



5 Tips to Finding the Right Language Services Provider



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In today's global economy, businesses are faced with cultural and linguistic challenges which only rarely can be handled using internal resources. In order to be able to effectively communicate with non-English speakers, be they employees, vendors or clients, companies typically need to outsource their language needs to independent providers of language services.

Given the low entry barrier for establishing a translation (written word) or interpretation (spoken word) business, the US market is literally flooded with providers of such services. The question then arises – how do you select a provider that will suit your needs? The short answer is that generally, you get what you pay for. We offer the long answer here, with 5 tips to help you find the right language services provider for your organization – and your needs.

1. Individual Translator & Interpreter vs. Language Services Provider

Translation – or interpretation – is certainly the key component to getting your message across to your international audience, and this task must be performed by qualified individuals. However, how do you know that your translator or interpreter has the right linguistic and subject matter expertise to do your particular job right? How do you assess and control quality? How do you handle a project with multiple languages involved? Enter the full-service language services provider (LSP).

The role of an LSP is not just to translate and provide interpretation. The value added to the translation and interpretation processes by the LSP is the ability to select translators, editors and interpreters with appropriate linguistic and subject matter expertise, and the ability to manage multilingual projects. The LSP will make sure that a translation is reviewed by a qualified editor and that an interpreter not only shows up on time, but also has the necessary qualifications to match your specific needs. The LSP therefore provides scalability, reliability and quality assurance, and serves as a partner in risk management.

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Additionally, the LSP adds value to the process through its project managers who coordinate the workflow and who represent the single point of contact for the client – you. For translation projects, a project manager ensures that all language versions are prepared in the same format and that all steps necessary to produce a quality translation are taken.

The oversight and coordination LSPs provide are invaluable for multilingual projects or for projects requiring additional services such as desktop publishing or those utilizing a wide variety of file formats. In addition to coordinating the workflow for large projects, LSPs often prepare and maintain glossaries in specialized fields.

2. Cost of Language Services

In the US, the rates for translation are typically given on a per-word basis; interpretation rates go by the hour, half-day, or full-day. Minimum fees typically apply for both translation and interpretation. Per-word rates charged by LSPs are all-inclusive (not only the translation, but also the project management time, editing/review, and quality assurance procedures) and cannot be compared to the rates charged by individual translators. The rates will differ for different languages; lower rates typically apply to Latin American Spanish and Portuguese, while Asian languages and right-to-left languages (such as Arabic and Hebrew) command higher rates. When negotiating per-word rates, it is advisable to agree in advance on the basis of

the calculation of the number of words. Word count of the same text in two different languages can differ by as much as 40% – this is true especially for Asian languages.

Consider the cost, not just the price. You can pay a low price and incur high costs because the translation or interpretation service you receive is of substandard quality which not only is expensive to fix, but also can cause incalculable damage to the name and credibility of your company. The cost and quality of translation and interpreting services vary greatly, and you can lower your overall costs by using an LSP which consistently delivers high-quality services.

3. Purpose of Translation and Interpretation

Be sure that you tell your LSP how the translation will be used or what the interpretation situation is. Is it a technical equipment training manual for a highly sophisticated reader? Or is it an informational brochure for an audience with a fifth-grade level reading knowledge? Is the interpretation event for professional physicians or for a patient with limited understanding of medical terminology? The intended audience and purpose of the translated document or interpretation event is critical information for the LSP – it helps the

linguist to establish the appropriate tone, style and register for the target language.

Another consideration is the target audience itself. Choosing an appropriate regional variation is important not only because you want to address your audience in the

language they are comfortable with, but also because some dialects can easily become politically charged. You don't want to use Simplified Chinese when providing translations for Taiwanese audience, and you don't want to address Serbians in Croatian and Croats in Serbian. Make sure that your LSP knows your target audience and is familiar with any regional variations and dialects.

Defining the target audience and purpose of your communication is just as critical to the interpreter as it is to the translator. The gender, voice, attire and general appearance of an interpreter may impact the message you are trying to convey. While the interpreter's goal is to be a conduit of communication and not detract from the message they are interpreting, it is the client's responsibility to provide enough information and details to the LSP for them to make an appropriate selection of resources. As the client, it is also your responsibility to understand that professional interpreters adhere to a strict code of ethics – they are not to serve as moderators, advocates, provide advice or change the messages they are interpreting.



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4. Language

Professional translators typically work into their native language. In the case of languages of limited diffusion this might not be possible; for example, professional translators who can translate from Faroese and who are native English speakers would be quite hard to find. In such cases it is crucial that the translated text is reviewed by a native speaker of the target language.

Avoid using culture-bound clichés which won't be understood in other countries – baseball metaphors will fall flat just about anywhere outside of the US. A good LSP will work with you to correct errors and contradictions in the source text and will point out potential translation pitfalls.

Make sure that your LSP uses native speakers of the target language for translation and identifies the right dialect for both translation and interpretation. Having a Mexican interpreter at a deposition for a Puerto Rican will cause unnecessary strife and possible miscommunication issues.

5. Final Review

Resist the temptation to revise the translated text without talking to your LSP. In many languages, grammatical and spelling rules differ dramatically from English – if you see different endings attached to a proper name, it is not because the translator does not know how to spell the name, but rather because the language in question is inflected and requires different endings for different grammatical cases. Different languages have different capitalization rules, punctuation rules, formatting requirements, etc.



It is an established practice to receive feedback from the end user in the target country – share this feedback with your LSP, preferably before the translated text is finalized. Another good practice is to have the translation reviewed by an independent third party, especially if you are working with a new LSP. Such a review can be done by another LSP.

Occasionally, clients ask LSPs for “back translation.” Much discussion has been devoted to this topic, and the general consensus in the industry is that re-translation of the translated text back to the language it was originally written in, for the purpose of checking if the translation is accurate, is a waste of time and money. The most efficient way to ensure that a translation is correct is to have

the translated text edited by another translator who reads a completed translation against the source text for the purpose of validating the accuracy of the translation.

Keeping these tips in mind as you begin your search for the right LSP will help you make the best choice, have a better experience, and offer the peace of mind you want – and need.



For an exceptional customer experience that gives you peace of mind, choose CETRA. To learn more, call us toll-free at 888.281.9673 or visit us on the web at www.cetra.com.

About CETRA® Language Solutions

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