

FIVE STEPS TO ACHIEVING CORRECT AND TRUE TRANSLATIONS



On time. On target. On budget.

INTRODUCTION

Apex Translations, Inc. provides quality technical, legal, medical, and business translations to clients throughout the world. We focus on providing cost-effective, professional translations, efficiently and on time. We have the experience and credentials to translate the most demanding and complex texts from and into most European and Asian languages.

Any company seeking to operate in foreign markets should be aware of the fact that language is crucial to success. Contracts, product and service manuals, brochures, advertising campaigns, and everything else related to corporate communications must be shaped and tailored to suit each different culture where commercial operations are targeted. Like an organism, language is more than the sum of its parts. Its function is to convey meaning within a context, and it uses symbolism to accomplish that. This is why some scientists have defined 'culture' as specific systems of 'symbolic interaction'.

Correct, accurate, and true translation is a specialized science, developed through years of experience. "Word for word" translation does not convey the intended meaning of a text adequately into another language. Meaning hinges on context. At Apex Translations, Inc., we translate the meaning of a text, not the text "word by word". Additionally, translation takes into account the culture of the location or region where the translated text is targeted. While it may be acceptable to say things in a certain way in one culture, it could be offensive to use the same metaphor, technical term, or colloquialism in a different culture. For example, speaking about "male" and "female" connectors may be considered as a crude and inappropriate sexual metaphor.

Translation is not interpretation. Written documents are translated. Spoken language is interpreted. Translating and interpreting require different skills and talents, and often the best person to translate a written document from one language into another is not also the best person to interpret spoken language — and vice versa.

There are many issues to consider before translating a document into another language. Addressing these issues before beginning translation can significantly reduce the time and cost of the project; otherwise, for a non-linguist, obtaining a translation can become a source of frustration. The better the project is planned, organized, and communicated, the easier and the more cost-efficient the entire process will be.

The purpose of this manual is to identify, using a systematic process, the issues Apex Translations, Inc. feels clients should consider before, during, and after the translation process. Additionally, the manual also provides a translation process checklist to facilitate the planning, organizing, communicating, and reviewing of the translation process. The translation issues identified by Apex Translations, Inc. are incorporated within the following steps:

Step 1: Planning Strategically & Tactically

Step 2: Organizing & Communicating for Quality

Step 3: Analyzing Costs in Terms of Quality

Step 4: Choosing a Translation Provider

Step 5: Reviewing the Translation Results

"Think like a wise man
but communicate in the
language of the people."

William Butler Yeats

STEP 1: PLANNING STRATEGICALLY & TACTICALLY

Planning strategically and technically for document translation involves anticipating your organization's future environment in the international marketplace. In order to succeed in foreign markets, a business must attempt to communicate with its targeted customers, as well as with its sales and service representatives from their frame of reference. This includes choosing the right language and communicating with cultural competence. Planning purposefully and precisely for document translation can help you shape and tailor documents to suit the various cultures where commercial operations are targeted, as well as to avoid problems leading to additional costs.

Think International...At the Time of Document Inception

- Write the original document with the intent that it may eventually be translated into a foreign language. Consider:
 - Cultural differences in symbolism, metaphors, puns, humor, sarcasm, irony, colloquialisms, clichés, and idiomatic expressions.
 - Culturally specific references that are not relevant to potential target audiences; these references should be generalized or omitted.
 - The effects translation will have on document layout, such as:
 - *Text expansion or reduction.* Translation text quantity varies from one language to another. Some languages have either fewer or more words than the source text. For example, Spanish takes up only 5 to 10 percent more space than the corresponding English, but Greek may need up to 35 percent more space; plan your document layout with the appropriate white space.
 - *Text embedded in graphics.* The translation of graphics can be more complex and problematic than text. English, for example, when translated into most other languages, expands by up to 20 percent causing text embedded in graphics to present significant problems. Text expanding outside of the space allotted impacts other elements of the document layout. It is better to place text that requires translation into text boxes within the application or keyed to the graphic, rather than embedded in the graphic.
 - Country codes for telephone and fax; differences in the international writing of dates and times, measurements, decimal points/decimal commas; paper sizes, etc.
- Author the source text in a software program that is universal and multi-language friendly.
- Check with the appropriate in-house staff (i.e., engineers, technical writers) to ensure that foreign adaptation of the source text is possible.

Decide What Needs to be Translated

- Determine the purpose of the translation. For example, a contract calls for precise translation, whereas advertising copy calls for artistic flair. Consider:
 - *Is it for publication?* Translations for publication need to meet the needs of a particular audience. These texts use culture-specific and often sub-culture-specific symbolism, metaphors, and puns, which often play to the subconscious mind, appealing to emotions, values, and moods rather than to critical thinking. The author's intent must be understood, and the intended meaning must be re-worded into another language for another culture. Additionally, publication documents usually require additional linguists for proofreading.
 - *Is it a highly specialized document in the field of technology, science, commerce, law, etc.?* Complex areas must be translated with conceptual exactness and terminological precision, and every comma needs to be in the right place.
 - *Do you just need a summary or "gisting"?* Some translation agencies offer these approximations and usually charge by the hour for it. The result is not a correct, accurate, and true translation; furthermore, it is inherently risky to ask a linguist to decide what is important or not in your legal or technical document. We recommend against this approach. In any event, if you are trying to sell or persuade, if image is important, or if a correct, accurate, and true translation is required, you should not compromise on a gisting or summary approach. If you just want to distill the essence out of documentation, let the translator do what he or she does best - the translation; then, have a legal, medical, or technical expert do a summary.
 - *Do you just need a "for-information only" translation?* For-information only translations are by definition superficial and imprecise translations that usually result in an arbitrary and capricious document. For this reason, Apex does not provide "for-information only" translations.
 - *What does not need to be translated?* Documents often contain graphics, screenshots, or other items that do not always require translation. In addition, brand names or slogans are often left in the original language for marketing purposes. The translation provider will need to know in advance if any part of the text does not need to be translated.
- Establish document consistency.
 - *Does the document need to be consistent with documents previously translated?* If there are already established translations of technical terminology, marketing slogans, product names, etc., it is important to convey these to your translation provider in order enhance consistency, minimize revisions, and reduce completion time. If there are prior translations, please consider making them available to the translation provider.

