APEX QUALITY PROCEDURES

On time. On target. On budget.

Apex Translations, Inc.
January, 2010

Apex Quality Procedures

Scope

This manual captures the quality procedures and methods employed by Apex Translations, Inc.

Applicable Documents

SAE Translation Metric J2450, issued December 2001 (Ref. http://www.apex-translations.com/documents/sae_j2450.pdf).

Appendix 1 – a graphical representation of Apex' production process flow.

Definitions

"Quality Assurance" (QA) - all measures and processes that serve the purpose of preventing errors from being made.

"Quality Control" (QC) - all measures and processes that serve to detect and correct any errors that may have been made in spite of Quality Assurance (QA).

"Quality Verification" (QV) - all measures and processes that serve to measure the product of our services for the purpose providing feedback to our quality system to continuously enhance or methods and processes.

"Error" - any objective and verifiable linguistic error, or inaccurate content translation, as well as any objective and verifiable error concerning terminology, orthography, punctuation, or style. This concept explicitly excludes subjective preferences of terminology and style, retroactive changes to the meaning or structure of the original source text, and changes to a translation that are not supported by the original source text.

"Native Speaker" - a speaker of a language, who grew up with that language and culture, and 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.

"Overall Document Weighted Score" (ODWS) – a means of quantifying the quality of a translation objectively using the method described in the SAE Recommended Practice J2450 (Translation Quality Metric).

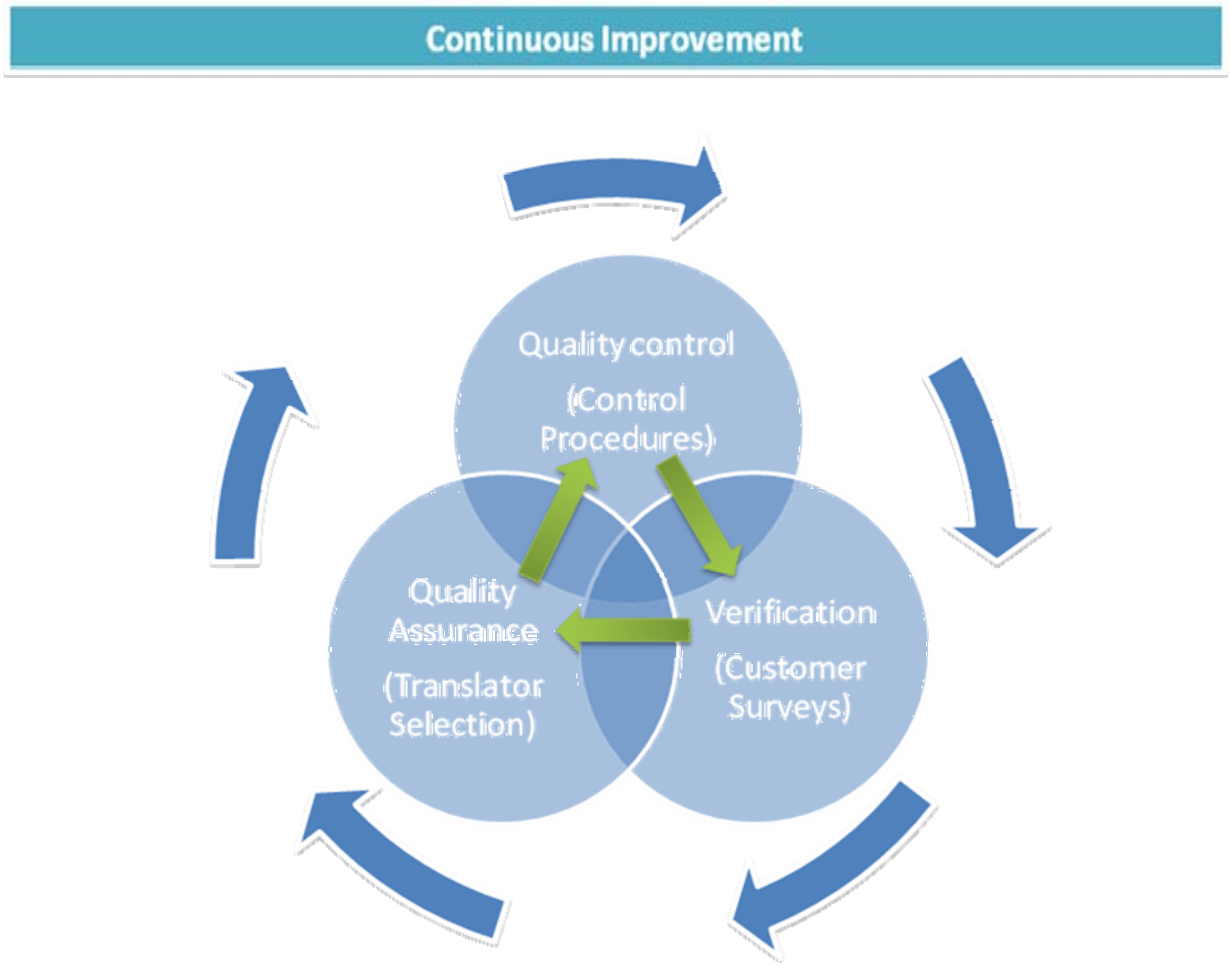
"Continuous Improvement" - an ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement

