Preparing content for all customer facing translations (website content, marketing brochures, packaging etc.) and legal/immigration translations.

As the translation buyer to ensure you get a quality translation, your main focus is to prepare your content to the best possible state for the translation process. You can download a simple translation readiness worksheet here {link to download worksheet} or work through the list below.

For all kinds of translation.

1. Run an automated spelling and grammar checker (such as in Word). Make sure the language is set for the right dialect so you get the correct spellings (e.g. colour vs color) and this is applied consistently.
2. Identify terms NOT to translate like brand names, product names or personal names as well as industry specific jargon or acronyms (e.g. “UN” for United Nations”). Give the translator a list of these terms.
3. Prices and currencies. When providing content for translation, ensure the pricing currency is always specified, as it can be confusing for the end reader if the translation is in their language, but the currency is not defined.
4. Dates. You should always specify the dating system used (in NZ that would be Gregorian) and the order of any numerical dates (e.g. DD/MM/YY), and whether you would like that changed to match the translation language standard format (e.g. the USA typically uses MM/DD/YY).

Preparation specific to Customer Facing translations (including packaging and labelling, marketing materials, websites etc.)

1. Has this or similar content been translated for you previously? If so then provide the translator with the previous original and translation so they can look to maintaining consistency across your translated content.
2. Define your audience. Give your translator as much information about who you expect will be reading the translation. Demographics such as age, gender etc. can affect how the translator phrases things as well as vocabulary used.
3. Hand the content off to someone other than the author for proofreading. This is not just to check for spelling, typographical and grammar issues, but sometimes authors know their subject so intimately that what makes perfect sense to them can be unclear for someone who is not as familiar with that industry or subject matter.
4. File formats. Wherever possible, the translator should work directly in the original file format (e.g. Adobe InDesign for a brochure). It is not recommended that translations are done in e.g. Word for a DTP operator to then “cut and paste” into another format; the risk of errors creeping in are great, and certain languages have specific rules around word and line wraps. Check that your translator can work directly in the original file format.

5. Space restrictions. Often with things like forms there are a limited number of character spaces available. If the translator is working in the source format then this should not be an issue, but if the translation is going from an e.g. excel spreadsheet to a web form, then the translator needs to know the maximum number of characters allowed (including spaces).

6. Use of CAT (translation management software). For any content that is likely to be updated in the future CAT is recommended. CAT allows the translator to maintain a memory of the translation, so that future updates/changes can be applied rapidly and consistency of translated terminology can be maintained across versions.

For Legal and Immigration related translations

1. Consult with your lawyer or immigration advisor first as to what needs to be translated. In NZ, unless they are also a lawyer or licenced immigration advisor, translators should not be giving any advice as to what is or is not required.

2. Certified Copy for Translation. If you have been requested to supply a Certified Copy of your original by the agency you are submitting to, you need to supply that Certified Copy to the translator (as legally that must be the document that the translator translates). You can get a Certified Copy by taking your original document to a Justice of the Peace (JP) or a lawyer.

3. Translating personal names. Often when working between a non-Roman script (such as Thai, Arabic or Cyrillic) and English there are multiple ways to spell a name. Where you have multiple documents (such as a passport, a driver's licence, a Diploma etc.) that have variations in the English spelling of your name, you may need to get these variations verified.

4. Translating different dating systems. Many countries operate different dating systems, and the start/finish dates of a year do not always match our Gregorian system. So while in New Zealand it may be 2018 CE, in most Islamic countries using the Hijiri system it will be 1439 or 1440 AH, in Thailand using the Buddhist calendar it will be 2561 BE, while in Taiwan it will be ROC 107. If the translation is to be used in NZ ensure that both the original date and the matching Gregorian date are included in the translation.

5. Translator's Affirmation. For translations for legal purposes (e.g. to be presented in the Courts) the translator will also need to supply an Affirmation. This is a legal statement, sworn in front of a lawyer or JP, that the translation has been translated by a professional and that the translation is accurate. Check with your translator first that they are able to provide this affirmation and have your lawyer draw up the affirmation.

Notes on uses of CAT

Translation management software (what we call CAT tools) has come ahead leaps and bounds since we have first started in 2002, and is an integral part of everything we do.

It is important to note that CAT does not mean software driven translation; real people translators still do the actual translation, but CAT allows us to manage the process, enforce consistency, recycle/re-use translations where appropriate and update existing translations rapidly when your master content is updated.

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