

How to get good translations

...that show your business in a
professional light



Accutranslate

any language, anywhere

How to get a good translation

Buying translations can be frustrating, especially if you're new to it. How do you ensure that you get the best possible translation, and how much should you be involved?

Here is Accutranslate's guide to help you in getting the best translation for your project.

1. Write a brief for your agency

This should explain your business, the product/ service the translator will be working on and the target market. Key points are:

- The countries you are targeting – a Spanish translation for the Argentinean market will be different to one for mainland Spain
- The target audience – software materials for specialist computer programmers will differ in tone and vocabulary to those for individuals using personal computers
- The nature of the text – highly technical texts need technical translators, literary texts require literary specialists

Your agency may request a meeting, especially if this is the first time you have worked together. This usually helps both parties to clarify the requirements of the brief and what is needed on both sides to make the project a success.

2. Allow time for the translation

Your agency will do the best job in the time available, but short lead times make it more difficult to book the best translators.

Give your translation agency the best possible chance of doing a high-quality translation by allowing them the time that your documents deserve.

3. You get what you pay for!

In every business this is the case. The best translators know their worth, and those with specific expertise in your market may be rare.

You will have taken care and time to create your materials in English – the same should apply to your translations. If not, the impression you leave with overseas customers and suppliers may be that you do not bother about quality or are taking them for granted.

4. Your translator should be a native speaker, translating *into their own language*

It's never wise to rely on someone who is not a native speaker, however long they have lived in a country and even if they have studied the language.

A native speaker can capture subtleties and convey them in their own language. A non-native speaker will always sound just a bit “wrong” – which is not the tone your business wants to have in documents. In the worst cases, a translation which hits wrong notes can be laughable. Don't go there!

5. Your translator should be a native speaker *with translation skills*

Even a native speaker of the target language does not necessarily make a good translator – translating requires a very specific skillset. To match the tone and style of your English document needs experience and practise.

Many businesses have asked a distributor or customer in their overseas markets to translate for them – it's a false economy, and also distracts them from their main role in your business. By all means show them the translation before publishing, but give the actual translation work to a proper professional!

6. In-country translators are best

Your translation agency should have good connections to translators in the target country, backed up with UK-based checkers. This way you get current, accurate translation.

7. Let your translation agency manage all aspects of the work for you

Finding and managing translators is a large task, and not one that most businesses can handle. Your translation agency on the other hand should be able to source the personnel needed, manage your project and undertake quality control of the translation work, minimising the hassle for you.

8. Questions are good

Don't worry if the translation agency or translator has questions for you. They need to fully understand the meaning of the original text– if they don't understand clearly, neither will the reader.

9. Do not use machine translations – at all – for outgoing work

Automated translation systems can be handy for quick translation of incoming emails, but you should never rely on automated translation for your outgoing letters, manuals or marketing materials.

It's better to give your translator/ agency the original text rather than ask them to “tidy up” a machine translated text. The process of unpicking the faults inserted by the automated translation is frustrating and time-consuming. You are likely to get a worse translation with little saving on cost.

10. Develop a good working relationship with your translation agency

The better your agency understands your business, the more effectively they can convey your business and products in their translations.

Pick well and keep with one agency, if possible.

11. Pre-publication checks by you

Your agency should offer you the chance to read the translation before final completion.

A good translation agency will explain their process before starting your work, including the length of time each stage of the process will take.

12. Pre-publication checks by the agency

Proof-reading is vital to getting the finished translation absolutely right. This should be done in the UK, just in case the native translator has not completely understood a nuance of English used in the UK.

Your agency will check the grammar, punctuation and accents before declaring the translation complete.

13. Most importantly - Client input

To get the best results, get involved in the process, ask questions, provide prompt answers to questions the translator asks you, and run the pre-publication translation past a trusted native speaker.

Key takeaways

1. Write a brief
2. Plan ahead - allow sufficient time
3. You get what you pay for
4. Use a native speaker
5. Use a native speaker who is a translator
6. Use an in-country translator
7. Let your translation agency manage the process
8. Help the translator by clarifying points that are unclear
9. Do not use machine translations
10. Develop a good relationship with your agency
11. You check before publishing
12. Your agency checks before publishing
13. Ask questions/ be involved

About Accutranslate:

Founded in 2003, based in Cheadle, Cheshire and serving clients across the UK. A team of great translators, based on their home country and a local UK translation team to proof and check all work.

Any questions about translation? Contact us here:

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