all at once. Delivery processes are constantly evaluated and improved in the light of their efficiency, effectiveness, and flexibility.

Apex' Overall Approach to Quality

The basic approach to our quality approach is illustrated graphically below. It comprises the basic building blocks such as Quality Assurance (QA), Quality Control (QC), and Quality Verification (QV).

The concept of "Continuous Improvement" is employed as an over-arching principle in our quality architecture. It embraces everything we do to maintain quality excellence, including elements such as how we train our employees, the way we structure our IT system for minimum project management error rates, the 6-Sigma tools and principles (as far as practical) that we employ in our daily work, as well as the way we measure key work activities, so we know where we must improve.



1. Quality Assurance (QA)

Translator Selection and Qualification:

In order to be a top-quality translator, it does not suffice that a person is fluent in two languages. A truly qualified translator must also have specific knowledge of the subject matter he or she translates, i.e., the translator must not only be a native speaker of the target language and have fluency in the source language, he or she must also be a subject matter expert of the subject matter he or she will translate.

Apex scrutinizes the CVs and resumes of solicited and unsolicited translator applicants based on our current needs or as part of our ongoing effort to add qualified translators to our translator pool.

Apex verifies — to the best of its abilities — the translator's education, experience, and professional qualifications, and that the translator is truly a native speaker of the target language into which he or she claims to be capable of translating.

Verification of the translator's capabilities is performed by asking the applicant to complete one or more test translation. This test translation is typically a text dealing with the subject matter in which the translator claims to be an expert. For example, if the translator claims to be an automotive engineer or to have experience with automotive translations from English into Mexican Spanish, Apex would typically have the applicant prepare a test translation of an automotive text from English into Mexican Spanish.

Upon completion of the test translation, one or more of Apex's established and proven translators and/or proofreaders with the same language combination and subject matter expertise will evaluate the translation. The results will then be reviewed by Apex' Chief Linguist. If the translation reveals an Overall Document Weighted Score of >0.002 according to SAE J2450 (ref. error scoring and limits below), it will not be accepted. At this level, we also put emphasis on formatting, layout quality/integrity, and small errors or oversights, since we must assume that the applicant would pay more than normal attention to the preparation of a test translation. Consequently, if the test translation shows a level of superficiality, or lack of attention to detail, or negligence concerning formatting, that would lead us to believe that we would have to expect more errors of this type in later translations, we may not accept it even if the Overall Document Weighted Score is within acceptable range. Essentially, we expect a test translation to be essentially flawless.

