The Long Way to a Corporate Platform for Multilingual Contents and Translation Processes: Corporate Translation Management in practice

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Abstract

As Polysius AG, one of the world's leading engineering companies in the field of equipment for the cement and minerals industry, were about to replace their existing translation memory, it soon became clear to them that they were renewing much more than just a software application. The decision to implement the concept of Corporate Translation Management was made with a view to increasing efficiency on various levels and this is now being carried out step by step. Because of the company's global activities, emails, reports and above all plant-related information such as manuals, clerical, technical and legal texts are translated into a current total of 10 languages. The majority of the workload of approx. 150 translation jobs per month, i.e. around 80%, need to be translated into English and Spanish and are centrally processed by the company's documentation and translation department. With the new system the documentation and translation department now has a tool for effectively managing projects that continually supports individually defined workflows. The translation memory and the terminology system form the basis for both effective translation support and the management of standardized corporate terminology. The terminology system is available by browser via the company's Intranet to ensure simple access to both the company's extensive terminology base and to the concordance search for all staff members who need these features. This paper will describe the decision process the company undertook to develop the new system.

1. Introduction

As Polysius AG, one of the world's leading engineering companies in the field of equipment for the cement and minerals industry, were about to replace their existing translation memory, it soon became clear to them that they were renewing much more than just a software application. The decision to implement the concept of Corporate Translation Management was made with a view to increasing efficiency on various levels and this is now being carried out step by step. Polysius AG erects complete production lines, supplies single machines and implements plant rebuilding concepts, including project

planning, construction, delivery, assembly, commissioning and after-sales service. These plants are individually designed to suit the various requirements of their users and implemented in an agreed quality, cost and time plan, regardless of whether complete plants, restructuring or only certain sections are planned. Because of the company's global activities, emails, reports and above all plant-related information such as manuals, clerical, technical and legal texts are translated into a current total of 10 languages. The majority of the workload of approx. 150 translation jobs per month, i.e. around 80%, need to be translated into English and Spanish and are centrally processed by the company's documentation and translation department. The translation jobs are sent by email to the documentation and translation department, which currently comprises 5 employees in Germany and one translator based at each of the subsidiaries in Spain and France. Here the decision is also made to either process the translation in-house or to have it done by an externally based service provider, depending on the required qualification and the available resources.
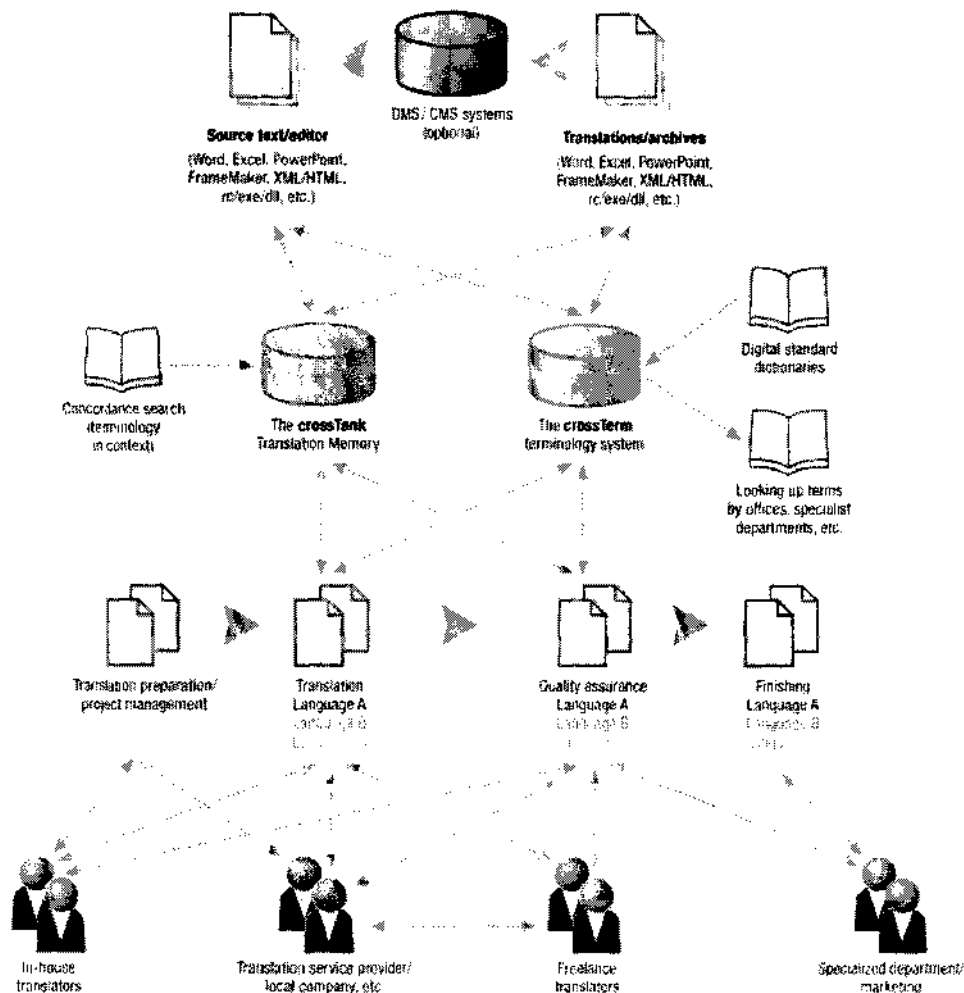

