

Translation in the Healthcare Sector - A Guide

The Importance of Translation in the Healthcare Industry

thetranslationpeople
love language.

A Truly Global Industry

The global healthcare market has grown – and grown fast! The international pharmaceutical market alone – according to statista.com – was valued at around \$1.25 trillion USD at the end of 2019 – a sharp rise from \$390 billion USD at the end of 2001. Likewise when looking at medical devices, internationally the market was valued at \$425.5 billion in 2018, and is expected to reach \$612.7 billion by 2025.*

This growth has coincided with an increasingly global approach to healthcare. Collaboration and co-operation between nations in both commercial and academic environments is firmly at the heart of innovation within sectors such as pharmaceuticals and medicine.

Take Pfizer for example: the largest pharmaceutical company in the world, whose 10,000 employees operate across more than 300 cities, in over 100 countries, with customers across the globe. With this level of global interaction and coverage comes a huge requirement for translated materials, ensuring that effective communication can take place between pharma and healthcare professionals throughout the world: from London to Lagos; Stockholm to Shanghai.

Typical resources requiring translation in the healthcare sector include:

- Clinical trial results
- Agreements and results
- Protocol documents
- Case reports
- Informed Consent Forms
- Instructions for Use (IFU)
- Declarations of Conformity
- Summary of Product Characteristics
- Patent Translations
- Software translations
- Maintenance manual translations
- Labelling translations
- Training resources
- Lab Reports



Accuracy is Everything

The healthcare sector perhaps more than any other must ensure that translated material is of the very highest quality and, as such, it is essential that businesses in this sector engage the services of a high quality, professional translation provider. While it may appear that free online translation tools produce ‘good enough’ results, there is no margin for error in an industry where accuracy is key. Miscommunication, misunderstanding or misdirection because of poorly translated materials can have severe consequences, including misdiagnosis or malpractice. The result could be legal action or worse, a compromise to quality of care and even endangerment to human life.

Take this example from Germany in 2006-07 where 47 patients were given the wrong type of knee replacement. The Journal of Specialised Translation reported:

“Two different types of that knee prosthesis are available — for use with or without cement. The source language label on the package of the prosthesis included the information that the femoral component was “non-modular cemented,” which was incorrectly translated as “non-cemented” or “without cement. For over 12 months, medical professionals who performed or assisted in the operations were unaware of the fact that prosthesis elements had not been implanted in the correct manner.”

SOURCE: https://jostrans.org/issue21/art_karwacka.pdf www.fortunebusinessinsights.com

Reach a Wider Audience

There is a world of business at play, and from a commercial perspective, if healthcare companies can successfully access global markets, they will reach more customers and have the potential to more rapidly grow their businesses.

High quality translation will be central to achieving this by:

- Meeting local regulatory demands with speed and accuracy
- Producing operational and logistical information in all languages
- Tailoring sales and marketing messages to local audiences



Many Nations, One Message

Moreover, since Covid-19, the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the hidden – but constant – role the healthcare sector plays in keeping the world safe, a vaccine has become a reality, and it has all been made possible due to the sharing of intelligence across continents and across multi-national trials.

COVID-19 is just one disease and, looking beyond the current climate, society will continue to rely on the healthcare sector to develop new medicines using expertise from around the world. Communication with the public about vaccines and their benefits as well as practical information, such as how to access the vaccine, are also key to ensuring high levels of uptake.

Effective translation, and the technology and services which accompany it, is central to achieving this. When we are literally talking about life and death, there is no rationale for ignoring the huge difference it makes to receive clinical information in your own language.

Important Translation Considerations for Pharma, Medical and Healthcare

When it comes to translation, the healthcare industry faces many unique challenges and this is where a high-quality translation partner can prove invaluable.

The Language of Healthcare

The medical sector is highly specialised and even the most talented linguist may not be able to adequately translate every type of documentation required. This is because, in addition to their language skills, translators must have highly specialist knowledge of the sector to ensure they are translating items such as medical conditions, scientific terminology and medical procedures with accuracy.

Regulation

The healthcare industry, understandably, is one of the most tightly regulated sectors in the world. With regulation comes an abundance of paperwork and documentation, and it goes without saying that translation of this documentation requires an unfaltering level of accuracy.

Furthermore, to accurately translate and record hundreds of thousands of words across dozens of language variants requires a rigorous project management approach from the translation provider. This can include creation of a central glossary which different translators can work from, cloud-based project management systems and stringent version control processes.