In assessing a test translation, we apply the following criteria:

- Did the translator use the terminology that is typical and customary for the pertinent subject matter field?
- Did the translator use this terminology in a consistent manner?
- Are there any spelling errors?
- Are there any punctuation errors?
- Are there any syntax errors?

- Does the translation show that the translator understood the content and subject matter of the source document correctly and fully?
- Is the translation complete?
- Did the translator add any text not contained in the source document?
- Did the translator omit any text contained in the source text?
- Is there equivalency in style and level of speech between the source and target text?
- Does the formatting correspond to the formatting of the source document?
- Is the overall formatting and appearance of the translation neat, clear, and visually appealing?
- Does the translation reflect a sufficient level of cultural competence and familiarity with the idiomatic, metaphoric, symbolic, ethical, and colloquial aspects of the language pair in question?

If the answer to any of these questions is negative, Apex will most likely not add this translator to its pool of qualified and approved translators.

Continued Monitoring of Translators:

Throughout the time translators are employed by Apex, we continuously monitor their performances and the frequency with which they commit errors, as well as the nature and seriousness of those errors. We provide feedback to them, alerting them to first signs of apparent lack of focus, diligence, or attention to detail. A performance record of each translator is kept in our translator database. If a translator shows a decline in overall performance quality, this would show up in our database for PMs to see. The production manager would then contact this translator and discuss measures for correction/improvement.

Apex also uses its translator database to capture subject matter skills, educational background, etc. of all translators who are either actively employed and/or contracted by Apex, or wish to be considered as translators for Apex in the future.

Terminology Standardization:

We maintain glossaries in order to assure consistency of style and terminology for future translation projects. Some of our clients provide glossaries and require these to be used during the translation process.

Note — not using a preferred term does not constitute a translation error, unless we have been advised in advance that we should adhere to a preferred glossary. Often, client reviewers of a translation do not distinguish between their rejection of the intended meaning of the source text and its translation. If a reviewer dislikes the way the source text reads, he or she will also dislike its translation. Translators are neither copywriters nor editors. While the client may do with his text whatever he or she pleases, the translator can do only one thing with it: translate it as accurately as possible, based on his best understanding of its intended meaning.

Apex and its translators also employ memory-based translation aids such as Trados, DejaVu, SDL, Star Transit, WordFast, etc. The use of these systems inherently improves consistency of terminology and style.
In larger projects, involving more than one translator per target language, we use Terminology Coordinators (TC), whose task it is to make sure that the translators apply standardized

terminology appropriately. This is typically done by using one of the translators as a lead translator.

2. Quality Control (QC)

Control methods:

However, we do not rely on Quality Assurance alone. At Apex, there are several post-production checks and controls in place. These are:

100% of our translations go through final proofreading by a qualified linguist, who is not the translator. The proofreader checks for completeness and correctness of the translation, as well as for spelling, punctuation and syntax errors, or unusual style. Errors are either corrected by the proofreader, or the translation is sent back to the translator for repair.

Approximately 30% of our translations are also proofread by a second proofreader.

Approximately 5% of our translations undergo random sample checks by our Chief Linguist. If any errors are found in these samples, the translation is returned to the proofreader.

Error scoring methodology and error limits:

We apply **SAE Recommended Practice J2450** (Translation Quality Metric), which is a consistent and industry-wide recognized method for measuring translation quality.

How the Metric Works:

SAE J2450 has seven error categories. Each one is associated with two scoring levels: Serious and minor.
The following table is summary of the error categories and their error points for the serious and minor scoring levels:

Error Category	Error points	
Cat. 1: Wrong term	serious 5 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 2: Syntax error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 3: Omission error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 4: Grammar error	serious 4 points	minor 2 points
Cat. 5: Spelling error	serious 3 points	minor 1 point
Cat. 6: Punctuation error	serious 2 points	minor 1 point
Cat. 7: Miscellaneous error	serious 3 points	minor 1 point

The assignment of minor and major error points to the various error categories allows an accurate assessment of an Overall Document Weighted Score (ODWS) which is a quantitative assessment of a translation's overall quality.