Figure 1: Exemplary translation process.

In the course of developing the translation infrastructure, the translation memory that had been used in the past turned out to be a limiting factor. The basic disadvantages were its lack of ability to be used in a networking situation and lack of automatic matching capability with the terminology database. The old

system did not fulfill the necessary requirements for efficient translation processes. For this reason, the key requirements for a new system were increased efficiency through:

- system support of corporate standard terminology,
- effective translation process management,
- system-supported connection to the translators working in the Madrid and Aix-en-Provence branch offices as well as to externally based service providers,
- an improvement in the quality of the translations based on a system supported translation memory and a terminology system,
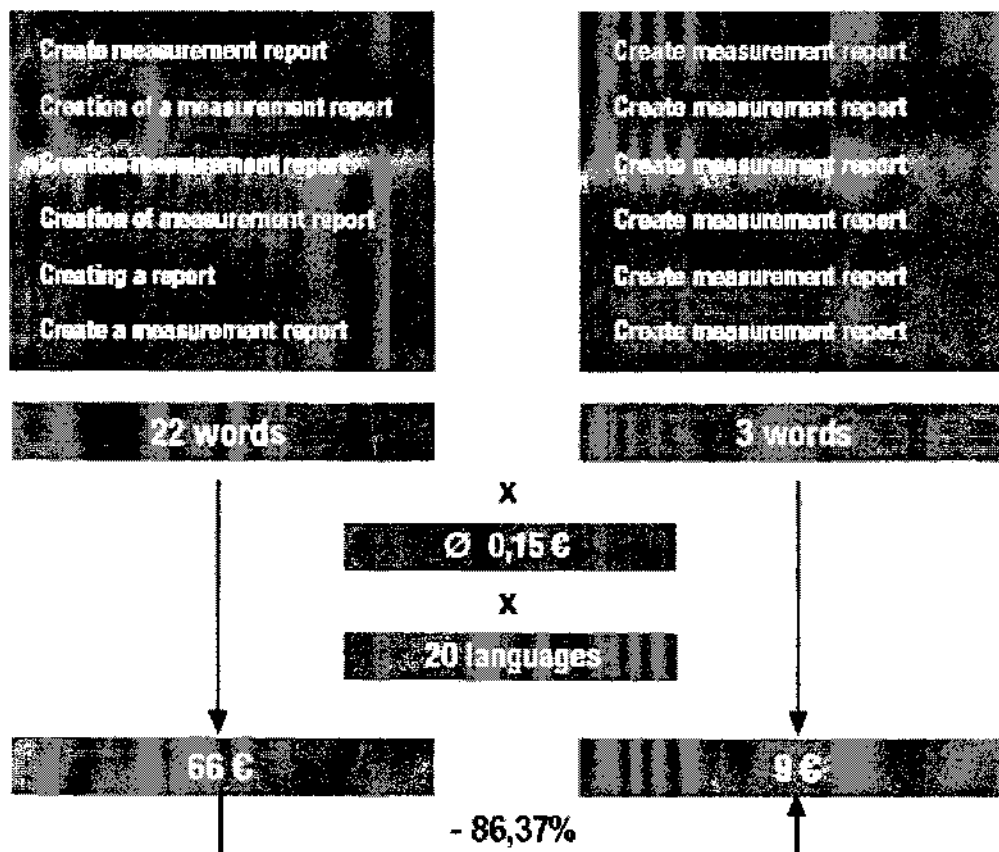- medium-term reduction in the cost of translation.

Figure 2: Efficiency of translation-oriented authoring

2. Greater efficiency - system-supported

The decision to introduce the across system was not so much influenced by the necessity to acquire new software, but more by the need for a sustainable concept. "We made a conscious decision to put our trust in this new concept", said Michael Leifeld, head of the documentation and translation department of Polysius AG. "The deciding factor was the fact that the complete process, including translation support, workflow management and project management, is encompassed within Corporate Translation Management, thereby overcoming the limitations of conventional translation tools and translation memory systems."

