

# A Buyer's Guide For Translation Services

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## Insights into Translation



# Introduction

There are many reasons why you may require translations for your business. In Canada you may have a project that legally requires you to distribute information in the two official languages, English and French. You may be communicating with multilingual communities, working with business partners overseas, or require a multilingual website.

When a translation need arises, what should you do? What information do you require to get a quote? What should you expect in terms of quality and price? How can you gain the confidence of others internally to get your budget approved?

This guide was prepared to help you make good decisions and enable you to purchase a quality translation at a reasonable price. The approach is based on four stages: gathering requirements, quotation, production and evaluation.

*If you are relatively inexperienced at buying translations, this guide is perfect for you. If you are a highly experienced buyer, please contact us for a customized version.*



# Gathering requirements

The more accurately you can determine and communicate your needs, the easier it will be to identify the services that will best meet your requirements.

Below is a checklist of items that will help you determine the scope of your needs. We recommend you address these issues when communicating with a Translation Account Coordinator, and ensure all critical points have been satisfactorily covered.

## REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

1. High-level description of project
2. Specific type of work to be done (translation, localization, revision, copy edit, update, terminology research, proofreading)
3. Editable source files (ideally). If actual files are not available, send a comparable sample file.
4. Source and target languages (English to French, French to Spanish, etc.)
5. The target location where translations will be read
6. Use of the finished product (printed document for internal use, advertising collateral, user guide, notarized translation, etc.)
7. Information about the target audience (to whom the text is addressed, i.e. consumers, clients, company employees)
8. Deadline (date by which a given document must be delivered)
9. Special requests
10. Name of person (if any) who will provide feedback on final translations



# Quotation

This section will help you get the most out of the quotation process. Getting prices from vendors is easy; understanding what you are buying and knowing that you're getting the biggest bang for your buck is much harder.

You will need to understand when costs will be lower or higher. For example, you will *likely* pay more if the subject matter is specialized or if the job has to be completed on a rush basis. You will *definitely* pay more for translations completed in North America (versus offshore) as translator fees are higher.

If you are starting fresh with an LSP (Language Service Provider), providing translation assets will reduce costs and maintain consistency. If you cannot provide translation assets, your costs will be slightly higher until the size of your asset base grows.

## TYPES OF RATES

There are three basic types of rates for language services: per-word rates, hourly rates and flat rates (all-inclusive). Today, per-word rates are usually provided for translation as well as proofreading, revision and review related to the translation itself. Final word counts are supplied by the language service provider.

Hourly rates are provided for such services as desktop publishing, transcription, proofreading and revision of other people's work, and other professional services such as IT development.

## PRICING FOR QUALITY

The highest quality translations follow the European Standard, which calls for two independent native-speaking professionals: one to produce the translation and a second to provide revision. Since there are multiple steps and people involved, costs are higher than the often lower quality process where the same person translates and revises their own work.



## CALCULATING COSTS

Pricing is not as simple as you would think. There are a number of variables that affect pricing such as language combination, repetitions, turnaround time, complexity and volumes. Your Translation Account Coordinator can explain the details to you.

Item	Description
<b>Languages and translators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates depend on source and target language combination</li> <li>• Translators are typically retained in or near the target audience location; their rates vary accordingly</li> </ul>
<b>Similarity between projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitions and partial matches reduce the translation rate per word</li> <li>• A translation management system allows the translator to use content from previous translations</li> <li>• Consistency, timelines and production costs are all improved</li> </ul>
<b>Subject matter or text domain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-technical, technical/legal/human resources and marketing material have different cost structures</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Assurance – Stage 1 (after initial translation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different types of content and usage require one, or all, of the following steps, which each have different cost structures:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Revision</li> <li>➢ Copy Editing</li> <li>➢ Proofreading</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Quality Assurance – Stage 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the target text by a Client Side Reviewer</li> <li>• Errors are corrected at no cost while subjective changes are subject to change request fees</li> </ul>
<b>Volume</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher volumes result in lower rates</li> <li>• This is true on a cost per order and estimated annual budget basis.</li> </ul>

## COMPARING QUOTES FROM MULTIPLE VENDORS

Buying simply based on price is never a good idea. What you want to identify is value.

***High value = quality processes + excellent customer service + experienced translators + competitive pricing + on-time delivery.***

Be aware that quotes may vary depending on the number of steps and linguists priced into the translation process. Your quotes should be fairly close in price as the translation market is mature. If one quote is exceptionally low, it is a good idea to understand why. Something is likely not getting done!



