

The Translation Challenge: Tipping the Scale in Your Favor

Maximizing Quality, Price and Turnaround

CyraCom translates over 7 million words annually for a variety of clients in healthcare. CyraCom has worked with numerous types of healthcare organizations and the information in this white paper is based on experience with clients over an extended period of time.

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If you could save yourself time, money and effort, would you?

Investing a few minutes in reading this white paper may save you all three. Whether you are a newcomer or veteran to translation projects, a little insight from inside the translation industry can provide support and direction to your organization.

Every buyer of translation wants to achieve the best quality with the lowest possible price and the fastest turnaround. If you weigh these factors as expense versus gain, you might come up with a picture similar to the image below, where quality is important and price and turnaround remain very favorable.

Price &
Turnaround

Quality

If you consider the maxim “you get what you pay for,” this seems like an impossible proposition. However, with application of the appropriate knowhow, tools and some pre-planning, you will be able to support the left side of this favorably-tipped scale and keep your translation costs and turnaround time manageable while obtaining high quality. This whitepaper will give you the information to get started. First, let us consider what shapes and defines each of the items on this scale.

Defining Quality

Many people view translation as a largely technical task that follows a more intensive effort of writing the original content. If a translation is grammatically correct, without spelling errors and does not mislead the reader, it is generally considered good. In the larger view, this is really only the middle of the quality spectrum. Imagine a case where you need only the gist of what is being said, say on a web search. Raw machine translation may suffice. Or, imagine a scenario when you have a subtle marketing campaign with nuanced catch-phrases and wordplay. Here, you would need translations that target something more specific than language. You need translations that speak the cultural dialect of the reader. Other factors may come into play as well. What about the education level or the age of your target reader? If you think beyond grammar, spelling and terminology, translation quality has much to do with the intended use of the content. More subtle translation tasks may require steps different from the standard translation process including: cultural adaptation, subject-matter review or even transcreation, where the original content is completely rewritten in target language, as might be the case with an ad campaign.

Once the intended use and the level of desired translation quality are determined, parameters can be set to achieve the desired result by spending only the right amount of time and effort. Here is where your choice of a translation supplier factors into the expense versus gain equation; the services you elect must deliver. If the content, intended use, timeframe and budget suggest that a standard translation with an edit pass is sufficient, a supplier with junior-level translators and no access to term management, Translation Memory and Quality Assurance (QA) technologies may not provide the best results. The true cost of translation goes beyond your supplier spend – it extends into whatever effort you put into reviewing and correcting work on your side as well as cost due to added burden on your customer support team and even your customers themselves.

Price

Price is determined in two primary ways for any translation project:

- **Requested Target Language** – All languages have various market prices due to the demand for that language and the cost of living for translators in that country. For example, Norwegian is a low-demand language with higher than average cost of living; both factors contribute to higher per-word pricing. In contrast, Spanish is a high demand language with average or below average cost of living, so per-word pricing is lower.
- **Volume** – Translation is charged per-word because Translation Memory technology allows suppliers to recycle your past translations. The amount of recycling and left-over from-scratch translation work is calculated in words. The more words, the lower the per-word pricing.

The Relationship between Price and Translation Technology → Translation Memory technology can provide many benefits relating to price. First, when properly utilized, technology enables translators to move through projects faster by translating fewer words—meaning less time is spent translating from scratch. Second, using Translation Memory technology can decrease per-word pricing for content that is similar between documents and can eliminate cost completely of translating identical content. Lastly, terminology management technology with Translation Memory technology allows translators to add new translation which is consistent with the style and specific terminology of your previous translations. This means fewer corrections and faster reviews, which saves money on projects and customer service later on. Overall, professional translators, assisted by technology, provide more reliable quality control, faster turnaround and lower project prices for your organization, all which help to balance the value equation above.

Turnaround Time

The faster a translation is completed and returned to you, the sooner your content will be in the hands of your customers. Several general factors increase turnaround:

Volume of text to be translated

More words = more time

Complexity of content

Highly specialized or highly technical text = more time

Number of languages

Languages can be translated in parallel; however certain desktop publishing and QA tasks are often done in series. More tasks = more time

Number of translation and production resources

Less resources = more time

Complexity of Typesetting and Desktop Publishing

More complex desktop publishing tasks = more time

Review and correction

Less organization = more time

The following can shorten turnaround time and can help keep quality levels high:

Technology → Translation turnaround time balloons when translators must translate every word, have no easy access to your specific terminology for consistent use or have no technical means to verify the integrity of your deliverables. With translation technology, multiple professional translators can access your translation and terminology databases simultaneously, changes can be tracked, and reviews can be managed easily. Also, QA tools can catch and flag problematic file-level issues before they come to you.