**"Savoir pour prévoir.
Prévoir pour prévenir!"**
**(To know, in order to
anticipate. To anticipate,
in order to proact.)**

Auguste Comte

- *Will the translated document refer users to other documents?* If so, other documents may also need translation. Translating a group of documents is usually more cost-effective than translating them individually.

For example: If you wish to have a software user manual translated, you need to make sure that the software itself is localized in the same manner as the manual. If the software program has already been translated, the manual translator will need to translate the manual relative to the software translation; otherwise, the translation of the manual will set the terminology for the later localization of the software program. If this is disregarded, what the user will read in the manual might be different from what the user will see on the screen.

- Determine document characteristics.
 - *Are the documents classified?* Classified documents require a translation provider having the appropriate security clearances and/or confidentiality procedures in place.
 - *Is a certified translation required?* Translations of documents for government authorities or other official bodies like immigration offices and universities (passports, CV, references, etc.) generally require a certification.
 - *Are there any legal issues to be resolved?* Some documents, for example, might involve proprietary rights such as copyrights and use of trademarks. These legal issues need to be identified and resolved before translation.
 - *Is the document password-protected?* If so, plan to convey the necessary password information to unprotect it. An editable electronic document is essentially translated by replacing the source text with the target text. If the document is password-protected, it will more difficult to translate it.

Identify the Intended Audience (Stakeholders) and Document Style

- Prepare the translation to have a maximum impact for a particular audience. Consider:
 - How many people will be reading the translation?
 - Will adjustments need to be made for register? For example, what is the educational level and/or age range of the audience? Will the translated document be read by individuals such as legal or medical professionals or by laypersons with a basic school education?
 - For what particular countries/nationalities is the translation intended? This is particularly important for languages with regional variations, such as Spanish, Portuguese, or French.
 - What language do your readers speak? For example, Spanish for Spain is different than Spanish for Mexico. While British English and American English are similar, they have their differences. Translation results can have embarrassing consequences if they are not prepared for the intended audience

"Failure to plan is a
plan for failure."

US Military

- In what language is the source document written?
- What is the desired language combination?
- Define the international image you want to project through the document style. Style refers to pronunciation, word choice, phrasing, and sentence length—all based on the intended audience and the company image to be projected.

Plan Ahead — Don't Put Yourself or the Translation Provider Under Time Pressure

Many clients underestimate the amount of time needed to produce a top quality translation. If translation is part of your project or implementation plan, allow enough time for it to be produced. Haste makes waste — in the translation industry as well as everywhere else. Inquire about the cost and time needed to produce the translations you require ahead of time.

For Example: We have had people ask if we can translate approximately 3 million words in less than six weeks. A translation of this magnitude can be accomplished by using a large team of translators. However, if the subject matter is nuclear physics and the target languages are Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi, it may simply be impossible to find enough truly qualified translators.

Thinking time or money can be saved, some organizations may resort to using less qualified translators such as language students or people with insufficient linguistic and subject matter experience. "We can hire ten students of Russian and let them do it." Would you want a medical student in his third semester to do open heart surgery on you? Remember — translation quality will reflect on the corporate image you wish to project.

The more translators need to be deployed to perform your translation, the more difficult it becomes to protect the quality and homogeneity of the translation. More complex project management can overcome this hurdle — but more complex project management also means higher cost.

"It is not a question of
how well each process
works; the question is
how well they all work
together."

Lloyd Dobens and
Clare Crawford-Mason,
Thinking About Quality

STEP 2: ORGANIZING & COMMUNICATING FOR QUALITY

Miscommunication and lack of preparation/organization are often to blame when translation projects go wrong. The time taken to develop the internal communication channels necessary in organizing for the translation process will reduce cost, stress, and time; but, more importantly, it will result in a higher-quality translation.

Assign the Coordination of the Translation Internal/External Processes to a Specific Manager and, if necessary, a Crossdepartmental Team

The job of communicating with the translation provider is an important one and can mean the success or failure of the translation project. Designating a translation manager, who will be the company's point of contact for questions, along with a crossdepartmental team, to implement the translation planning, organizing, and communicating processes, helps organizations understand what goes into a quality translation. The translation manager ideally should have in-depth knowledge of the text being translated and be able to explain terminology and context. Translation managers and crossdepartmental teams offer the following benefits:

- Allow everyone to stay in the "loop" so translation providers are not left to reprioritize schedules and resources at a moment's notice.
- Help establish a standardized method of submitting documents.
- Provide one avenue of information coming from the client to the translation provider and vice versa, resulting in greater translation consistency.
- Allow those involved with the translation project to build relationships resulting in higher-quality translations.

