PLANNING A
TRANSLATION & LOCALIZATION PROJECT

argosmultilingual

It's All in the Planning

Ready to translate your website, product, corporate or product marketing materials into another language? Whether it's your first time, or you've done it before, our insider advice is to start by writing up a project scope document. Do this one thing first and do it well.

Once you have a well-thought-out scope document, you'll be on your way to success. We'll break down why you should create this project scope document, items to include in it, and lastly, tips on how to make your document as useful as possible.

How a Project Scope Document Can Benefit Your Project?

You'll receive a solid translation quote and proposal. Providing project details and goals in an organized, purposeful fashion helps your translation agency give you a proposal that truly responds to your objectives and needs.

You'll give yourself a good tool for evaluation. If you're choosing between translation agencies, using a scope document provides you with a consistent guideline to evaluate competing proposals.

You'll eliminate eleventh hour surprises. Mapping your project in detail helps you really think it through. What you will need, and which items are nice-to-haves. This process will help you avoid last minute surprises and even disasters.

You'll get to preview your working relationship. A translation agency who responds in detail to your scope document demonstrates they're on your wavelength. This is something you definitely want to know before you trust your project to anyone.

You'll improve internal buy-in. Your scope document requires input from several different stakeholders, giving them the opportunity to identify critical elements from their areas of expertise. Integrating cross-department feedback into your project plan removes roadblocks, and helps build support for the project.

10 Key Considerations

Start by answering these 10 questions. Use a spreadsheet or any other tool that makes it easy for other stakeholders to review the information and add their ideas and improvements.

1. Broad scope

Provide a short description of your project. What is to be translated and localized? Who are the end readers or users? Is the content static or ever-changing? Are you translating and localizing an application, software code, or something else?

2. Identify your target language markets
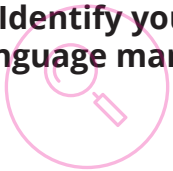
Which markets are priorities? Which do you plan to include in this project? As you evaluate options, remember that this choice goes deeper than nationality. The "same" language may be spoken in several regions yet there can be regional variations that require special consideration. For example, Spanish for the U.S. market is different from Spanish for Spain. If you need Portuguese, is it for Brazil or Portugal? Thinking English-only? Even if your target market will accept your brand of English, be sure you're taking into account regional differences such as the handling of numbers, dates and currency.

3. Prioritize markets

Rank target language markets in order of priority. Ask your translation agency to review your list. They may be able to spot missed opportunities for concurrent localization or other possible cost or time savings.

4. Target timeframes and project forecasts

When do you need the current project completed? What upcoming projects can you forecast on the horizon? What is their estimated scope and when do they need to be complete? Sharing this information with your translation agency can help define a project approach that will be the most efficient, cost effective, and will take into account any special requirements you may have. For example, you may need a project plan that builds in extra quality assurance measures to meet industry standards, adds local independent review, or incorporates a brand translation and localization initiative.

5. Source content

Describe the source content format and how you plan to deliver it to your translation agency. What kind of source files will you be providing and where are they stored? Do you have a content management system (CMS) or a different kind of repository? Is there potential to make the file transfer automated? Will some of your content be image graphic or image files that include copy? How do you want the translated content delivered to you? In the same format as you delivered it in or in an additional format and/or in PDF?

6. Define content type
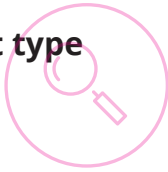
Describe how your material is used by your organization. Does this project include an application, website, or user guide? Is marketing collateral, user-generated content or other material part of the project? How do different content objects relate to each other? Does one of your documents rely on content from another content resource? Incorporate content from another object? For instance, does your online help or documentation rely on your software content being finalized first? Does the project include images with text? What and how many are there? Can you provide an editable format of the image to your translation agency? Discuss all of these questions here.

7. Metadata

Are data tags or metadata part of your project? If so, will it be necessary to translate them? This is something your translation agency can help you determine. What are your localization preferences? In this area of the project scope, you will list your preferences on dates, numbers, and other conventions. For example, if the project mentions currency, how do you want that handled in another language version? Do you want the reference translated as is or converted to local currency? Similar questions would also apply to data formats, product names, acronyms, measurements, and many other culturally different elements. If you're not sure and want someone to walk you through how best to proceed, call your translation agency for a planning session.