## COMPARING CURRENT AND NEW VENDOR QUOTES

Your current vendor has access to your translation assets and, as a result, has a pricing advantage over a new vendor. To ensure a like-for-like pricing comparison, it is a good idea to ask all parties to provide per-word pricing sorted based on match value (new words, full word matches and partial word matches).

## VALUE OF CHOOSING A CERTIFIED VENDOR

There is no governing body over the translation industry, so how do you know which companies are most likely to provide you with quality translations? Leading translation companies will follow the world's highest standards and be transparent about their processes.

When quality translations are required, look for a company that offers the following certifications:

### ISO 17100:2018

This international standard provides requirements for the core processes, resources, and other aspects necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service. It also provides the means by which a translation service provider (TSP) can demonstrate conformity of specified translation services and its capability to deliver that translation service. Compliance is ensured by recognized certification bodies through on-site audits.

### CAN/CGSB-131.10-2008

Developed by the Canadian General Standards Board and approved by the Standards Council of Canada, this certification defines quality translation processes. It was strongly advocated for by l'Association de l'industrie de la langue/Language Industry Association (AILIA).

## GENERATING COST SAVINGS

The most common way to reduce costs is to develop a long-term relationship with your language service provider. By signing a formal "Letter of Agreement" you can immediately benefit from volume-discounted prices and specify service delivery parameters.

It is natural to feel uncomfortable about committing to an annual volume. If you have concerns, you can ask for a formal account review at the end of each year to analyze production data and choose between a "fixed price per word" model or a "level of similarity" model, which charges rates on each project based on full matches, partial matches and new words involved with each project.

If you work in a large company or are using multiple translators, you should consider centralizing your purchasing with a single vendor. A good LSP will educate you on how to reduce costs and will add value by streamlining administrative processes.



# Production

Once you have given your LSP approval to proceed, you should explain to your Translation Account Coordinator how you like to work. Do you want to be contacted before the completed project is sent or shortly thereafter? Is email the best method to reach you, or can you be reached easily by phone? Set clear expectations for your LSP and they will be happy to oblige.

If your project will take several weeks to complete, how frequently would you like project updates? Do you require a written work-back schedule or project plan? Do you require any special reports delivered by a certain time each month?

Most importantly, you should plan to spot-check translations by asking for staggered deliveries you don't have to wait for the project to be completed before you start your own quality assurance.

## PROVIDING REFERENCE MATERIALS

To speed up production, achieve high quality results and maintain consistency, you should provide your LSP with all of the critical information they need to work effectively. This will also reduce the costs of taking on a new vendor. Depending on your situation, you may be able to supply all or just some of the items below:

Item	Description
<b>Background materials</b>	Brochures, documentation, analyst reports, and annual reports.
<b>Corporate standards guides</b>	Information about your company's general style of expression and conventions for grammar, punctuation and word usage. Often there are boilerplates for legal clauses or mission statements, etc.
<b>Translation style guide</b>	Explains how text should be translated in each language including dates, weights, how measures should be converted, how capitalization is handled, forms of address, etc.
<b>Glossaries and lexicons</b>	Required for terminology management. A list of unique or industry-related terms, product names and other specialized words.
<b>Translation memory</b>	A database of previous translations that enables the LSP to translate only the changed part of a text. Includes set phrases and pre-approved bodies of text. This will help to ensure your new and incumbent vendor(s) have the same scope of work to consider.



# Evaluation

The people who know your corporate culture the best are you and your team members. Ideally, all translations should be reviewed by one company employee with the industry-specific knowledge.

Your LSP will value your feedback. Knowing your preferences and expectations will increase your level of satisfaction with each successive job. It is common that early in a new relationship the first few projects will require some changes to address stylistic preferences.

As a rule of thumb, if the source text was developed by a specialist (accountant, lawyer, technician), the translated document should be reviewed by a specialist.

# Summary

1. Be an educated translation buyer
2. Understand and document your needs
3. Obtain quotes for the same type of services
4. Understand the LSPs quality processes
5. Choose your LSP based on overall value and fit
6. Allocate appropriate budget and resources
7. Communicate your work style and reporting requirements
8. Create style guides and glossaries
9. Internally review translations
10. Provide feedback to LSP

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