Because of its integrated approach, this concept offers a range of ways to improve efficiency. It enables integrated processes. The degree of influence these processes has is often underestimated. A lack of integrative system support often diminishes the efficiency effect achieved by translation memory systems because the administration, quality management and follow-up work required on texts without proper integration in a complete workflow often takes up more time than the translating itself. With across, the documentation and translation department now has a tool for effectively managing projects that continually supports individually defined workflows. The crossTank translation memory and the crossTerm terminology system form the basis for both effective translation support and the management of standardized corporate terminology. The subsidiary companies and service providers are all connected within a complete system via crossWAN. With this system, decentralized databases, lack of ways to compare terminology and too little transparency in translation processes all become things of the past.

3. Improved efficiency - team-based

Deciding for a system is only half the battle. The demands placed on the employees were also consequentially reviewed. The aim was to quickly build up operational system know-how, which led to the decision to employ a key user for the across system. Michael Leifeld commented, "This step really paid off. It allowed us to effectively build up system know how and give practical support to the employees, some of whom had been working with other systems for a long time, with system integration and practical further training." That enabled us to break through the acceptance barrier that every new software has to overcome. The high level of know-how displayed by the employees and the close, effective cooperation between Polysius and across had a very positive effect on the project. "The input given by the translators who till then had been working with other systems was gratefully integrated by us in conjunction with the project", said Sven Schafer, head of development at across.

4. Next milestones

System integration is a process that stretches over a long period. After the imminent system change from the previous Content Management System (the plan is to connect the Ovidius TCToolbox CMS via the crossAPI interface) across will be used throughout the company.
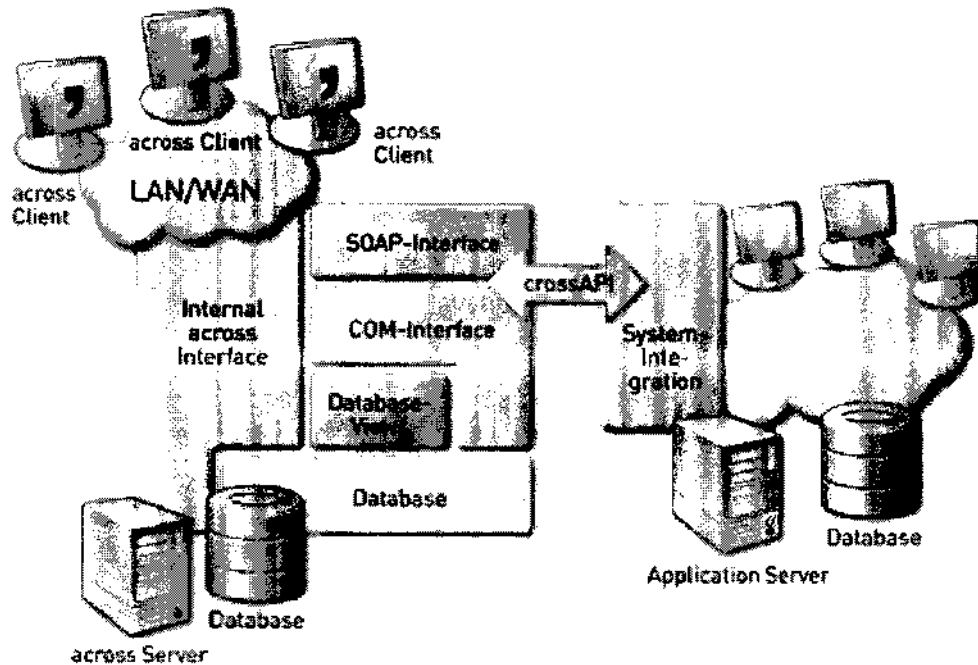

Figure 3:

Integrating processes and systems.

At the moment, almost half of the translations are being done with across, and the number is increasing rapidly.

During the test phase at Polysius, the crossTerm terminology system was accessed by browser via the company's Intranet. The aim was to ensure simple access to both the company's extensive terminology base and to the concordance search (searching for words in context) for all staff members who need these features. With the introduction of the across Release 3.5, these features will be available to all employees from the end of August 2006 onwards. At this point, the previous terminology database will become obsolete and all work will be carried out using the translation memory and the terminology system. A linkup to SAP is also being planned, e.g. to translate the material master data from SAP. This will be implemented with the help of system integrators. Partner companies with specific solution know how work in conjunction with the across system integrator concept.