Scalable Resource Pool → Ensures that your supplier can assign as many equally qualified translators on your project as needed to get it done when you want it. Be sure to ask if your translation provider can handle influxes of demand—either in volume of word count per project or number of projects submitted simultaneously. Smaller providers may have fewer equally qualified resources to take on large or multiple projects, which can affect your turnaround time.

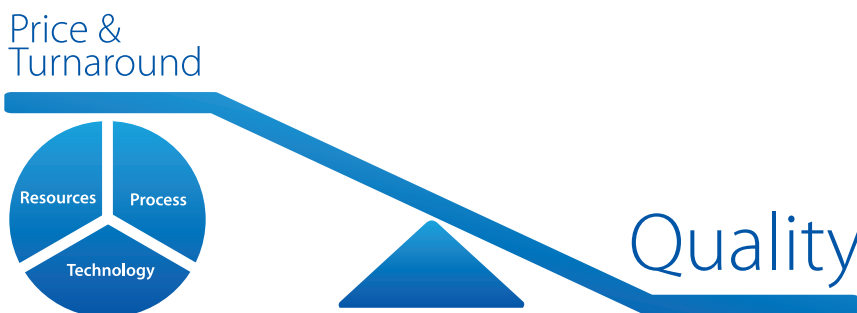
Standardized Production Processes → An effective, standardized process supports a translation agency's ability to consistently and quickly turnaround your documents. Moreover, the keystone of turnaround lies in obtaining repeatable results; good turnaround times must be replicated over time, with consistent prices and quality. The backbone of this process is derived from clear organizational processes. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification tends to be the gold standard, so look for organizations with ISO certifications.

Managed Review Process → Translation providers can also expedite turnaround by coordinating quality assurance processes for you within their workflow or project management systems. If your supplier manages their workflow through an on-line system, reviews can be streamlined by giving your reviewers and the supplier's translators direct access to project files, reference documents and reports in one location which can reduce back-and-forth communication as well as task and query tracking. 3rd-party subject matter experts can be added seamlessly as reviewers if your organization does not have the resources to support all languages.

These four factors—Technology, a Scalable Resource Pool, Standardized Production Processes and a Managed Review Process can work together to decrease your turnaround time, all no additional charge. As a result, we see the value scale tipping in your favor—higher quality and faster turnaround at lower overall cost.

Tips for Getting the Most from a Translation Provider

While getting the most quality for the least cost and time seems like a physical impossibility, the solution is no real trick at all.



Your translation provider should be able to support lighter overall cost and turnaround times with solid application of the right resources, technology and processes as described earlier. In addition, you want to consider asking for the following enhancements to the resource/technology/process mix:

Request Dedicated Account, Project Management and Translation Teams – Resources

Make sure you are assigned an Account Manager and Project Manager dedicated to your organization, with at least the project manager in your time zone. This ensures the smoothest workflow for your employees and provides the greatest accuracy and consistency from project to project. This will also save time when implementing and delivering projects, especially those of larger size. Maintaining the same translation team across projects will ensure that individuals familiar with the needs of your company will translate your materials repeatedly over time.

Maintain a Translation Memory on All Projects – Technology/Process

Work with a provider that maintains best quality Translation Memories (TMs) for each and every project you submit. Different translation providers may translate your projects, and it is possible that a translation provider may not use best practices for quality control and maintenance of TMs. Therefore, set the expectation that content from every project 1) be added to the TM, 2) conform to your current approved glossary and 3) include final review changes in the TM. These parameters will ensure the greatest accuracy on all work and provide the greatest amount of discounts on repeated words and phrases.

