CAPITA

A centralised approach to localisation

What are the benefits and how to implement a future-proof strategy

Capita Translation and Interpreting - WHITE PAPER

Contents

Executive summary

Localisation is often a forgotten function within an organisation, is left until the last minute and then panic ensues, or most worryingly it falls off the radar and holds no importance. It's not unusual for procurement teams to be unaware or uninvolved in the buying of language services or the costs for localisation can be hidden in other fields such as marketing or training.

As businesses look at opportunities in new markets and increase their global operation, the demand for localisation increases, whether it be for consistent internal communication, targeting customers in their local language or legislative compliance. Once a business has made the decision to translate and localise content, the next question they face is how best to go about it.

Many businesses with bilingual employees choose to carry out their translations in-house, to keep costs down and prevent too much time or effort being 'wasted'. When it comes to adapting content for other markets, the question we must ask ourselves, is this something we should subject to cost cut-backs? Whilst it may seem like a no-brainer to use existing linguistic resources, there are other aspects to consider – for example, will these employees have other workloads and priorities that mean this approach isn't appropriate for the long-term?

Some may choose to go a step further and implement an in-house language team to solely carry out translations; however, this in turn brings more challenges around management and the cost of putting in place the relevant programs and technologies.

At the other end of the spectrum some large, global companies adopt, often unwittingly, a fragmented approach to localisation through the use of multiple external translation partners, or Language Service Providers, often due to each department, country or stakeholder just doing their own thing – and this often starts with a quick online search for a translation agency.

As more content is created and inevitably requires translation, the more likely it is that businesses will be required to provide a transparent, efficient process for their translation requirements, or put simply; a centralised approach to localisation.

How do you weigh up the options though before you commit, and how can you be sure that centralisation is the right option for you?

Options - The good, the bad and the downright messy

There are 4 main choices when it comes to localisation: using existing employees, employing an in-house team, using multiple vendors or working with a single supplier. The latter 2 involve outsourcing your translation work to external agencies, or Language Services Providers (LSPs). Here's a brief description of each method and an example of why you might, or might not, opt for each solution.

Using existing employees

What does it involve?

You keep some or all of your translation work in-house, using existing staff who speak the language.

Why choose this approach?

Some choose this option when just starting out on their localisation journey to test the waters in terms of target markets, which content to translate and how best to make use of their in-house resources.

Are there any downsides?

It's a good starting point, but not recommended for a long-term localisation strategy, as employees speaking the language won't have the necessary translation experience, knowledge or tools to carry out professional translation work.

Employing an in-house translation team

What does it involve?

You use an in-house language team, made up of linguist and translators.

Why choose this approach?

It's a more robust option than using existing employees who are in another role, as the team is solely dedicated to dealing with translation requirements, and are appropriately qualified.

Are there any downsides?

It brings high implementation costs and questions around team management. As translation requirements increase, so must the size of the team.

Using multiple vendors

⎡ What does it involve?

You outsource translation projects to more than one LSP.

⎢ Why choose this approach?

Some choose this option to manage different specifications such as language pairs or documents types. In other instances, some companies use multiple vendors unknowingly, due to lack of communication across internal departments, which can lead to a fragmented localisation approach.

⎣ Are there any downsides?

It's not a recommended strategy if clear, transparent costing and efficient workflows are important to your business. Speaking to so many contacts can lead to confusion and complications, and issues over translation consistency can arise.

Working with a single supplier

⎡ What does it involve?

You outsource translation projects to one sole LSP.

⎢ Why choose this approach?

Once you've developed a strategy and have a better idea of your translation and localisation needs, it's best to work with professionals who have a pool of dedicated linguists with industry specific knowledge. It's more professional than using in-house teams, and a lot less messy than using multiple vendors.

⎣ Are there any downsides?

It can be more costly than an in-house approach and if you're already using multiple vendors, it will require time to streamline the process and move all translations over to a single vendor.

Let's explore this last option in more detail though...

