



Top 10 Tips for Technical Document Translation

Use multilingual documentation to drive your business in new markets

Preparing technical documents for new language markets can raise a host of challenges particularly as you manage content across product lines and versions within ever tightening deadlines. The right combination of preparation and expert partners, however, will not only ease the process but save both time and budget. Here are our top-10 tips for avoiding localization pitfalls when translating technical publications.

1. **Follow technical writing best practices, including:**
 - a. Write short, clear sentences. Limit dependant clauses. One thought per sentence helps translators and increases savings from translation memory matches.
 - b. Avoid idiomatic expressions. These are more easily misinterpreted.
 - c. Avoid cultural references, as they may not work across borders.
 - d. Make sure symbols are internationally recognized. Don't assume that a symbol (i.e. a stop sign) has the same meaning in other markets.
2. **Use automation.** Use automation in your documents for Table of Contents (TOCs), Indices (IX), cross-references, variables and internal/external links. Also, make sure to use style sheets so that any updates or resizing can be automatically applied.
3. **Prepare for text expansion.** Most languages are 20% longer than English, so remember to account for text expansion when designing or creating your original printed piece, including artwork, graphics or charts. Also consider that your documents may need to be resized (U.S. letter sizes are normally converted to A4 for foreign markets).
4. **Link your graphics.** Whenever possible, try to link graphics in a document rather than embed them. This simplifies replacement in localized versions and future updates. Linking graphics also reduces file size, which is friendlier to use with translation tools.
5. **Provide editable source files.** Providing editable/layered source files, including images, is critical to smooth localization of artwork for printed materials. If no editable source files are provided, re-creation will most likely be necessary prior to localization, which can add considerable time and cost to the project.
6. **Compress your files.** Compress all files when delivering electronically (e-mail, FTP, CD/DVD, etc.). Compression helps protect corruption-prone fonts and speeds transmission during very tight schedules.
7. **Provide instructions.** When handing off files to your translation provider, be sure to define the scope of the project, tools and versions as well as the desired deliverables. Specify any information needed to generate deliverables including output format (PDFs, HTML, image types, etc.) and settings.
8. **Organize your file submissions.** File submissions should include all relevant files for translation in working condition and should not include extraneous or unused files. An organized folder structure aids enormously in efficient localization by ensuring that unwanted files are not processed or, conversely, necessary files are missed. Messy structures can also delay project kickoffs and create technical issues such as broken links, which in turn causes compiling errors.

9. **Get rid of returns.** Avoid using hard and soft returns within sentences. Using them will add extra time at the localization stage as broken sentences cause difficulties for the translation team and their tools.
10. **Plan your updates.** Plan ahead for updates to minimize re-work that may impact your budget and schedule.

Successful technical documentation localization strategies can be the key to meeting your time-to-market, budget and corporate quality objectives. Arm yourself with a localization partner that knows how to navigate the cultural and technological challenges of taking your project multilingual. Visit us today to learn more: www.acclaro.com/document-translation. Plus, learn more about general content development for international audiences by reading: www.acclaro.com/international-content-tips.

About Acclaro: Acclaro is an international translation and localization firm that helps the world's leading brands succeed across cultures. We translate websites, marketing campaigns, documents and software to give clients an authentic voice in key language markets.

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