

Keynote Speech: Born Global - How to Communicate Effectively in an International Environment

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Abstract

While companies participating in a global market benefit from the reduction and removal of barriers between national borders, the language barrier still persists. To be successful, they need to identify and address their internal and external communication requirements. Sales volume in exports can be significantly increased for companies with the right strategy for multilingual communication, whereas failure to localize and communicate in multiple languages can lead to lost revenue. In particular, buyers of costly products and services ask for information in their own language, and as more and more companies react accordingly, consumers become even more demanding. At the same time, delays in product introduction due to slow localization processes reduce profitability over the product life cycle.

The issue of language strategy therefore moves to the executive level, but since language-related tasks are usually not part of their core business, companies mainly rely on language service providers (LSPs). These employ native speakers of the respective target languages with the relevant linguistic know-how, processes and technology. Leading LSPs operate on an international level themselves and have state-of-the-art solutions in place, which can be used both by translators and by the client. Compared to internal language service departments, the use of LSPs can lead to cost reductions of up to 50%.

Right at the beginning of the communication production cycle, professional **copywriters** can author original texts based on a briefing by the client and their own research. While clients usually have the domain expertise in-house, their staff might not have the writing skills required to produce sophisticated annual reports or brochures, especially as companies today also need to find linguistic differentiators for their services and products vis-à-vis their competitors. In addition, **readability** aspects should be taken into account when writing an original text to make it clear and easy to understand for the target audience. In some areas there are even regulatory policies and norms that have to be complied with, e.g. the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) regarding the capital market in Europe, or EU norms for patient information leaflets in the pharmaceutical industry. To increase readability, software-based statistics and the know-how of language experts can be combined, which also provides for optimized conditions for better and faster translations.

Dedicated **terminology management** to ensure consistent and accurate use at the content creation stage helps reduce costs later in the process, since detection and correction of errors generates more effort with every additional language involved. Client- and domain-specific terminology databases (TDBs) containing translations, definitions and other information can be used by the client's employees as a reference and for internal communication, as well as by translators. During the **translation** process, translation memories should be employed to look up past similar translations and store the new ones for later reference. When creativity and cultural aspects are key to reach a target audience, as in marketing and advertising, **transcreation** experts recreate the message in another language rather than translating it.

To keep costs low, human translation of internal communications should be limited to a minimum. Staff can instead use tailored **Machine Translation** (MT) systems to translate foreign language mails or meeting minutes for their own understanding, or might even author source texts and post-edit the MT output to publish on their intranet.

Multilingual content should be made available on a global basis to all persons involved in order to enhance knowledge sharing, ensure consistency, increase efficiency and reduce cost. Existing content can be recycled for various types of applications and usage.

Given the complexity of global communication and the opportunities for technology leverage, companies need to define a communication process strategy early on and start with the final product in mind. The LSP must provide the client with a single point of entry to submit orders, track the order status and use TDBs and MT, for instance.