

Speaking your Language

Simone Lamont and Alison Lamb of CLS Communication AG discuss the value of professional partnerships for multilingual communication within the biopharmaceutical industry

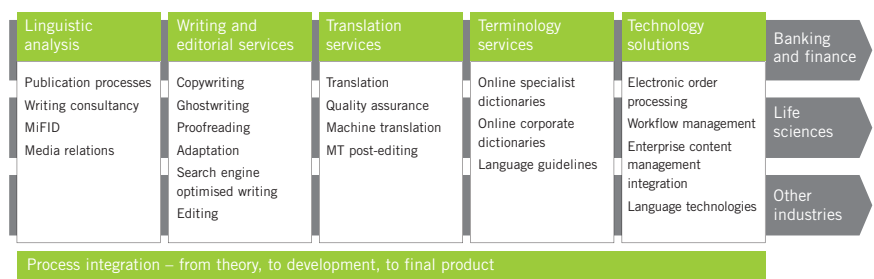
Companies in the life sciences sector need to operate across borders, with all the challenges of international competition, reputation management and networked development that implies. The success of these companies depends not only on their efficiency and innovative power, but also on their ability to forge a strong multilingual communication architecture. Finding the right partner to help meet these challenges is paramount.

The increasingly complex and diverse nature of the life sciences business means that, in today's environment, the demands placed on language service providers are greater than ever before. Never has it been so important to get a message across rapidly, effectively and in a way that addresses specific target groups and cultures. It is vital to have the support of a professional and dependable partner who is not only fluent in the language of communication, but also fully conversant with the technical terminology and specialised processes of the industry and sector-specific developments. These are the demands that translation companies face in today's complex world, meeting these challenges with customised, high-tech, secure solutions. The advent of online and electronic tools and resources has transformed capabilities beyond recognition, enabling the multilingual professional to deliver the uncompromising quality and flexibility of service required.

COMMUNICATING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

As companies expand geographically, they are confronted with all the associated problems of language barriers and cross-border production and sales. Depending on the specific requirements of a business, a multilingual strategy may be essential. Just consider, for instance, labelling regulations that require package inserts and summaries of product characteristics to be translated into all EU member state languages. Despite the prevalence of English as a corporate language, it is still important to accommodate the language requirements of the local market in order to avoid misunderstandings and give

Figure 1: Strategic corporate communication



products a 'home flavour'. What's more, in an age of increasing competition and ease of access to information, a sophisticated approach to global communications is often a major asset. For a biopharmaceutical company, writing, translating and terminology management may not be core activities, but they are for language service providers with highly qualified teams of professional writers and linguistic specialists. It could, therefore, be worth considering outsourcing corporate communication processes. The flexibility of costs and volume capacity can be increased by working with providers that offer an integrated communication production chain spanning copywriting, proofreading, translation and terminology, right through to design and layout.

When seeking the right partner, three factors are key to evaluating the services offered:

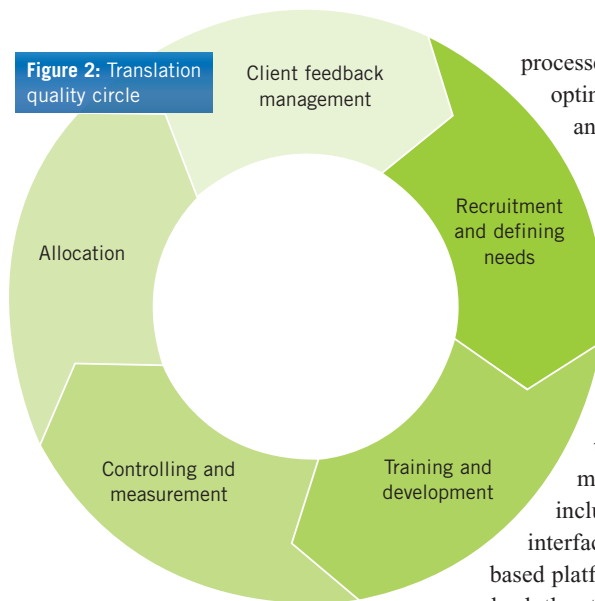
- Specialist knowledge – are the editors and translators not only skilled linguists and writers but do they also understand the client's business?
- Technological competence – to profit from economies of scale and ensure the consistency and accuracy of written material, the provider's language services must be supported by technologies such as document management systems, terminology databases and translation memories
- Project management expertise and translation memories – the partner must understand the company's projects, with all their various stages, stakeholders and objectives, and offer a central, dedicated point of contact

The company might also consider whether the provider has a global presence similar to its own, and is thus able to guarantee the round-the-clock availability and coverage needed, as well as intimate knowledge of relevant local markets.

