Translation Case Study – Scios

Introduction

"I wish there was someone who understands the technology." "I wish there was someone who strives for near perfect translations." It sounds simple enough. It even sounds absolutely achievable that both talents can be combined. But what frustrates many customers with technology projects, are the pesky and incessant little errors that are missed by many, if not by most, translation companies.

Is there a cost to these translation errors? Sometimes the cost is significant, and sometimes not, but whatever the cost, it is seldom welcome, always inopportune, and often generates embarrassing complaints. Whether it is a loss of development time, a temporary halt in manufacturing or even a delay in a product launch, the costs reduce bottom line productivity and profit.

The Problem

In a recent customer project, for example, the manufacturing division of Scios (a division of Johnson & Johnson) had received a third-party translation from its research and development division. The problem centered upon a standard operating procedure document that had been translated from German to English. Both divisions were getting incompatible results and neither could explain why the other was incorrect.

Manufacturing felt that to proceed under the original translation would have resulted in a million dollar headache because the product could be unsuitable for sale. In addition, the complete production line would have to be shut down to unravel the error. On the other hand, the research and development division felt that to delay any further would mean missing their product launch date. The company that provided the original third-party translation assured the two divisions that the translation was correct.

The Solution

Because pharmaceutical and medical device development and manufacturing are often international or transnational, the numeric content of translated documents are subject to cultural or linguistic differences that can obfuscate the intent of the source document and can thus create differences in arithmetic outcomes.

In this particular translation project, Communicaid, Inc. was asked to resolve the issue. In response, Communicaid assembled a project team that possessed both the relevant and appropriate technical knowledge of the customer's project and same country linguistic capability where the target document would be used. The rationale for such an approach is straight forward. If a translation company is familiar with the technology, then it can maintain the integrity of the translation.

Communicaid Inc.
2077 Gateway Place Suite 220
San Jose, CA 95110
Tel 408.287.1337 Fax 408.516.5270
Toll Free 866.249.8069
www.communicaidinc.com

To backup and support the project team, Communicaid employed its new numeric proofing tool called SafetyNet™. This innovative software tool monitors numeric content and units of arithmetic operations and helps the proofreader verify their consistency throughout a document. Usable in either short or long documents, SafetyNet™ reduces the possibility of human error by eliminating fatigue for the proofreader. SafetyNet™ flags the sentences where the numbers have changed between the source and final document. Prior to SafetyNet™, proofreaders would have to verify every number in a document – now they can focus on the handful of inconsistencies and rest assured all the other numbers haven't changed.

Finally, Communicaid's goal of the near perfect translation is embodied within the Near Perfect Translation Program (NPTP). In the NPTP, each translation project is meticulously handled and quality checking is part of the standard process at each step. Each project is translated by a professional linguist with relevant industry experience. Next the material is edited carefully by domain knowledge experts who often hold masters or doctoral degrees and additionally have years of translation experience. Careful proofreading by a third professional linguist ensures the integrity of the work. To maintain the highest quality and accuracy of the translation, Communicaid adds an additional proofreading step using SafetyNet™ before the client reviews the project. All projects are then reviewed by the client. Because language is not an exact science, oftentimes stylistic changes are requested by the client and Communicaid incorporates these into the document before final approval– free of charge. This kind of care in their project management means that Communicaid and the client can have full confidence in their work.

The Result

In this case of the German to English translation, Communicaid's rigorous process and unique SafetyNet™ technology discovered a numeric error that was the root of the problem. The original translation company had missed a small numeric error, the result of which would have ruined the production of the drug.

This case also reflects the difficult task of technical document translation. Not only must translators process words from one language to another, but the integrity of the numeric content must also be preserved. This difficult aspect of technical translation is often overlooked and even dismissed. Its impact, though, strikes at the very heart of a good translation.