The benefits of centralising the localisation process

Now we've looked at the various options around the localisation process, what are the benefits to a centralised approach?

1. Reduced costs

Adopting a centralised approach to your localisation strategy will give you clearer transparency on pricing and adherence to set budgets, as many LSPs will set agreed (and preferential) rates with you when signing an agreed contract.

Will using an LSP be more expensive than in-house?

Increased costs are expected when using a professional translation company but if localisation forms a large part of your international sales strategy, it should be viewed as an asset, not a cost. Moreover, if your business has a steady demand for translation, economies of scale can be achieved.

Even if you're at the beginning of your localisation journey and using in-house linguists, the overall process of translation should be reviewed. No matter whether it's your 1st translation project or 101st, your company data should be kept secure, and obtaining the appropriate systems and technology for in-house linguists can be costly, not to mention the implementation of servers, licenses, training and maintenance of such software. Large LSPs have certified datacentres and security procedures already in place for handling your data for no extra cost.

If you're using existing employees who have language skills, there are also questions surrounding the payment – should employees be cross-charged for their time internally or do you ask them to do it as a favour, in addition to their day-to-day role? If translations are done free of charge, incentive needs to be provided in other forms for the individual to complete the project.

If you choose to set up a new translation team based in-house, the cost of managing and maintaining their workload needs to be considered, especially if there is a lack of knowledge of the localisation process within your company. How will you know the expected turnaround time of a translation? Will you have a steady stream of work to be translated to keep the team busy? How will you manage holiday cover for linguists?

What price do you pay when translation goes wrong?

Saving money and keeping costs down is top of the priority list for a lot of companies, but if you don't invest properly in your localisation and opt for the cheapest option available, you need to consider the cost when these translations go wrong. First of all, there's the initial cost: re-printing incorrect documents, having projects re-translated, and paying staff to work around the clock to rectify the issue. However, there's also the longer term cost: the cost to your brand, how your customers perceive you; poor sales due to lack of customer engagement or a reputation for not knowing your market. A mis-translation could cause large setbacks when trying to launch new products or campaigns in other languages, and can, in due course, also have an impact on sales. Just because someone speaks a language, doesn't mean they are best placed to provide a professional translation. It could well be a false economy for you.

Where is my money being spent?

Using in-house linguists means you'll likely just pay for their time. When you outsource, you'll receive add-on services such as 3rd party feedback from in-country linguists; quality checks; project management; proofreading and post-editing by a second linguist.

With outsourcing, you'll also have access to technology, such as translation memory (TM), which can help reduce long-term costs by storing strings of previously translated text and using them in future projects.

Is using a single supplier cheaper than using multiple ones?

Some may choose a multi-vendor approach in the hope that they can 'shop around' and obtain the best price for a certain piece of translation work. Not only does this raise consistency issues, which we'll address further on, but dealing with multiple vendors also means multiple invoices and different billing and payment procedures. Adopting a multi-vendor approach makes it more difficult to monitor and report on your spending, whereas using one central supplier gives you the option to obtain management information reporting, detailing key metrics such as spend by language, TM savings, who is requesting the most work and, of course, performance against agreed SLAs.

The popular American "Got Milk?" campaign was mistranslated in Mexico as "Are you lactating?"

2. Adaptability, scalability and flexibility

By centralising your localisation process you'll gain immediate access to an increased amount of languages, products and services.

Adaptability - Access to languages

Thanks to a dedicated pool of linguists, outsourcing will also give you access to more translation languages and options, including rare languages and sign language for example. This could be a deal-breaker further down the line: as your company grows, it's likely you'll want to target other markets, areas and consumers. Also, once you've started out on your localisation journey, you might want to look into other services, such as adapting videos for the deaf and hard-of-hearing or transcribing your interviews. It's easier to adapt to these changes with a global LSP as they'll have the resources and linguists to manage an increase in capacity.

What if I need to change requirements during the translation process?