The following equation applies:

ODWS = total number of error points divided by the number of words in the document(s)

For example:

If a 500-word document as received from the translator contains

1 syntax error (serious),
2 punctuation error (minor)
1 wrong term (serious)

The total number of errors are 4 - 2 serious ones and 2 minor ones, resulting in a total of 11 error points in accordance to the values in the table above.

This equates to an Overall Document Weighted Score of:

11 [error points] divided by 500 [words in the document] = 0.022.

This score would not be acceptable.

Apex applies the following limits to their quality procedures:

Error score:	Action:
0.02	Three occurrences of exceeding this limit will lead to the exclusion of an approved translator from our approved translator list.
	If a translation is received from a translator that has – after a cursory evaluation by the proofreader – errors that result in an ODWS score of 0.02 or higher, the translation will be sent back to the translator for correction and re-submission before any additional proofreading is done on this translation. This data is entered in our database.
	We guarantee that none of our translations provided to our clients will ever exceed this ODWS value. While we consider an ODWS score of 0.02 realistic due to the fact that language production is not precision engineering and must heavily rely on human work, focus, and attention, we consistently score significantly lower. Indeed, about 95% of our translations contain zero errors or very few minor ones (see below).
0.002	Maximum permissible ODWS score for a test translation submitted by a new, unapproved translator.
zero to 0.002	ODWS Score after proofreading has been completed. 95% of the translations we deliver to our clients fall within this range.
zero	Zero errors allowed during a random sample check by our Chief Linguist. If any errors are found in these samples, the translation is returned to the proofreader.

Note: This approach does not apply to documents containing 50 words or less since just one minor error (1 point) would already result in a Document Weighted Score of 0.02.
Repetitions of the same mistake are not counted as additional mistakes.

Appendix 1 illustrates in detail in form of a flow chart the production activities that we employ from order receipt to delivery to the client.