Time-critical

With regulation also comes critical and uncompromising deadlines. This means healthcare companies must work with a translation partner they can count on to deliver the right output at the right time, and that can scale up production of even highly technical documents, no matter the language combination.



Methods of Translation

When we use the term 'translation' there are several different approaches which can be taken, depending on the individual project requirement. Regulatory and public facing content should be translated to the highest standards, however companies producing other, less business-critical content, such as internal knowledge bases, may decide to explore more cost-effective options. Some companies require documents to be 'back-translated' into their original language as a way of checking the accuracy of the translation. It's important to note that back-translations need to be completed and checked by experienced linguists and reviewers, as a specific method of translation is required.

Depending on budget, time frame, content type and desired outcome, a range of options is available and an overview of these is covered in the table below. As previously highlighted, accuracy is everything when it comes to healthcare, so methods which facilitate this outcome are always the preferred approach. Your translation provider should work with you to review the available methods and options to develop the most effective plan for your requirements.

Translation Methods Explained

	Machine Translation with Human Post-Editing	Standard Human Translation	Transcreation
	Intelligent machine translation, text subsequently edited by specialist post-editors for readability and suitability.	Faithful adaptation of the source content into the target language by a professional translator.	Adaptation of original content in the target language by a creative translator, faithful to the message and objectives of the source text, but often with changes to the content, imagery or messaging to suit the market.
Readability and Accuracy	Will be a coherent and accurate reflection of source text. Language may, in some cases, be structured differently to human translation and may not always read as well.	Will read as if written from the outset by a native speaker and will be an accurate reflection of the source text. Highly creative concepts may, in some cases, be less articulate than transcreation.	Will be very articulate with highly creative concepts reading effortlessly. Some cases may differ from the content of the original in order to create equivalent impact.
Cultural Relevance	No adaptation of the content to suit the target market	Some adaptation of content to the general characteristics of the target market	Fully tailored to fit every cultural nuance of the target market
Lead Time	~30% shorter than standard	Standard (2000 words per day)	~60% longer than standard
Cost	~30% lower than standard	Standard (very competitive with possible TM technology savings)	~60% higher than standard
Suitability	High-volume non-creative content such as technical manuals, and texts where the comprehension of the text is more important style.	Websites & general marketing content, blogs, technical documents, datasheets, contracts, HR documents & systems, software. Texts where accuracy and readability are important but there is little room for adapting the content to create an emotional response.	Highly creative website and marketing content, blogs. Texts designed to stimulate an emotional response.

Terminology Management

Terminology Management is a vital asset to ensure accuracy and consistency in your translations and can help avoid pitfalls such as the same product or item being translated in different ways, or translating something into a local language which is globally known by its English name. Without careful management and close communication between you and your translation provider, such inconsistencies can easily creep in.



Use of specific terminology requires special attention, because the same term can have synonyms, which are not universally accepted. Termbases within translation tools play an important role in this context, because they automatically suggest the correct terminology to use during the translation process.

Silvana, Medical Translator



Good translation agencies work with their clients to develop a comprehensive understanding of the correct terminology for their business. This can include product names, corporate language and specific translations for terms that may have multiple options in the local language. By doing this, accuracy and consistency can be ensured, as well as brand values, whether you are translating a website or undertaking technical translations.

What is the Best Way to Manage Terminology?

Whereas in the past translators may have worked from a bilingual table in Excel, it is now recommended to manage terminology through Termbases, which are a feature of specialist translation software packages. These Termbases are detailed glossaries giving context and definitions, as well as setting out forbidden terms (those which should never be used). They can even be stored in the Cloud, giving shared access to all relevant parties and allowing the client and the translator to edit or add to them as the project develops.

