

Why Should You Hire a Professional Language Company? How Do I Find and Hire One?

Why should I hire a company, rather than an individual?

The primary reason is to ensure accuracy, especially with industry-specific or technical information, or projects where multiple languages may be involved. Just as any organization creates a brochure, publishes a website or prepares an advertisement with the support of several editors and reviewers, translation projects also benefit from the skills and experience of multiple individuals. Accuracy in translation is the result of hiring the appropriate experts as well as providing the project management and quality assurance only a full service company can offer.

Professional language companies have the experience to efficiently conduct these processes for translation and to match each stage of the task with the proper expert linguists. This team approach provides accuracy in appropriate style of writing, grammar and quality assurance that ensures that the meaning is correct and appropriate from a cultural perspective whether for the US or overseas markets.

A second benefit is the abundance of resources a company offers, which is especially important on larger projects where there will be an ongoing need for several translators or interpreters involving multiple languages. Companies can also incorporate translated material with sophisticated graphics, audio or video media or software code. Language companies are adept at desktop publishing, website development and database management—all managed in multiple languages.

Hiring individual translators may be sufficient in some cases, but there are disadvantages. For example, the person you need may be unavailable when you need them. Large projects will take more time—more than you may have in some cases. Also, the individual may have limitations, which can be of concern if the project involves specific technical expertise or output requirements. Finally, most translators and interpreters are proficient in a single language. For translation into several languages, a company can assign teams of translators and editors to work simultaneously on large, complex projects.

How do language companies charge?

For simple documents, some companies charge by the word, others by the page. Most companies charge a total project price (based on an approved estimate), especially for complex ones such as brochures, manuals or websites that can involve graphic design.

Why does it take so long?

First, translation is an art. Conveying the source text into the target text takes time—especially with creativity or marketing texts. Translators' daily output is typically between 2,000 and 3,000 words. Also, professional translation projects typically involve the work of a translator and an editor, both with excellent bilingual and writing skills. They need time to work together to ensure that the customer receives the quality expected from a professional native expert.

Why is it more expensive than hiring my friend?

Because you are hiring a trained professional who has been screened and tested with a higher level of skill than individuals who may only speak a second language. A professional translator is proficient in the subject matter with industry-specific experience and has demonstrated this ability in numerous previous assignments.

Why shouldn't I just hire a friend or neighbor who speaks a second language?

Professional companies offer expert resources by industry in numerous language combinations—much more than individuals can offer. Companies are also equipped with state of the art translation memory technology that can automate some of the work—saving clients money.

What's the difference between a translator and an interpreter?

Translators deal with the written word, interpreters with the spoken word. A business letter, magazine or book is translated; a conversation is interpreted.

What companies are out there?

There are more than 4,000 companies nationwide, ranging from one- and two-person homebased companies to multi-million dollar firms with hundreds of employees and as many contractors, often working in multiple locations and time zones.

How do you choose a language company?

First, ask the firms to explain how they ensure delivery of a quality product. What are their minimum requirements of translators and interpreters regarding their education, credentials and experience? Do they require continuing education? How many interpreters and translators do they have in each language?

Second, ask about experience. The best business partnerships often result from finding a firm with industry-specific experience in the languages you require—and that has translated similar types of documents.

Third, ask for details about how they handle administrative issues. For example, do they use standardized contracts? How do they handle estimates? And are purchase orders necessary?

Fourth, ask candidates to indicate their commitment to the language services industry. Are they members of any national, regional, or local trade associations in the field? Do they hold leadership positions in them?

Background

The Association of Language Companies (ALC) was incorporated as a nonprofit trade association in 2002 by nine founding members—language companies from across the country. The ALC was started to bring together language companies into an organization that represents only their unique interests.

FOR BACKGROUND

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