8. Word count estimate

A total word count estimate will help you and the translation agency calculate ballpark costs. A note of caution: whatever number you come up with will be different from the actual word count when the project has been completed. When setting your translation and localization budget, use ranges for word count such as fewest possible words, greatest number of possible words, and probable word count.

9. Source in-country subject matter expert

Review by an independent and/or subject matter expert (SME). Using an independent reviewer can be a great way to assure quality and cultural context. Using an in-country SME may be helpful depending on your topic. For example, if you're localizing medical device information, you probably need a domain expert review. A SME may or may not be a linguist. However, on a day-to-day basis they work in a vocation that qualifies them to review the translated and localized content for accuracy and in-context word choice. Your translation agency should be able to help you find and vet local domain experts and independent reviewers.

10. Stakeholder engagement level

Ask your stakeholders what engagement level or access they will need to the translationr and localization project. Do they need constant access to the project while it is in process? Or, just checks at certain scheduled points?

15 Tips to Get the Most Out of Your Project Scope Document

1

Provide as much information as you can. In this case, more really is better.

2

Provide content samples, if you have them.

3

Prioritize! This includes projects, elements and target markets.

4

Be clear and honest about your timeline, no matter how ambitious it is. If it creates issues or expense, quality translation agencies will tell you that. If you're looking to reduce translation and localization costs, explore whether timeline and workflow modifications can help you do that.

5

Ask your translation agency to help you spot opportunities for reducing immediate and ongoing costs. Examples include content optimization, controlled authoring and more. If you want to know price differentials between rush jobs and business as usual, ask.

6

Don't consign initial projects to procurement or a rigid request for proposal (RFP) process. While your procurement team offers expertise in purchasing services and negotiations, translation and localization projects are generally so strategic that they will need your hands on guidance, at least in the initial stages. Standards that are typically important to a procurement department might not help you find the translation and localization partner. Engage your procurement team when your process and standards are clearly defined.

7

Make time to talk in-depth with potential translation agencies about the project. The right agency will be willing to take you step-by-step through their plans for your project, and be ready to modify it as needed.

8

Find out if you can change process. Your translation agency has a carefully calibrated process but you may need something tailored to your business goals. A translation agency that can't or won't modify process to meet your needs may be signaling that your project won't really be getting personalized attention.

9

Ask about services that may be right for your project but aren't part of your basic project plan. This may lead you to opportunities to speed development, or cut costs. For example, it may be that your translation agency can enter bugs right into your bug database instead of creating a report your team must then process. This can save your team time and may reduce quality assurance (QA) costs.

10

Get the quote in writing. Obvious, right? Yet not automatic. Translation agencies with structure and process are happy to put everything in writing.

11

Talk about budget constraints with potential translation agencies. It may be that you can't get all the services you want for your current budget. The right agency will help you choose which are most important for immediate and long-term project success.

12

If you're looking at multiple quotes and there's a large price disparity, probe deeply. Knowing the proposed workflow helps you understand what you are being charged for and your project process. It may be that a bargain quote won't be providing all the services you require. Or you may not be getting the quality standard you require. Reliable vendors will be happy to walk you through their proposal elements and planned workflow.

13

Ask for a dedicated project manager. As your project develops, your team will want to have one project manager to rely on for questions, troubleshooting, brainstorming and more. Smart translation and localization requires a human touch, professionalism and commitment. Don't settle for less.

14

Check to be sure your translation agency has a translation management system (TMS). Centralizing translation memories and glossaries, and automating file transfers can offer significant project benefits. For example, such a system can enable the second and third stages of the translation process to happen concurrently with the primary translation. This can reduce project turnarounds by more than 25%.

15

Choose a translation agency that can offer you 24×7 access through a client portal. Quality translation agencies can offer you a portal so you can access your translation memories (TMs), glossaries, quotes and invoices. With this tool, your team can track your project in all of its stages. This is particularly helpful when you're translating and localizing content for multiple target markets, working with geographically distributed teams, or translating and localizing complex products such as enterprise software.

About Argos

Argos Multilingual provides global language solutions. With over 30 years of experience, we serve clients in the high-tech, life sciences, human resources, and financial industries.

We make it easy for businesses to grow globally and connect with expert talent anywhere in the world. With production centers in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, we follow a strategy of building robust programs for continuous translation and localization.

You can expect a long-term and transparent partnership, backed by innovative solutions around technology, AI & data, creative content, and quality assurance.

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