Terminology Management and Glossaries – Technology/Process

Glossaries serve a different function than Translation Memories in the translation process. Glossaries developed specifically for your content contain individual key terms or short phrase fragments that are unique to your company. Translators use glossaries to be sure they use your preferred terminology when building newly translated sentences. TMs, on the other hand, contain full sentences and phrases. Translations of complete phrases must be maintained in order to preserve the correct grammatical dependencies between words in many languages. In English we can take the sentence “I see the red ball”, and swap the word “buses” for “ball” without changing anything in the sentence. However, in many languages, it would be necessary to change the translations for both “the” and “red” because of noun gender or number differences between “buses” and “ball”. Using sound Terminology Management practices and up-to-date, well-maintained glossaries will allow translators to find the right words more quickly with fewer queries. Your end-review time will be shortened as well due to increased term consistency.

Maintain Project Information and Assets Centrally Using an Online Portal - Technology

Whether it is your company’s portal or the provider’s portal, it is advisable to store all information in one place so you can access documents on demand. Both you and the provider can see what has already been translated to avoid paying for the same document to be translated twice. Translation Memories and Glossaries can also be stored on an online portal, so you and the provider will always have access to the same information.

Ask About Pricing Discounts – Process/Technology

An experienced translation provider should be happy and willing to provide you with the best solution. When you ask about pricing discounts, a translation provider may try to help you gain volume discounts, possibly by combining multiple small projects together into one or look for new ways to use technology to reduce effort. Ask, “How can we do this in the most cost effective way?” A translation provider may help you see options you did not know existed.

Inquire About Flexibility – Resources/Process/Technology

Translation providers must be able to handle essentially anything their customers require, ranging from special file types to large influxes in demand. There should not be any special steps required regardless of the complexity or size of your request; the right provider will be able to assist you immediately and efficiently, given you have done the prep work on your end to ensure a clean hand-off.

Tips for Interacting with a Translation Provider

While you can take advantage of a translation provider’s assets for your benefit, you can achieve even greater value by ensuring your processes prepare you for translation. These tips will help you lower price and increase turnaround time while helping you receive measurable quality.

Plan for Translation

No matter how great or small a translation project, including the time required for translation in your plan will make your responsibilities less stressful. Individuals encounter frustration with a translation project when the project duration is different than expected and interferes with a parent project’s timeline. Your provider can supply you with tools to help you estimate the duration of any translation effort, even before submitting a project for bid. Decide up-front what part of the project you wish to manage yourself and what you want your provider to manage. A good provider has project managers that can transparently run projects from beginning to end, from scheduling, to budgeting, to review management. Pre-estimate the scope of your translation by knowing the word count, number of pages and the percent of content that can be recycled using Translation Memories. This helps eliminate surprises and also allows you to compare ‘apples to apples’ when submitting projects to multiple vendors.

Finalize Documents Before Sending

A sure way to create headaches and increase costs is to submit revisions for a translation project once it has already begun. Ensure every original document is complete before translation begins. Alert your management and your content developers that changes to a document already in process will likely incur added expense. If multiple drops are needed, schedule as few as possible with absolute dates.

Send Text in a Friendly Format

Some document formats are more expensive to translate than others because they do not work readily with available Translation Memory tools. Make sure your documents are translation friendly in their file format and layout. Your translation supplier can advise.



Different Languages Have Different Formatting Considerations

Many European languages translate into longer sentence length than the source English content. Asian translations can appear shorter than original English text, but they require larger font sizes to ensure readability. For these reasons, try to keep text outside of picture elements. Maintain graphics files that either store text as editable text fields or externalize translatable text to container files. If your final product has limited or restricted space for text, this could lead to redesigning products and adjusting label placement for non-English products. In order to meet launch dates, consider all target languages within the initial design.

Tying it all Together

Understanding the value equation in translation will allow you to gain control of the translation process and get the most out of your provider. With these inside tips on what both your translation provider and you can do to best utilize resources, processes and technology, you can save yourself time, effort and money, and tip the equation in your favor.

For more information about achieving value in translation, or to start a translation project, contact CyraCom Translations: call **1-866-743-9010**, or e-mail translations@cyracom.com.

About CyraCom

CyraCom is the leading provider of innovative language solutions for healthcare including Over-the-Phone Interpretation, Video Remote Interpretation, Translation & Localization and On-Site Interpretation. CyraCom has been awarded ISO 9001:2008 certification - the first Over-the-Phone Interpretation company in the US to achieve this distinction.

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