Gather Materials

Reference material allows translation providers to better understand your organization and its products/services and can be an invaluable tool for the translator. Reference material is also very useful for maintaining consistency in word choice, style, and terminology in order to tailor the translation to meet expectations. Types of documents to gather, in both the source and target languages, include:

- *Visual material:* pictures, schematic drawings, videos, DVDs, brochures, web presentations, etc.

- *Existing translated material:* For example, proper names, company names, and references to other literature previously translated, as well as previously translated versions of the current document or other materials with which the translation should be coordinated.
- *Background materials:* manuals, user's guides, etc.
- *In-house glossaries or translation preferences for specialized terminology:* Special terms, acronyms, and abbreviations that may be specific to the product or company will often require an explanation in order to provide an accurate translation. Translators are expected to use the preferred translations supplied in glossaries. Apex Translations, Inc. will continue to develop client glossaries at no charge.

Ensure You Have the Technical Software/System to Send and Receive the Translation

Your system must be enabled for the language into which you are having the document translated. For example, a client translating a document from German to Chinese would need an Asian language (dual byte) enabled system and the proper font; otherwise, the client will not be able to view the Chinese script. Windows 2000, NT, and XP are already dual byte enabled. Older systems may not offer this capability. Additional considerations include:

- *Is your software compatible with the translation provider's software?* Pay special attention to fonts. If the document's layout requires special fonts, make sure to provide them to the translation provider. If the fonts are not available, the provider may be able to substitute similar ones. For languages that use non-Latin characters, you may need to configure your computer to read the foreign script, and/or install the proper fonts for the language. Apex Translations, Inc. provides fonts, free of charge, to their clients provided they have at least a Windows 2000 or newer operating system.
- *Are there special formatting and conversion requirements?* The best format for any document is electronic source files in an editable format. PDF files are like electronic faxes and cannot be edited or overwritten, or only to a very limited extent. The translation of a PDF file is usually done in MS Word, and the layout and formatting of the translation may differ from the layout and formatting of the original. Fully editable electronic documents are normally translated in the same format as they are provided. Should it be necessary to maintain the exact formatting and layout, the original source file (for example, in MS Word, Illustrator, Quark, etc.) needs to be made available to the translation provider.

- *Is the source text authored in a software program that is universal and multi-language friendly?* Many Desktop Publishing systems do not work well in a multi-language environment. If the document was created in a Desktop Publishing (DTP) environment, it is important to determine whether the translation should be done within the original file format or in MS Word format, which would allow the translated text to be inserted into the document in the appropriate layout by company staff. When the translation is done in a table format, with the source and target languages side by side, insertion is greatly facilitated. Even without knowledge of the foreign language, company DTP staff can easily and quickly place the translated text correctly into the desired layout.
- *What tools and applications will be used, including versions?*
- *What are the source files and formats?* It is vital that information on the files be conveyed, such as whether they were created on a PC or Mac platform.
- *What are the translation output formats and final delivery method?* Give the source files a name that will have meaning for both you and the translation provider. When referring to the source files in correspondence, use the exact filenames. Inform the translation provider of any special file-naming conventions you (or your technical personnel) may have for target-language files.

Set a Reasonable Delivery (Turn-Around) Time

A correct, accurate, and true translation takes time . . . it is labor intensive. Unrealistic turnaround times can place a project in jeopardy, can increase project costs, and can compromise quality. For example, a 10,000-word document in a European language requires about five days for translating, editing, and proofing. Of course, special circumstances may require faster turnaround. Your translation provider may be able to accommodate your "rush" request, but inquire first before committing yourself and your colleagues, staff, and project management to a time schedule that may not be realistic. Consider the following indicators in estimating a reasonable delivery time:

- The time it took to initially develop the document.
- The average number of text pages a professional translator can produce in one day — varies from 8 to 15; the average number of words translated — varies from 1,000 to 3,000. An experienced translator usually translates about 3,000 words per day. This applies to most European languages. For character-based Asian languages, the daily average is 2,000 words. Add to this — the time required for a second translator to edit and proofread the translation (approximately one-third to one-half the translation time).
- The length, complexity, language combinations, and nature of the document cause translation time variations. Complex documents and less common languages require more time.

- Any additional requirements that require more time and/or processing, such as special formatting, proofreading, foreign language typesetting, editing, graphic design, printing, etc.
- The added value features built into the translation process, such as proofreading of the translation.

Finalize Your Document Before Submitting It For Translation

Not finalizing a document before translation leads to delays and additional costs, as translators have to re-work the document. The more versions of the document that exist, the more likely errors will result. Surcharges usually apply when:

- Changes are made to a document while it is being translated.
- Changes are made to the document after it has been translated.
- A document has been compiled by different entities (various footers, headers, inconsistencies, etc.) that lead to formatting and style problems.

“There is nothing in the world that some man cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper, and he who considers price only is that man's lawful prey.”

John Ruskin

STEP 3: ANALYZE COSTS IN TERMS OF QUALITY

You are likely to find a wide range of prices quoted for translations. Quality translations depend on educated, experienced, knowledgeable, and skilled professionals using the correct tools in the correct way—which all costs money. The cheapest translation may turn out to be the most expensive for you in the end, so do not choose a translation provider purely because of the price they offer. It is far better to choose a company based on the quality they provide.

Analyze Cost vs. Quality

The added value of the highest caliber translators, project management, quality control, file conversions, editors, proofreaders, consultants, standardized presentation of multilingual projects, etc., has a price tag, but can save you hours of work. For example, purchasing a cheaper translation that is not done by a native speaker of the target language reflects in the quality of the translation.