3. Quality Verification (QV)

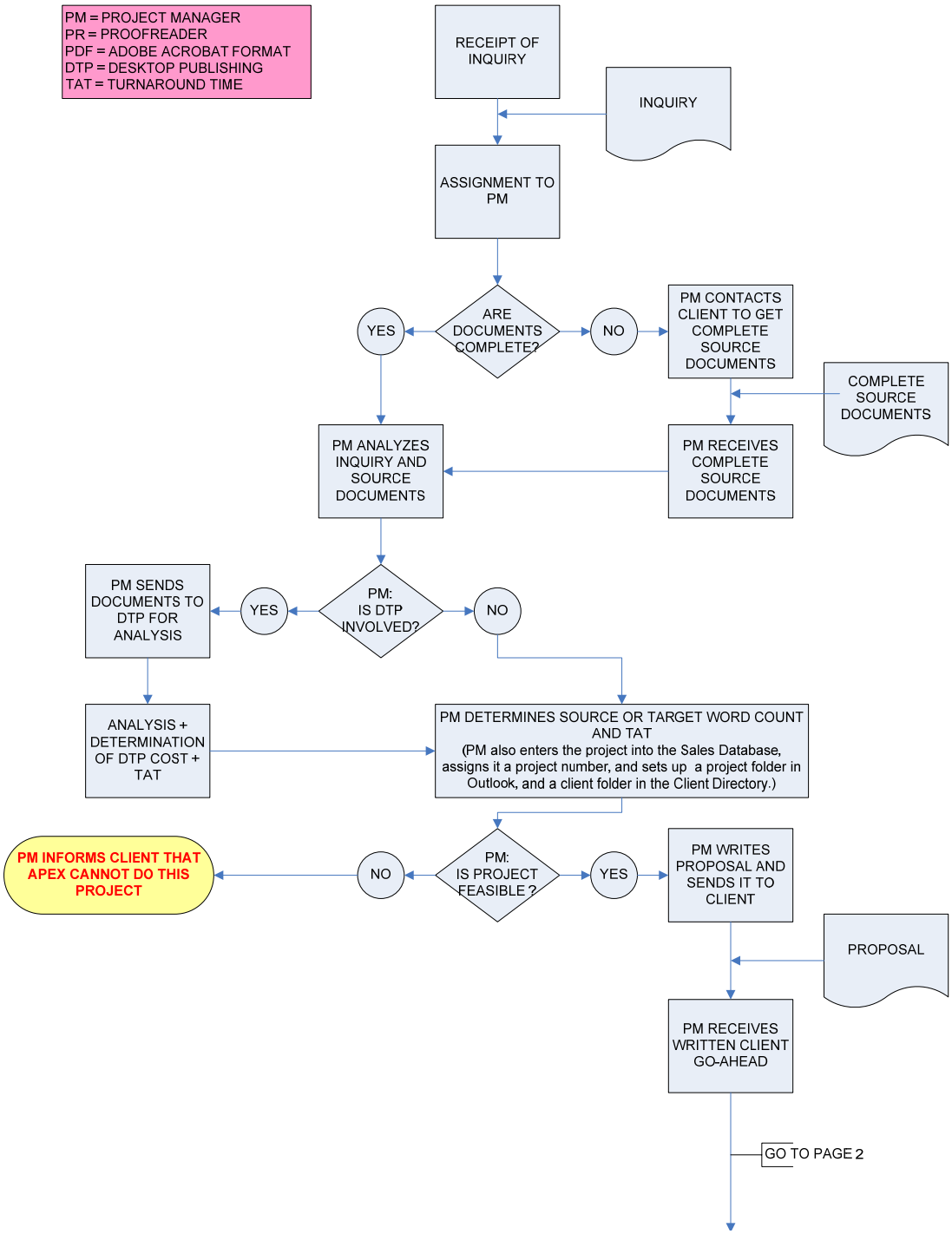
Client Surveys:

Even the best quality practices are only partially effective unless we continuously measure and monitor our quality performance – and, more importantly, react to the results.

Every six months we conduct a client survey in which we ask our clients to rank us in terms of price, quality, delivery, and client interaction on a scale from 1 (best) through 5 (worst). Any feedback and/or client dissatisfaction that may surface in these surveys are vigorously researched (6-Sigma 7-step procedure) and every reasonable effort is made to:

- Understand the root cause of the issue
- Develop an approach to avoid the problem from occurring again in the future (change processes, methods, internal procedures, etc.)
- Discuss with client the issue and jointly develop a resolution for the issue at hand

