remain intact.

What Will Help Us Do The Best Possible Job For You

1. Allowing Sufficient Time

This is the problem we come up against most of all. Weeks and weeks are spent carefully crafting the source text. However once this had been through countless revision cycles, the text is handed to the translation agency with a deadline that means the work has to be rushed, corners have to be cut and compromises will have to be made. This approach devalues the whole process and potentially jeopardises the outcome of the whole project in terms of quality and ultimate customer satisfaction

2. Supporting Documentation

(a) It is always helpful to us to have sight of the original copywriting brief. This will help us and our teams get an insight into client objectives in terms of brand communication but also in terms of project-specific considerations.

(b) Let us have access to previously translated material. This isn't cheating on our part, but in order to provide the best possible translation it helps to have as much text as possible to help us maintain consistency of terminology

(c) When creating your original design try to include as much white space as possible. Some target texts can expand by up to 30%... typically you'll find about 5 – 10% expansion. Allow the text breathing space, other wise you may find compromises in the integrity of the design for your international versions.

(d) Be clear on the technical aspects of your documents. Let us know what programme you're working in, what fonts you're using (there may be issues with target texts in certain fonts – if we know that we can work together to overcome these) and whether you're working on MAC or PC platforms.

(e) Deliverables. Please let us know up front what format you'd like the finished files delivered in; what programme, whether they need to be print-ready, whether you require bleed, whether you require low resolution files for website downloading/emailing

(f) Let our designers talk to your designers! Sometimes studio people have their own language. Account/Project Managers and clientside marketing/ admin personnel can't always answer the more technical aspects of file set up. To ensure the smooth progress of a job, we find it often helps to let the designers sort the more technical things out between them!

(g) Make sure we have all relevant files. It's almost impossible for us to work from PDF files unless you want us to recreate the document for you in our studio (which we're happy to do, but you need to allow additional time and budget for this). Please let us have actual source files (usually QuarkXpress or InDesign). If you have illustrations or graphics in your advertisement or brochure it would be helpful to have them all, especially if there are elements of text in them.

In Summary...

Your best course of action is to enter into dialogue with us at the earliest possible stage. This way there will be no nasty surprises for either party, and we will be able to offer guidance on the best way to proceed.

Unlike most translation agencies, we are happy to attend face-to-face meetings, provide contact reports and essentially act as an integral part of either agency or clientside activity. Talk to PUSH International when undertaking complex target language reversioning and internationalisation assignments – it's what we've done for more years that we care to mention, and we know how to make it work for you!

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