Assess Quality Through a Sample Translation

Get an accurate idea of the work that translation providers can perform by obtaining a sample translation. Run the sample past a trusted, language-sensitive native speaker for an opinion. In addition, talk with the translation provider: Do they listen? Do they sound competent? Are they open-minded and flexible?

Consider Current Investment in Product or Service

Weigh the current investment in the product or service against translation costs. Remember—translation quality will reflect on the corporate image you wish to project. Touting the superiority of your product or service with bizarre language belies your claim. Here is a paragraph from the product manual of a leading golf equipment manufacturer. The equipment, a training golf club, was apparently manufactured in Asia.

“Congratulations for your new practise-club! With the encl. tool you can fix the flexibility — for beginners is better you screw it a little stronger and for advance more easier that you can get a good golf-swing. It is forbidden, to hit any balls with this practise-club, otherwise you have not any warranty”!

From a consumer standpoint, would you be assured that you bought a quality product after reading this? Would this translation reflect the image you want to project of your company and product?

Be Realistic in Assessing Cost Estimates

Compare projected cost to the average hourly rate you would pay an attorney for a standard document. For example, assume the typical rate for a European language translation (e.g., German, Italian, etc.) of a standard document, using a translator in the field who is a native of the target language, is 17 cents per word. Additionally, assume the translator can translate this document at an average of 1,500 words a day.

Mathematically then:

$$\frac{1500 \text{ words/day} \times 0.17 = \$225/\text{day for 1 language}}{8 \text{ hour}} = \$31.875 \text{ per hour}$$

Compared with the hourly rates of other educated, experienced, knowledgeable, and skilled professionals, this rate now appears quite moderate.

Discounts are not usually applicable to the translation industry. Translation is a time-consuming process requiring attention to detail. As document translations increase, so does the need for more people, such as project managers, additional translators, etc., causing costs to increase, not to decrease. The more translators and target languages a project involves, the more it will usually cost to translate it. This is why, unlike in industrial production, higher production volume does not necessarily "translate" into lower production or unit cost.

Consider the Requested Delivery Time

Standard rates normally apply when the turn-around time is reasonable. Rush work usually incurs a surcharge, due to the need to pay overtime costs.

“Quality is never an
accident; it is always
the result of
intelligent effort.”

John Ruskin

STEP 4: CHOOSING A TRANSLATION PROVIDER

In addition to the products/services an organization offers, nothing is more important than effectively communicating with potential partners or clients. Preparing key documents, such as presentations, sales and product literature, technical reports, or financial statements, in the language of the country in which you wish to establish your presence is a vital step towards success. You need to entrust your project to a translation provider that has the experience, expertise, and training to properly convey your message in the target language.

Resist temptation to translate it yourself or to have an in-house employee, who is known to have some proficiency in the target language, translate it.

Translation is a full-time job. It is time-consuming and labor-intensive and requires years of training and experience, as well as the skills and ability to translate accurately from, or into, other languages. Oral fluency does not guarantee smooth, stylish writing. Inadvertently using the native language in an awkward or sloppy manner may have embarrassing consequences and reflect on your company's image. Consider:

- Who will edit the in-house employee translation?
- Will you recognize your own mistakes?

Avoid Using Language Departments of Universities

Using students from language departments may be cheaper, but they, most likely, will not have the experience, expertise, and training to properly convey your message in the target language. Determine your current investment in the product or service, as well as the time spent creating the document to be translated, and then consider:

- Did you use students to develop the product or service?
- Did you use students to create the source document?
- Would you use students to prepare your financial documents or create your advertising campaigns?
- Would you consider having your open-heart surgery performed by a second-year medical student, because he or she would charge less?

Develop an ongoing relationship with a translation provider

A good translation company can manage your project from translation through editing, desktop publishing, and proofreading. In choosing a translation provider, use the following questions to assess their ability to deliver a correct, accurate, and true translation:

- *Does the provider use professionally qualified translators working in their native language?*

A native speaking translator is one who grew up within that language and culture; and, one who is intricately familiar with all facets and levels of writing and speaking that exist within that language. It does not mean that the person must have been born in a certain country or that his or her parents must have been natives of a certain country or nation; nor does it mean that the person must be a citizen of any specific country or state.

A native speaking translator translates from the source language into his or her own language. For example, native English speakers translate from foreign languages into English. Additionally, they must understand the nuances of both the source and target language; and, furthermore, they must understand the source language culture as well as their own. This is usually accomplished by living in both countries for an extended period, as well as by visiting their native countries often. The translator's goal is to provide a correct, accurate, and true translation that takes the local language and culture into consideration while retaining the client's message and content.

At Apex Translations, Inc., translators are our assets. Apex carefully hand-selects the most accomplished and accredited translators who are top professionals in their respective fields and who are native speakers of the target language. With each project, their goal is to provide translation services that ensure accuracy, correct grammar, and style. In addition, all of our translators are fluent in their respective target languages, combined with at least ten years of translation experience. For more information on how we select our translators, please request a copy of the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice*.

- *Does the provider use professionally qualified translators working in their subject-matter fields?*

In order to translate intended meaning within the correct context, a translator must not only be fluent in at least two languages, confining himself to translating only into his native tongue, he or she must also be a subject matter expert in the topic he is called upon to translate. In addition, he or she must be culturally competent. Translators with subject matter expertise are more likely to produce a better translation. They are effective bridges between the subject matter and the languages in which they work, better able to render the message of the source text.