Automation and agile localisation streamlines the process and focuses on frequent delivery, continuous changes and close internal team collaboration. Using an agile methodology also allows for a change in your requirements and adaptability to different circumstances during the translation process. However, this can be more difficult when dealing with several LSPs as some may be more accommodating to certain requests than others – one LSP may be able to adapt and change to suit your requests whilst another might not be so flexible, meaning that you could end up with a chaotic and disorganised delivery of final projects.

Scalability - More than a straightforward translation

At some point, it's likely that you'll require something more than just a standard translation project. LSPs offer additional services to help you deliver marketing material, videos, blog posts and podcasts to your target market in a way that sounds as if it was made especially for them.

Transcreation – This service adapts and creates material for a given target audience instead of merely translating it, including copywriting, font changes and image selection.

Desktop Publishing (DTP) – Also known as multilingual typesetting, this service manages any changes to the format and layout of a document to allow for text expansion, line-wrapping, alphabets and characters for other languages.

Audiovisual – With more content now being created in multimedia formats, there is a growing need for services such as voiceovers and subtitling to localise content such as videos, software and gaming.

Flexibility – 24/7 support

Most global LSPs will have dedicated Account Managers and Project Managers to deliver translation projects around the clock, as and when the need arises, to cover worldwide time zones. It would be difficult, and not to mention costly, to achieve this level of flexibility with an in-house team of linguists. If you're using multiple vendors, each vendor may have different timescales and target SLAs, which might mean your translation projects aren't all delivered within the same time frame.

3. Enhanced quality and standards

Your translated content could be the difference between an engaged, potential customer, and a disgruntled individual, put off by your poorly translated material, and unlikely to engage with your brand again. In order for your business to be seen as credible in overseas markets, your translations need to be good quality.

How do you know translations are good quality?

Reduction of error

With so many steps involved in a translation project, there is opportunity for error and when using a decentralised approach, it's possible that these errors won't be highlighted until it's too late and your customers are the ones pointing it out to you. With a centralised approach, quality assurance steps are implemented throughout each stage of the process and each translation piece is quality passed and proofread by another linguist.

Quality scores and customer feedback tools are also implemented by LSPs pre-delivery of the project, to ensure translations are carried out to each customers' unique specifications.

Quality standards

Many global localisation companies are accredited in various international certifications, such as ISO, to help benchmark quality and define standards. In order to achieve these accreditations, businesses must undergo an external audit and submit documentation as proof of their stringent quality processes.

Professional linguists

Using a centralised localisation service will also give you access to linguists who don't just speak the language, but who have a Masters Degree in Translation, years of translation experience and relevant industry experience with strong knowledge of industry-specific language, vocabulary and systems. The majority of an LSP's linguists are based in-country, meaning they are immersed in the local language every day and are aware of cultural differences and sensitivities.

4. Heightened security

With security breaches and confidential data leakage making the headlines almost every week, no matter what industry you're in, businesses need to strive to ensure data security and protection of their confidential information. The localisation industry is lagging behind in this regard – do you know where your precious files are going when they are being emailed around the globe?

Where is my data going?

A key benefit of using a singular, professional LSP is protection of your data and Intellectual Property. When using in-house linguists, it's likely that the translation will be completed on their company or personal laptop, on an unprotected server, and could be sent via unencrypted email - meaning your confidential data could be seen by anyone.

With LSPs, the supply chain is longer, with more touch points and more individuals involved – files even end up on a linguist's local machine and then the control is gone. However, a professional LSP will ensure stringent steps are taken throughout the translation process to guarantee data security. With mature LSPs, translations are also managed on secure platforms using certified datacentres, requiring linguists to log onto cloud-hosted platforms, rather than storing the files on their own computer.

Professional linguists should also be regularly vetted by the LSP's Vendor Management team, ensuring not only their language skills and qualifications are appropriate, but also that security and privacy requirements are continuously met.

The localisation industry still has a lot of progress to make in this field, and whilst a few well-established, mature LSPs have implemented strict procedures, not all have stringent data policies, so if you use multiple vendors, your data may not be dealt with and protected in the same, consistent manner and you could risk your data being leaked.