Appendix 1 – APEX Production Process Flow Chart



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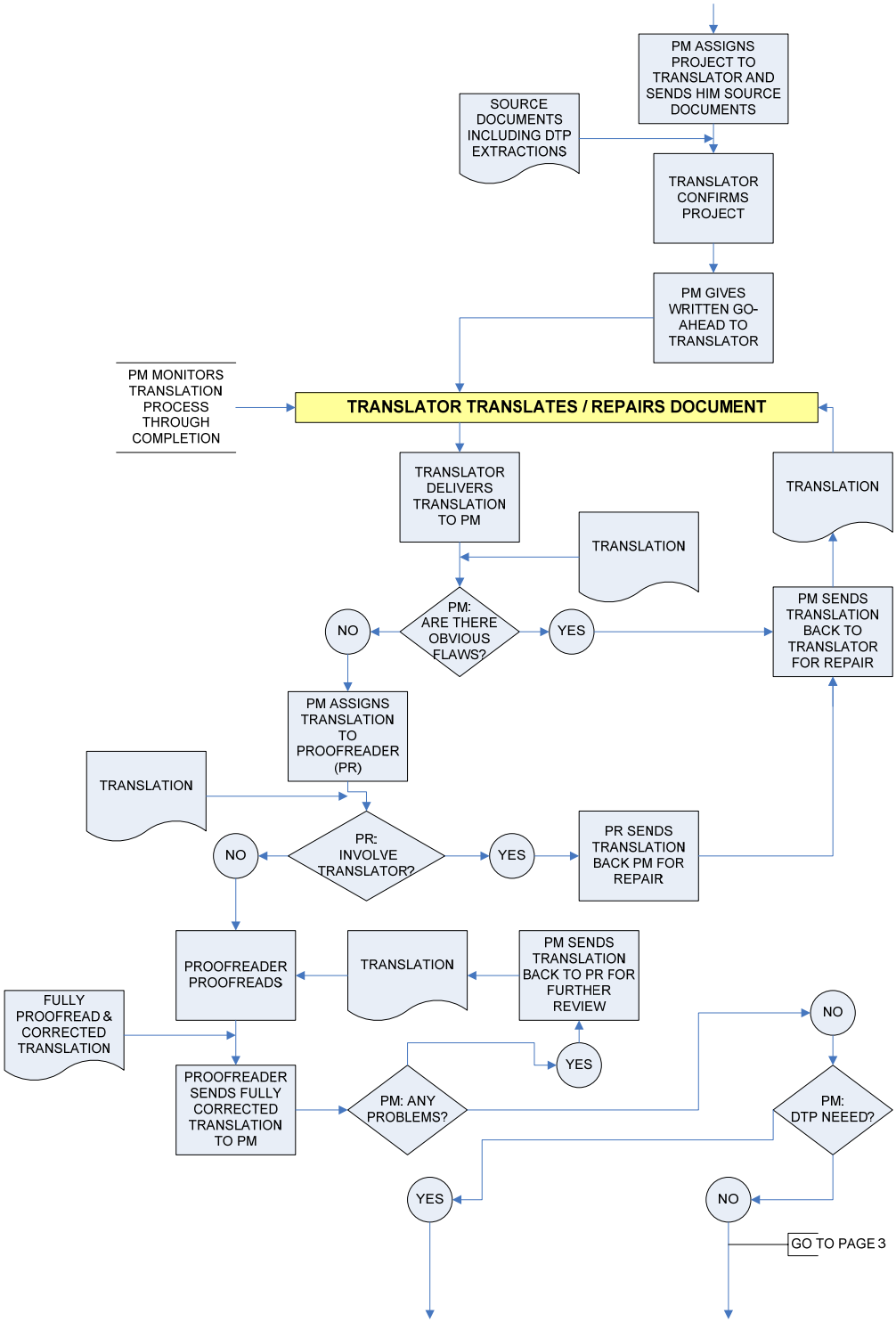
PM ASSIGNS PROJECT TO TRANSLATOR AND SENDS HIM SOURCE DOCUMENTS
SOURCE DOCUMENTS INCLUDING DTP EXTRACTIONS
TRANSLATOR CONFIRMS PROJECT
PM GIVES WRITTEN GO-AHEAD TO TRANSLATOR
PM MONITORS TRANSLATION PROCESS THROUGH COMPLETION
TRANSLATOR TRANSLATES / REPAIRS DOCUMENT
TRANSLATOR DELIVERS TRANSLATION TO PM
TRANSLATION
TRANSLATION
PM: ARE THERE OBVIOUS FLAWS?
NO
YES