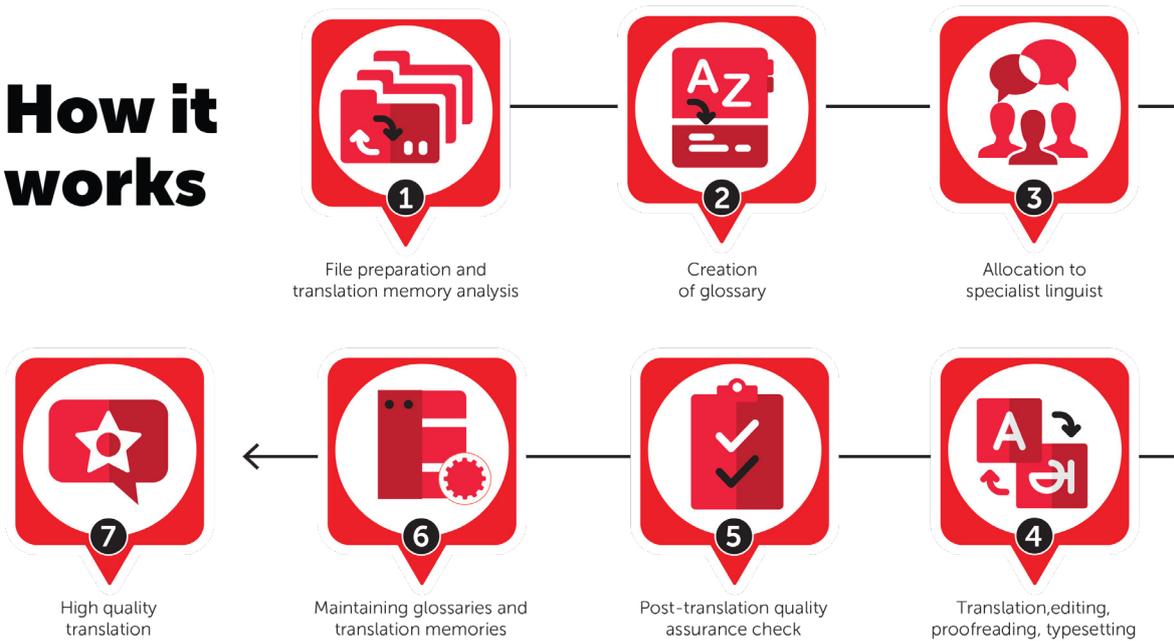
The huge advantage of tools like this is that they can be integrated with Translation Memory Systems, so the appropriate term is automatically suggested to the translator wherever it appears in the document. On completion of the project, automated QA tests can be run to ensure that the translator has followed the Termbase and that the terminology used in the document is as expected.

What are the benefits of Terminology Management?

- Consistency throughout all written communications
- Money savings by avoiding potentially costly amendments further down the line
- Automatic alerts within the translation environment, ensuring only preferred terminology is used
- Quicker and more accurate proofreading
- Translation and terminology management in one system

10 Tips for High-Quality Translation

How it works



Tips for Quality Translation

Across any sector we have some ‘golden rules’ for our clients in terms of the advice we give to achieve the best quality translation results, which applies equally to the healthcare sector. Our 10 Tips on Producing High Quality Translations are as follows:

1 - Allow Enough Time

Ensure that you allow enough time to produce a quality translation. As a rule, a translator will translate approximately 1500-2000 words per day (although teams of translators can be assembled to accommodate tighter deadlines), with additional time required for QA and formatting. Whilst most translation agencies will pull out all the stops to try and meet impossible deadlines, if you are at the planning stage, allocating enough time for the translators to do their job properly – consulting reference material, resolving queries in the source text etc. – will doubtless lead to a smoother project.

2 - Get the Source Right

A good quality translation needs a good quality source text, written in clear, concise sentences using consistent terminology. If puns and idiomatic expressions are used or the text contains ambiguities, the translation may take longer while queries are resolved or, worse, mistranslations may occur.

3 - Choose the Right Translator

Use a qualified, mother-tongue translator with knowledge of the healthcare industry. If possible, request the profile of the person doing the work and their prior experience, as well as references about your proposed translation provider from similar companies. When translating marketing materials, choose a translator with good style who can match the tone of your original.

4 - Consider a Translation Memory (TM) Tool

TM software stores translations in a bilingual database. When the translator comes across previously translated material, a translation is automatically suggested for the translator to use or adapt. This ensures consistency in current and future projects and can also lead to significant cost savings. Previous translations can also be retrospectively added to the TMs so that you are getting the maximum value from your legacy content.

5 - Use Termbases

Ask your translation provider to work with you to draw up termbases (bilingual glossaries) which can be incorporated into your translation memory tool to ensure that preferred terminology is used consistently throughout your documentation. This is an ideal way to ensure that company and industry-specific language is used within your projects and that the final translation will meet with end-user satisfaction.

6 - Use Style Guides

A style guide will ensure that the correct style and tone is consistently used which reflects your company culture and is suitable for your target audience. Ask your translation provider to draw up a guide and then get approval from internal stakeholders. This is especially relevant when it comes to marketing content, where different target markets may require slightly different styles to suit the target audience.

7 - Use Reference Materials

Make sure existing translations are made available to the translator to maintain consistency with previous work. Give them access to accompanying drawings and graphics which will help place the text for translation into context.



For the translator specialised in medical language, one of the most important considerations is the permanent and easy access to rich and extensive reference material: databases, manuals, dictionaries and more.