For example, legal documents, such as summons, letters, depositions, evidence documents, decisions, contracts, wills, or patents may have to be translated from or into another language. These translations need to be true to their originals and reflect the weaknesses, errors, false conclusions, inconsistencies, or other flaws of the source documents, as this information may be crucial. A good legal translator not only translates from one language into another but also translates from one legal system into another and from one cultural tradition into another. This means that the translator must, in addition, be an expert in legal matters as well as be an expert linguist.

At Apex Translations, Inc., we choose highly skilled professional translators who are also subject matter experts in their fields. For example, translators who are also medical professionals, i.e., medical doctors or nurses, will translate medical translations. This approach assures that quality is built into the translation as early in the process as possible. For more information on how we select our translators, please request a copy of the Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice.

- *Does the provider use translation software?*

Machine Translations (MT) may occasionally be sufficient to get the "gist" of a document, but they perform extremely poorly when it comes to conveying the accurate meaning. In fact, Machine Translations largely lack correct grammar, style, appropriate sentence structure, and recognizable syntax. Translations generated by computer programs are so skewed that it is often faster to retranslate a text than to correct it. The sample machine translation below demonstrates the inadequacies of machine translation.

We have machine-translated the preceding paragraph from this document (written in red font) into German and Spanish and then back into English. Here is the translation into German:

Maschinelle Übersetzungen (M.Ü.) können genügend gelegentlich sein, den "Kern" eines Dokumentes, aber sie zu erhalten durchführen extrem schlecht, wenn es zum Übermitteln der genauen Bedeutung kommt. Tatsächlich ermangeln maschinelle Übersetzungen groß korrekte Grammatik, Art, passende Satzstruktur und erkennbare Syntax. Die Übersetzungen, die durch Computerprogramme erzeugt werden, sind also skewed, daß er häufig schneller ist, einen Text als zu zurückübersetzen, ihn zu beheben. Die Beispielmashinelle Übersetzung folgend zeigt die Unzulänglichkeit der maschineller Übersetzung.

Here is the back-translation of this German translation into English:

Machine translations (M.Ue.) can be sufficient occasional, the "core" of a document, but they to receive accomplish extremely badly, if it comes to conveying the exact meaning. Machine translations largely correct grammar, kind, suitable sentence structure and recognizable syntax actually lack. The translations, which are produced by computer programs, are to be back-translated thus skewed that it is frequently faster, a text as, it to repair. The example-machine translation following shows the inadequacy that machine translation.

Apex Translations, Inc.
does not recommend or
use Machine Translation
software.

Here is the Spanish translation:

Las traducciones automáticas (TA) pueden de vez en cuando ser suficientes conseguir el "gist" de un documento, pero las se realizan extremadamente mal cuando viene a transportar el significado exacto. En hecho, las traducciones automáticas carecen en gran parte la gramática correcta, el estilo, la estructura de oración apropiada, y el sintaxis reconocible. Las traducciones generadas por programas de computadora son así que sesgado que es a menudo más rápida re-traducir un texto que corregirlo. La traducción automática de la muestra abajo demuestra las insuficiencias de la traducción automática.

And, here is the back translation of the Spanish text into English:

The automatic translations (TA) can once in a while be sufficient to obtain "gist" of a document, but they are made extremely badly when it comes to transport the exact meaning. In fact, the automatic translations lack to a large extent the correct grammar, the style, the structure of appropriate oration, and the reconocible syntax. The translations generated by computer programs so are slanted that are often faster re-to translate a text that to correct it. The automatic translation of the sample down demonstrates the insuficiencias of the automatic translation.

We used the best and most capable machine translation software currently available, and this is certainly not a very difficult text. Would you want to see your product information translated with Machine Translation software and project this bizarre image of your company to your customers or service personnel?

- *Is the translation provider culturally competent?*

Before initiating foreign business opportunities, such as joint ventures or partnerships, or before negotiating with a foreign firm, it is imperative to understand cultural nuances, local business practices, and, of course, the language. Translators must be able to find an equivalent context and a linguistic match for what the source text is trying to express.

Many texts use culture-specific and often sub-culture-specific symbolism, metaphors, and puns, which often play to the subconscious mind, appealing to emotions, values, and moods rather than to critical thinking. The author's intent must be understood, and the intended meaning must be re-worded in another language for another culture. This talent requires translators who do not just know another language; they must have a feel for the context being translated. The translator must be able to find an equivalent context and a linguistic match for what the source text is trying to express.

Other cultures and languages use different symbolism and metaphors. In American English, for example, 'blue' has the emotional connotation of 'sad', 'unhappy'. The French term for 'blue', 'bleu', has the connotation of 'stupid', 'silly', 'inexperienced', 'bad'. The German term for 'blue', 'blau', has the connotation of 'drunk', 'stoned'. The translator must find the images, symbols, metaphors, and puns that express in the target language what the source text is trying to express. This task requires people who are intricately familiar with both the cultures and the languages involved in the translation.

If you think that technical translations are inherently immune against these kinds of ambiguities, think again. The German term 'Achse' may have to be translated as 'axis', 'axle', or 'shaft' depending on the technical context. The German term 'Gleichstrom' may mean 'DC current' in electrical engineering but 'equal flow rate' in chemical engineering.