5. Time saving

Adopting a centralised approach to your localisation process allows for deadlines to be met effectively and efficiently. Using existing employees means that translation work could get completed hastily in the individual's spare time, or is postponed behind higher-priority tasks. Similarly, setting up a new in-house translation team will take time and effort, not just to recruit the linguists, but also in training and management.

With a single LSP, there is less internal management involved, with the LSP handling the project from start to finish, saving you time to concentrate on your business' core offering. However, managing multiple language partners requires processes and administrative effort to coordinate projects and you could end up spending more time speaking to the various LSPs than you expected.

Automation and agile methodology act as time-saving tools too, changing to fit your requirements throughout the process and ensuring deadlines are still met on time, despite changes to the original brief. Technology such as Machine Translation and connectors that link your Content Management System (CMS) to a LSP's Translation Management System (TMS) streamline and speed up the process, removing the aspect of manual extraction of data.

6. Consistency

With one organisation handling all localisation work, you will benefit from a more consistent workflow, due to well-established processes and team collaboration. Using multiple vendors would mean staggered deliveries, with final translations being sent whenever the separate LSPs have finished the project. However, with using a single LSP, you'll get smooth, consistent delivery of all your projects from your project management team.

## How can consistency be ensured with so many people involved?

Outsourcing your project management efforts means that your Project Manager will gather everything together and check consistency across languages before returning the files to you.

Using in-house staff for translation leads to inconsistent outcomes; whilst these employees may be native or fluent speakers of the languages, they are not often familiar with the professional translation process. On the other hand, if you create an in-house team, these individuals may be professional translators, but they won't be familiar with your brand. Moreover, if you have separate linguists for French, Spanish and German – how will you ensure these finished translations are consistent across different language pairs?

Professional Language Service Providers work with their customers to produce tools such as style guides and glossaries, so that translations into other languages remain consistent with the brand's identity and guidelines, which has significant importance when translating marketing and advertising material for example. Translation memories will also improve and maintain consistency as repetitions and previously translated strings of text are stored for use in future projects.

Can consistency be ensured across multiple LSPs?

When using multiple LSPs, you won't have the benefit of shared assets and best practices. Whilst you may be able to submit one central glossary, summary and best practice document, each LSP could interpret these differently, or even make suggestions, turning your single, central guidance document into several different, inconsistent versions.
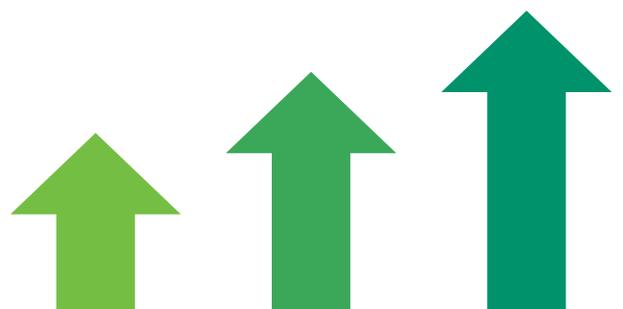
7. Improved communication

Using a mutli-vendor approach means there will be multiple people, processes and prices to coordinate, and confusion tends to arises in these situations. When dealing with one single language vendor, communication is a lot clearer. You'll have one dedicated point of contact who will handle all your translation requirements, all languages and documents types, reducing the administration and hassle on your side.

Additionally, the more you communicate and collaborate with a single LSP, the more they'll understand your requirements, preferences, style, tone of voice and brand identity, leading to high-quality, consistent translations.

Conclusion

In order to have a truly successful localisation process, you'd want to reap all of the 7 benefits listed above, and a centralised approach is the most likely to deliver all 7.