PM SENDS TRANSLATION BACK TO TRANSLATOR FOR REPAIR
PM ASSIGNS TRANSLATION TO PROOFREADER (PR)
TRANSLATION
PR: INVOLVE TRANSLATOR?
NO
YES
PR SENDS TRANSLATION BACK PM FOR REPAIR
PROOFREADER PROOFREADS
TRANSLATION
PM SENDS TRANSLATION BACK TO PR FOR FURTHER REVIEW
FULLY PROOFREAD & CORRECTED TRANSLATION
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PM: DTP NEEED?
YES
NO
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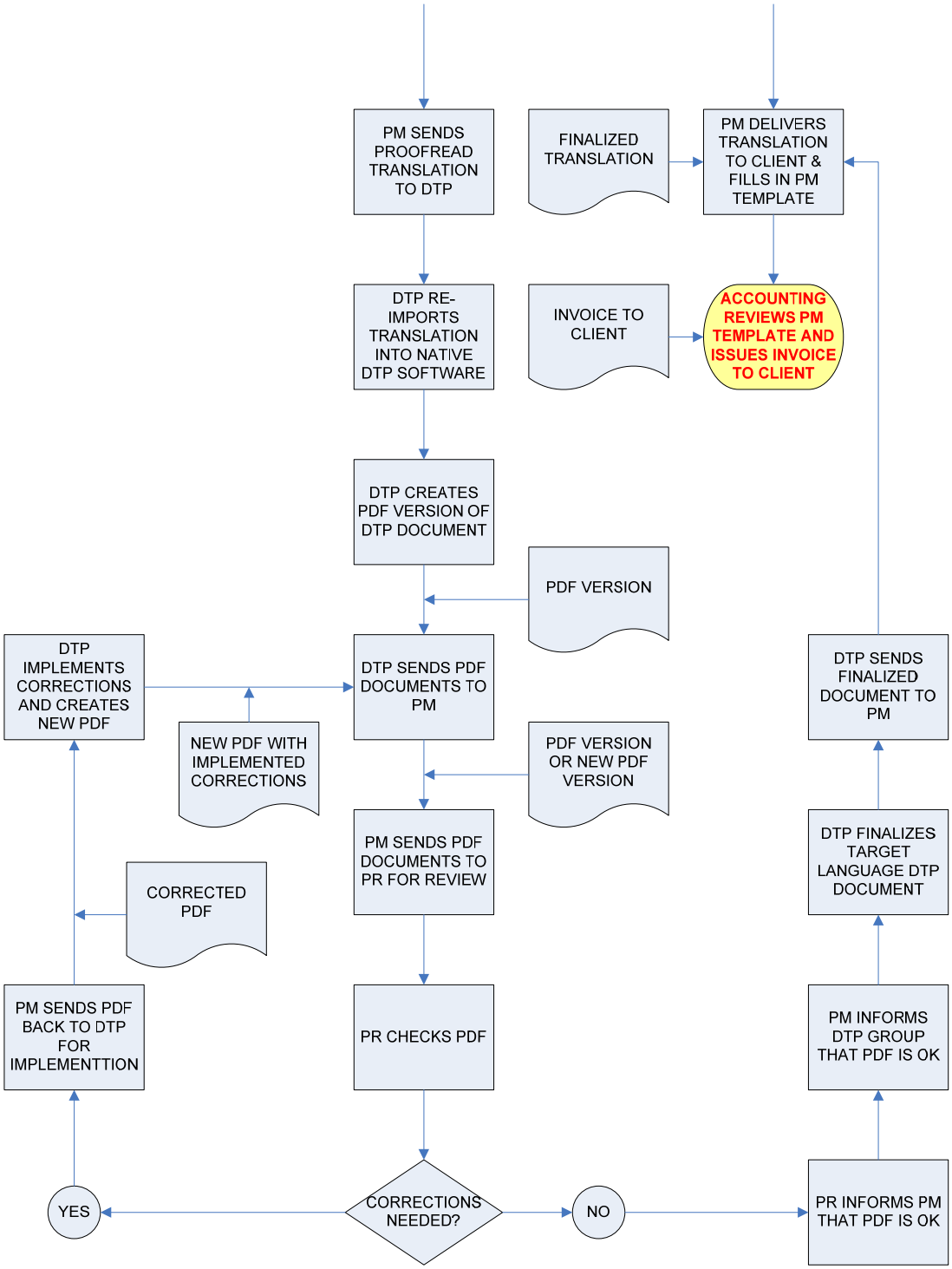

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