After World War II, the Germans ate cornbread and corn cake for many years due to a misunderstanding by a clerk in the German Department of Agriculture. 'Korn' in German means 'grain'. The concept includes those types of grain eaten by Germans such as wheat, barley, or rye - corn is not one of them. Corn is called 'Mais', and it is used to feed pigs. When the German government asked the American government to send "Korn" to feed the starving population, the clerk who drafted the letter in English wrote "corn". Many Germans believed that they were given pig feed by the Americans to humiliate them. The story about the translation error made it into high school curricula in an attempt to wipe out the myth.

At Apex Translations, Inc., all of our translators go through rigorous testing and credential checks to assure they understand the cultural nuances of both the source and target language. In addition, we also make sure that translators, who do not permanently live in their native countries and cultures, return there periodically to stay current with the development of their native languages. For more information on how we select our translators, please request a copy of the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice*.

- *Will the provider offer sample translations, so quality can be assessed?*

A sample translation gives you a perspective of translation quality and style and allows you to run the sample past a trusted, language-sensitive native speaker for an opinion before placing an order. Understanding quality and style up-front assists in the assessment of project costs.

Upon request, Apex Translations, Inc. provides a FREE sample translation of your text before you place an order, provided your source text contains at least 3,000 words. This sample translation is typically 150 source words in length and is usually completed within 24 hours.

- *Will the provider offer references?*

Checking a provider's references will allow you to ask questions regarding the provider's commitment to the quality and correctness of the translation, as well as their expertise, professionalism, security procedures, etc.

Apex Translations, Inc. serves a broad spectrum of clients, including small and large corporations, law firms, medical institutions, government agencies, small businesses, and individuals. Some of our best advertising comes from our customers. While formal references and client lists are provided upon request, potential clients may also access our client testimonial list at:

http://www.apex-translations.com/testimonials/testimonials_frame.html

- *Does the provider employ a Project Manager?*

Project managers serve as liaisons between the client and the translator. It is the project manager's responsibility to communicate with the client, improving ambiguities in the source text. The project manager coordinates large projects and asks questions throughout the project. The more inquisitive the project manager, the better the translator understands the client's business philosophy, strategy, and products, and the more effective the translator's texts will be. In addition, project managers ensure that the client's glossaries are used for the translation.

Apex Translations, Inc. uses Project Managers for larger, more complex projects, for multilingual translations, and/or when working under significant time constraint, especially when it may be necessary to use several translators, each translating a portion of the same document. Since no two translators translate in exactly the same manner, it could then become necessary to use the Project Manager (PM) also as a Terminology Coordinator (TC) and/or to use one or more additional TCs.

- *Does the provider use more than one translator on a project?*

To ensure consistency of style and terminology within a translated document, it is always a best practice, if possible, to use the same translator.

Apex Translations, Inc. typically uses only one translator per source language to ensure consistency of style and terminology. For larger, more complex projects and/or when working under significant time constraint, we will employ one or more additional translators to complete the project. In these cases, special measures are taken to use common glossaries, common databases, and the expertise of a translation coordinator, all to ensure consistency of the document.

- *Will the provider certify their translations?*

A certification is a separate document attached to the translation. It states that a competent, professional translator has performed the translation and guarantees the translation is true to the original. Surcharges usually apply for this service.

Apex Translations, Inc. will certify its translations, upon request. Certifications can be issued in most languages. In addition, Apex provides notarizations and apostillizations. Apex's certifications, notarizations, and apostillizations are accepted by foreign governments and their local embassies/consulates, United States government agencies and courts, and educational institutions and universities.

- *Will the provider maintain confidentiality of classified documents?*

At Apex Translations, Inc., we understand the importance of proprietary information being treated as CONFIDENTIAL. If requested, Apex will sign a non-disclosure agreement in order to assure the confidentiality of the document to be translated. All documents will be stored in a secure environment and no proprietary information will ever be released to any person or entity that is not bound by our non-disclosure agreement. Upon request, the original documents can be returned to the client.

- *Does the provider guarantee the correctness of their work?*

An error/mistake is any objective, intersubjectively verifiable error, fault, or incorrectness of content translation, or of terminology, orthography, punctuation, or style. This concept explicitly excludes subjective preferences of terminology and style or retroactive changes to the meaning or structure of the original source text.

Apex Translations, Inc. warrants the correctness of its translations and corrects mistakes or errors that clearly and unequivocally are committed by Apex Translations, Inc. at no charge to the client. No translation will be released by the Production Manager for delivery to the client until and unless its error score according to SAE J2450 is under 0.002. For more information on our translation quality control procedures, please request a copy of the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice*.

- *Does the provider have quality control procedures in place?*

Apex Translations, Inc. assures quality of its translations by applying quality assurance, quality control, and the project management principles of ISO 9000.

For quality assurance, we assure quality by choosing highly skilled translators who are best suited for a specific project, are native speakers of the target language, and have been carefully selected after having been evaluated using our own rigorous battery of tests and interviews. This approach assures that quality is built into the translation as early as possible in the translation process.

For quality control, we are continuously improving our production process with the goal of preventing errors. We also exercise a measure of post-production control.

We apply the principles of SAE recommended practice J2450 (Translation Quality Metric) as the method for measuring our translation quality.

For further details regarding this SAE document and its associated metrics and acceptance thresholds, or, if you wish to review a more detailed description of our quality procedures, please request the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice Manual*.

- *Does the provider offer pre-delivery proofreading?*

Before delivery, translations should be carefully proofread by a language-sensitive native speaker to ensure stylistic and orthographic correctness, and, if promotional copy, that the document is idiomatically effective. Proofreaders check grammar, syntax, punctuation, and style before delivery.