EXPERTS NEED EXPERTS

In selecting a provider, a company wants to be sure that the translators assigned to its texts are recruited not only on the basis of their linguistic and writing skills but also for their in-depth sector knowledge, acquired through a course of study, ongoing vocational training, or direct professional experience. By definition, they are required to apply their skills on a daily basis, often under extreme time constraints, to a vast range of specialist content including scientific articles and patents, technical specifications, laboratory reports, patient histories and regulatory approval documents, through to HR and training materials, media releases, annual reports, and sales and marketing documents. This necessitates versatility of style and approach. Translating a text promoting a state-of-the-art hearing aid calls for technical accuracy and familiarity with the correct 'terms of art' and compliance with the company's approved glossary, while a press release or annual report demands both in-depth insight into the business and an approach finely attuned to the company's corporate culture and stylistic preferences. The benchmark is a polished and idiomatically authentic translation which reads as an original piece of writing. Meeting this standard requires strict adherence to the principle that translators translate only into their mother tongue, and the implementation of tried-and-tested internal quality control processes.

Figure 2: Translation quality circle



Translation is just one of the many services a professional multilingual provider is capable of offering. As English is often the corporate language of companies that operate on different continents, it is not uncommon for texts to be written by non-native speakers. A proofreading service adds real value, especially in cases where a company is communicating with its external public. Language specialists can correct grammatical errors and ambiguities, producing credible, authentic-sounding text that respects stylistic preferences and wording requirements.

Increasingly, too, companies look to outsource their requirements for scientific copywriting and technical documentation in different languages to third-party language specialists. Science writers can compile specialist articles and research papers in a variety of languages, tailored to the relevant field and cultural background. Technical authors, meanwhile, can produce documents while the product is being developed, ensuring that the documents are received in time for the market launch and fulfil all legal requirements and industry standards.

Alternatively, an editing service can help to flesh out a draft text and make it ready for print, harmonising style and content in line with the brief. Whatever the type of service offered, ongoing communication and liaison between the company and translator or writer is key to building an effective, constructive and trust-based partnership. Wherever possible, there should be face-to-face meetings where translation tools, resources and work

processes can be demonstrated for optimal mutual understanding and exchange.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

These days, no professional language service provider can offer solutions that meet the standards of quality and flexibility required without using technology. At process management level, solutions include automated order-issuing, interface management and browser-based platforms, enabling clients to check the status of ongoing projects on a regular basis. As information management becomes increasingly unwieldy, both in terms of volume and regulatory demands, it is also critical for multilingual providers to acknowledge the increased use of electronic document management systems and ideally provide a plug-in to client systems. An integrated workflow eliminates the need for manual intervention and creates efficient streamlined processes: an invaluable aid if texts need to be translated into several languages under time constraints.

In terms of the translation process itself, the importance of state-of-the-art translation applications cannot be underestimated. The use of translation memory and electronic glossary tools is paramount in ensuring accuracy, consistency and systematic use of correct terminology in line with corporate preferences. Alternatively, machine

translation tools adapted to client needs with integrated customised glossaries and other lexical resources may be used to translate simple texts where speed and a rough grasp of meaning are of the essence.

Finally, mindful of the sensitive content of documents entrusted to a language service provider, be it an annual report, critical media release or the as-yet unpublished results of a clinical trial, technological solutions must conform to the highest security standards, with encrypted data transfer and absolute confidentiality guaranteed throughout the entire writing and translation process.

FULL-SERVICE PROVISION

As the communication needs and standards of businesses have grown more exacting, so the professional status of language specialists has risen, and the 'cottage industry' image of translation has been consigned to the past. This is in recognition of the fact that only multilingual providers offering end-to-end solutions can deliver a product suited to the global business environment. The litmus test of a professional, full-service provider of language solutions is its ability to integrate seamlessly into its clients' processes, and demonstrate an understanding of their business and corporate culture to rival that of an internal language service. By using the services of such a provider, the client can be secure in the knowledge that the chosen partner speaks their language, has the capacity to respond to their needs in terms of both volume and quality, and can help communicate the message to the target audience exactly as required.

About the authors



Simone Lamont joined CLS Communication AG three years ago and heads up the Life Science business team. Prior to joining CLS, Simone held managerial roles in sales at TRADOS GmbH/SDL International Ltd, and in operations at Lionbridge Technologies Inc in the US. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Linguistics from Kent State University.
Email: simone.lamont@cls-communication.com



Alison Lamb has been an in-house translator with CLS Communication AG for eight years, working as a life science translator since 2006. She holds an MA degree in German and Dutch from the University of Cambridge, and a distinction in post-graduate Technical and Specialised Translation Studies from the University of Westminster. She is pursuing part-time studies for a BSc in Life Science with the Open University.
Email: alison.lamb@cls-communication.com