Colette, Medical Translator



8 - The Value of Proofreading

Two sets of eyes are better than one. However, ensure that the proofreader is equally as qualified as the original translator, otherwise you risk introducing errors into your text as well as failing to spot existing mistranslations. Speak to your translation provider about their quality control measures and whether their processes include an independent review. Some healthcare companies also request 'back translations' (a literal translation back to the source language) as part of the process, however this should be completed by a linguist with specific experience in back translation, with an appropriate internal reviewer in charge of assessing the result at the client end.

9 - Version Control

Make sure that amendments made by proofreaders or internal reviewers are incorporated in your translation memory database for future projects. This will ensure that subsequent translations are more in line with expectations. Speak to your translation provider about the workflows they suggest in order to best manage this process, as some will be able to facilitate online review portals for client review.

10 - Data Transfer Security

Working with a translation provider who can integrate with your existing content management systems – both web-based and non-web based – will help to ensure greater security and efficiency when it comes to data transfer. Many translation management systems have APIs that can be used to connect to client systems in order to streamline this process.



Working with The Translation People

Healthcare companies across the globe rely on The Translation People and our specialist translation services to provide them with accurate translations, adhering to international industry standards.

Accurate and professional medical translation services are essential when registering products overseas. It is also crucial to work with a translation partner who can cover all the languages you need in the required deadlines. Patient information leaflets, product labelling, brochures and legal contracts must be adapted to the linguistic requirements of different territories to meet regulatory standards and expand the reach of your products.



The Translation People has helped add great value to our business – they are professional and reliable, providing a quick turnaround on all projects. Delivering exceptional quality, The Translation People provides an outstanding service which we would highly recommend.

GAMA Healthcare, a customer of The Translation People since 2016



Given the huge implications if a healthcare translation is inaccurate, there is simply no room for ambiguity or errors. Our expert medical linguists and experienced Account Managers employ rigorous terminology control measures to produce precise and high-quality healthcare translation services you can depend on and which will allow you to take advantage of international opportunities.

How do we do it?

Industry Focus



The Translation People specialises in providing translation services to healthcare companies, covering a wide range of requirements ranging from research, clinical trials and regulatory translations, through to marketing content and training material. We help healthcare companies meet specific registration requirements in the territories they are targeting, such as those laid out by the FDA and EMA, allowing them to successfully market the product in that territory.

Subject Matter Expertise

Our specialist medical translators have extensive experience of the healthcare sector, so you can be sure your translated material will have the same attention to detail as the original content you produce. As well as being familiar with industry guidelines and templates, our medical translation team uses standardised specialist terminology and dictionaries in their work.

Our expert in-house Account Managers have a wealth of knowledge about the industry, which, coupled with our ISO:9001:2015 certification ensures that your project is dealt with professionally and efficiently.

Translation Memory

Our Translation Memory tools store your preferred terminology and completed translations in a secure location, allowing our linguists to translate your content in line with your preferences. The technology also allows processes to be streamlined for duplicate and similar content, reducing your time to market and enabling you to make cost savings.

Turnaround times

We have a large number of qualified translators specialising in medical, healthcare and pharmaceuticals in all languages you could possibly need to cover your global requirements. For urgent large-scale requests, we can put together teams of translators using state-of-the-art translation technology to ensure consistency, allowing you to get your translations to market as quickly as humanly possible.

By choosing The Translation People to support your translation requirements, you will be joining world-leading healthcare corporations in trusting us to protect your brand at an international level.

W: www.thetranslationpeople.com

E: info@thetranslationpeople.com

T: +44 (0) 161 850 0060

What our Customers Say

“The Translation People have been great - excellent communication, customer service, and very friendly.”



“Excellent value for money and high quality translations.”



“We are constantly impressed by the level of service we receive from The Translation People.”



“My company has been using The Translation People for a number of years and have found them to be very professional and accommodating - also no job is too big or too small.”



“A very high quality translation service. This, plus prompt service and the ability to deal with very technical text make The Translation People our first choice.”



“The Translation People are an absolute pleasure to deal with. Responsive, reasonably priced, quick turnaround times and great communication.”



“Very pleased with services, responsive team and flexible approach. Very good.”



“Very reliable and professional outfit, who meet our demands.”



“We have used The Translation People for a number of projects and find the service to be consistently excellent in terms of the customer relationship, quality of translations and timeliness of completion. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend them.”



“I use The Translation People often for quite technical documents, often with tight deadlines and I have never been let down.”