At Apex Translations, Inc., we exercise a measure of post-production control. Each translation goes through final reviews by a qualified linguist and native speaker of the target language. During both translation and review, electronic systems are deployed to check spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax according to the rules of the target language. Strict adherence to this process is key to achieving excellent translations. For more information on our quality control procedures, please request a copy of the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice Manual*.

- *Will the provider guarantee on-time delivery?*

Part of reputable translating is delivering the translation on time.

At Apex Translations, Inc., we understand the importance of on-time delivery, and we take our delivery commitments very seriously. Our proposals state the agreed-upon delivery time.

Apex, also, has the resources to respond to urgent requests. Typical turn-around time for a 2,000 word document is 24 hours or less.

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- *Does the provider have security procedures in place that prevent document loss and prevent documents from containing viruses?*

At Apex Translations, Inc., all incoming and outgoing emails and documents are scanned with anti-virus software, which is updated daily with new virus definitions. To further protect against computer problems, our backup system maintains a duplicate of all documents and emails that we receive and send to our clients, including completed translations.

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- *Will the provider be able to maintain the formatting and style of the documents?*

At Apex Translations, Inc., our translators translate directly into the source document; and, in most cases, we are able to maintain the formatting and style of your document. This includes any tables, text boxes, footnotes, etc., that may exist in your document. We can also translate directly into spreadsheets, presentation documents, and, of course, into virtually any available word processing application. If the source document is a fully editable electronic document, authored with a software program that lends itself to translating, formatting can be preserved at or near 100 percent. By contrast, if the source document is a document that cannot be edited electronically or if the software program with which it was authored is not conducive to language translation, the formatting may vary.

- *Does the provider offer formal job proposals/job quotes?*

At Apex Translations, Inc., providing you with cost-effective translation services is critical. If you have several documents you wish to have translated, you will receive a comprehensive proposal that includes a summary containing a list of all filenames, the applications with which the files will be created (e.g., MS Word, etc.), and the associated word count for each file that will be used as the basis for billing. If you are interested in the translation of a complete website, we will analyze the entire website (or only the web pages that you wish to have translated) and provide you with a comprehensive proposal. The document summary or website summaries will serve as the basis for a firm cost estimate, including turnaround time, which will be provided to you at no cost within hours of your request.

- *Can the provider handle multi-language translations?*

Apex Translations, Inc. has the resources, capacity, and project management capability to deliver not only complex and demanding translations but also large and/or multi-language projects, including websites.

- *Does the provider have a personal data privacy/security policy in place?*

The Apex Translations, Inc. Privacy Notice can be accessed on the web at:
http://www.apex-translations.com/privacy/privacy_frame.html

- *Is the provider listed with the Better Business Bureau (BBB)?*

The Apex Translations, Inc. standing with the BBB can be accessed on the web at:
<http://www.bbbonline.org/cks.asp?id=104030112255940256>

The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.

Ray Kroc,
Founder, McDonald's

STEP 5: REVIEWING THE TRANSLATION RESULTS

What is a complete, true, and accurate translation?

Apex Translations, Inc. applies the principles of the **SAE recommended practice J2450** (Translation Quality Metric) as the method for determining a complete, true, and accurate translation. The metric allows an evaluator to tag errors in a translation and compute a weighted, numeric score that represents the quality of the translation. It is through this metric that Apex guarantees its translations.

A translation error is an objective, intersubjectively verifiable error, fault, or incorrectness of content translation, or of terminology, orthography, punctuation, or style. This concept explicitly excludes subjective preferences of terminology and style or retroactive changes to the meaning or structure of the original source text.

SAE J2450 has seven error categories. Each one has two subcategories: serious and minor. Each of these subcategories is assigned a weight or value:

- Cat. 1: Wrong termserious 5 pointsminor 2 pointstogether 7 points
- Cat. 2: Syntax errorserious 4 pointsminor 2 pointstogether 6 points
- Cat. 3: Omission errorserious 4 pointsminor 2 pointstogether 6 points
- Cat. 4: Grammar errorserious 4 pointsminor 2 pointstogether 6 points
- Cat. 5: Spelling errorserious 3 pointsminor 1 pointtogether 4 points
- Cat. 6: Punctuation errorserious 2 pointsminor 1 pointtogether 3 points
- Cat. 7: Miscellaneous errorserious 3 pointsminor 1 pointtogether 4 points

Category weighted scores are then totaled and divided by the number of words in the document. Apex Translations, Inc. guarantees its translation to be a complete, true, and accurate translation that does not exceed an error score of 0.002. For further details regarding this SAE document and its associated metrics and acceptance thresholds, or, if you wish to review a more detailed description of our quality procedures, please request the *Apex Quality Assurance and Quality Control Practice Manual*.

Translation Results Caveats

- If in-house reviewers criticize the translated document, do not automatically assume the translator provider delivered a poor quality translation.

In many cases, the source language text may lack the desired quality and/or contains ambiguities and inconsistencies. If we find errors, inconsistencies, or ambiguities in the source language text, we will report them to you when we deliver the translation.

- Beware of in-house, well-meaning non-linguists changing an otherwise effective document translation.

Often, in-house editors or a company's foreign marketing or sales representatives dislike the overall style, tone, and pitch of a text, or they feel that it just simply should have been written in a different manner. They then edit the translation and blame the translation provider for what are actually shortcomings of the source text. These editors are often blissfully unaware that their edits amount to a re-write of the source document, which is something a translator must never do. Make sure in-house people understand the difference between editing a translation and re-writing the source text.