If you're considering that using in-house linguists will be low-cost and time-saving, you need to consider, will the finished project be of a consistent, high quality? Will your data be protected? Can your in-house linguists adapt to last minute changes in requirements, whilst still carrying out daily responsibilities? What's the cost of creating an in-house translation team and how will they be managed? For those using multiple agencies, can you guarantee ease of communication, consistency in translations and transparent pricing? Will all of your agencies respond in the same time-frame, or adhere to the same guidelines with data protection? It's likely that the answer is "no" and the only way of ensuring the most efficient and cost-effective approach is embarking on a partnership with one, single, mature, knowledgeable LSP, with access to linguists, technology and structured processes.

Whilst the cost of using a professional translation service is a concern for many, the long-term financial impact and gains will prove to be an advantage, not only to your business and internal stakeholders, but also to your customers. Studies have shown that 87% of those who don't speak English don't buy products or services from English language websites. Localisation can also help not just to acquire new customers, but to nurture existing ones, as 74% of people are more likely to repeat purchase if the after sales care is in their language.

Localisation isn't just a one-off or singular occurrence; it's an intrinsic part of a global strategy. As your business grows and creates new products, content and services, the more you'll rely on localisation to reach your customers.

So you've decided to localise? Follow these steps to ensure a fully structured strategy for your translation content...

Implementing a future-proof plan

1. Establish your strategy

Which languages are most important for your business? What content would you look at getting localised first? Make sure you understand and analyse your market before making these decisions – with localisation, one size doesn't fit all. If your website is your largest lead generation tool, you run a blog, regularly update your webpages, and you've worked hard to optimise your site for search engines, then website localisation and multilingual SEO would allow you to be easily found by international prospects.

In recent years there has been a shift in language services from single-project focused to a more inclusive and comprehensive approach. LSPs will work in partnership with you to ensure a smooth end-to-end process for all of your localisation requirements.

2. Convince Senior Management

In order to reach a fully sound localisation strategy, it's essential to get support and funding from Senior Managers. It may be difficult to get them on board initially, when the 'get things done' mentality often prevails and budgets are becoming tighter, but the longer-term strategy needs to be at the forefront of business decisions.

3. Choose the right level

You may want to consider a tiered approach for your localisation requirements – it's possible that you only need gist translations for online reviews, or perhaps you want to adopt a creative approach for translating marketing material, where text isn't just translated but re-created for your target audiences. Assessing which level is right for your business and the project in hand will avoid wasted costs and help to deliver exactly what you're looking for, at the right price.

4. Make use of available tools

Your Marketing department will probably have put in a lot of work and effort into developing your company brand, identity and tone of voice, so you'd want to make sure that it is adhered to in any language. Style guides are a tool that allow LSPs and translators to maintain the tone and style of your company documents, allowing you to take your brand global.

Look at maintaining your Translation Glossary – a list of terms and phrases with the corresponding translation. These are especially useful for documents with regular repetition, such as legal contracts and technical manuals.
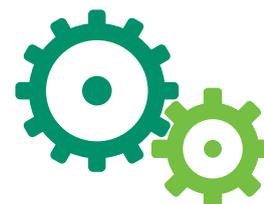
5. Streamline the process within your company

Once you've started localising, you may find translation requests left, right and centre – legal, marketing, sales, so it's important to have a single point of contact within your business. Even if it's not a localisation specialist, it'll make the whole process much easier, allow you to consolidate requests from various stakeholders and prevent silos building up across other departments. Why not even outsource that single point of contact, to a single language service provider?

6. Set KPIs, metrics and SLAs

If you want to be able to determine quality and consistency of translations, whether deadlines are being met, and generally monitor how well translations are being carried out, you'll need to determine some targets. SLAs will help LSPs to build processes and procedures in-house so that they are able to turn your projects around within the set time frame. Professional LSPs will produce regular reports for you with regards to translation quality and cost savings, so work with them to establish what you want reporting on and when.

7. Choose a trusted localisation partner

If you're looking for a partner to help your long-term strategy, who will help maintain and improve quality and consistency across your translations, whilst also bringing costs savings with translation technologies, then using a single LSP is the preferred choice.

Notes

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