For Example: A translation provider completed its translation and sent the document to the Client in MS Word. Later the provider received an irate call from the CEO indicating that it was a horrible translation. The provider requested a copy of the translation to which the CEO was referring. To the relief of the translation provider, the printed document the translation provider received did not match the one originally sent to the client. Upon further investigation, it was found someone in the Client's office had rewritten the text, which thereby botched the typesetting as well.

Summary

Some of the translation issues identified by Apex Translations, Inc. that are incorporated within each of the *5 Steps to Achieving Correct, Accurate, and True Translations*, may be difficult to implement, depending on the logistics of your organization. However, the importance of organizations employing a systematic process to ensure competent translations, which will invariably lead to improvements in quality, cost, and delivery, is becoming increasingly evident within the competitive international marketplace. At Apex Translations, Inc., we hope the steps to achieving correct, accurate, and true translations presented in this manual will assist you in those efforts.

TRANSLATION CHECKLIST

Step1: Planning Strategically & Tactically

Completed

- 1.1 Think international...at the time of document inception.
 - A) Write the original document with the intent that it may eventually be translated into a foreign language.
Consider:
 - 1) Cultural differences.
 - 2) Culturally specific references.
 - 3) The effects translation will have on document layout:
 - a) Text expansion or reduction.
 - b) Text embedded in graphics.
 - 4) Country codes for telephone and fax; differences in the international writing of dates and times, measurements, decimal points/decimal commas; paper sizes, etc.
 - B) Author the source text in a software program that is universal and multi-language friendly.
 - C) Check with the appropriate in-house staff (i.e., engineers, technical writers) to ensure that foreign adaptation of the source text is possible.
- 1.2 Decide what needs to be translated.
 - A) Determine the purpose of the translation.
 - 1) Is it for publication?
 - 2) Is it a highly specialized document in the field of technology, science, commerce, law, etc.?
 - 3) Do you just need a summary or "gisting"?
 - 4) Do you just need a "for-information only" translation?
 - 5) What does not need to be translated?
 - B) Establish document consistency.
 - 1) Does the document need to be consistent with documents previously translated?
 - 2) Will the translated document refer users to other documents?

- C) Determine document characteristics.
 - 1) Are the documents classified?
 - 2) Is a certified translation required?
 - 3) Are there any legal issues to be resolved?
 - 4) Does the document contain any protected parts?
- 1.3 Identify the intended audience (stakeholders) and document style.
 - A) Prepare the translation to have a maximum impact for a particular audience.
 - 1) How many people will be reading the translation?
 - 2) Will adjustments need to be made for register?
 - 3) For what particular countries/nationalities is the translation intended?
 - 4) What language do your readers speak?
 - 5) In what language is the source document written?
 - 6) What is the desired language combination?
 - B) Define the international image you want to project through the document style.
- 1.4 Plan ahead - Don't put yourself or the translation provider under time pressure.

Step 2: Organizing & Communicating for Quality

- 2.1 Assign the coordination of the translation internal/external processes to a specific manager and, if necessary, a crossdepartmental team.
- 2.2 Gather materials.
 - A) Visual material
 - B) Existing translated material
 - C) Background materials
 - D) In-house glossaries or translation preferences for specialized terminology

- 2.3 Ensure you have the technical software/system to send and receive the translation.
- A) Is your software compatible with the translation provider's software?
- B) Are there special formatting and conversion requirements?
- C) Is the source text authored in a software program that is universal and multi-language friendly?
- D) What tools and applications will be used, including versions?
- E) What are the source files and formats?
- F) What are the translation output formats and final delivery method?
- 2.4 Set a reasonable delivery (turn-around) time.
- 2.5 Finalize your document before submitting it for translation.

Step 3: Analyze Costs in Terms of Quality

- 3.1 Analyze Cost vs. Quality.
- 3.2 Assess Quality through a Sample Translation.
- 3.3 Consider Current Investment in Product or Service.
- 3.4 Be Realistic in Assessing Cost Estimates.
- 3.5 Consider the Requested Delivery Time.

Step 4: Choosing a Translation Provider

- 4.1 Resist the temptation to translate it yourself or to have an in-house employee, who is known to have some proficiency in the target language, translate it.
- 4.2 Avoid Using Language Departments of Universities.
- 4.3 Develop an Ongoing Relationship with a Translation Provider.
- A) Does the provider use professionally qualified translators working in their native language?
- B) Does the provider use professionally qualified translators working in their subject-matter fields?
- C) Does the provider use translation software?

- D) Is the translation provider culturally competent?
- E) Will the provider offer sample translations, so quality can be assessed?
- F) Will the provider offer references?
- G) Does the provider employ a Project Manager?
- H) Does the provider use more than one translator on a project?
- I) Will the provider certify their translations?
- J) Will the provider maintain confidentiality of classified documents?
- K) Does the provider guarantee the correctness of their work?
- L) Does the provider have quality control procedures in place?
- M) Does the provider offer pre-delivery proofreading?
- N) Will the provider guarantee on-time delivery?
- O) Does the provider have security procedures in place that prevent document loss and prevent documents from containing viruses?
- P) Will the provider be able to maintain the formatting and style of the documents?
- Q) Does the provider offer formal job proposals/job quotes?
- R) Can the provider handle multi-language translations?
- S) Does the provider have a personal data privacy/security policy in place?
- T) Is the provider listed with the Better Business Bureau (BBB)?

Step 5: Reviewing the Translation Results

- 5.1 Translated document(s) meets the requirements of being a complete, true, and accurate translation.