



The Experts Checklist for Technical Manual Translation

Deliver the quality manuals that matter in any language

STAR Translation Services



www.star-ts.com

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1. Why every Manager and Designer should read this book

There a lot to worry about when translating your technical manuals.

- Do the translators understand our terminology?
- Will the translation meet the EC Machinery Directive?
- Can they translate the manuals and the file formats we use?
- Can they do the layout as well?
- What do I need to get a quote?

We've been translating technical manuals for manufacturers since 1984. We understand the technical, terminology and business challenges involved.

This guide will give you a head start to understand the process, avoiding the pitfalls and ensuring your entire team is on brand and technically accurate in every language.



2. Fundamentals

File formats

Ensure that you are providing editable source files with your brief to translators. This should include all inputs, including fonts, links/images, graphics etc., where relevant. This includes images with text in them.

When translating, it is best to work with the source file format. This streamlines the translation process and allows for the highest definition in printed images. In cases where non-source files such as PDFs are the only option it may be possible to recreate - however this can impact the visual output.

Adobe InDesign is the de-facto standard for technical manuals. It can easily handle any language.

Adobe FrameMaker is great for large volume manuals, such as books.

Microsoft Word is still popular for shorter manuals.

Font Compatibility

It's important to use fonts which support use for all the language sets you intend on translating into. This is important as choosing a font which does not support the characters you require (e.g., ç, à, é, î, ø, ü, as well as character sets in Asian/Cyrillic etc) can lead to substitute fonts being used for certain languages and impacting the overall consistency of your brand image.

For file formats that include font files separately (e.g., Adobe Creative Suite applications such as InDesign), fonts should be supplied from the outset.

□ Images, Graphics and Screenshots

Images with embedded text can pose issues for translation when this text needs to be translated. They are expensive to translate. Here's how to avoid the cost.

For diagrams, there are 3 options to choose from:

- A. Label elements of the diagram with numbers/letters/symbols, and use a table underneath to expand on meanings and explanations.
- B. Use callouts to move text to the margins rather than the diagram.
- C. Apply text-boxes as a separate editable layer, containing any text to be translated.

□ White space & text expansion

Translated text will often be 20-30% longer than English.

Expansion can occur during the translation process - meaning that the same phrase in German may require more words or characters to convey the same meaning as the English.

Leave plenty of whitespace in your document to account for this text growth and avoid translations being truncated or running onto extra pages.

□ Tables

Use table functions to create tables. Avoid using tabs to “fake” table-like structures - this breaks segmentation and needs to be fixed manually before translation can continue. In most systems Word and InDesign, Table outlines can be switched on or off.

□ Bad Example:

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|------------|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| Working→ | → | → | Measuring→ | → | Continuous→ | → | High-quality |
| range→ | → | → | accuracy → | → | measurement→ | → | storage bag |

✓ □ Good Example:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Working Capital ratio | Measuring accuracy | Continuous improvement | High-definition video storage |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|



Print formats / Page formats

If you have specific print / publishing requirements (e.g., crop & bleed specifications, outlined / non-outlined PDFS) make sure that this is shared with your translator.

This way the translation team can deliver to you print ready PDF's. Most agencies can provide hi-res and lo-res PDFs to you as well.

Getting this sported in advance will eliminate rework- going back and forth.

You'll get the PDF's you need ready to go first time around. Saving time and money.

3. Translation Process

Workflow

Every manufacturer has a different system and process for developing their manuals.

Different companies have different needs. Work with your translator to customise a workflow that aligns with your needs.

Workflows can vary depending on the nature of the project (technical, marketing, software, multimedia, or simply just internal comprehension).

Things you may want to consider when designing your workflow:

Terminology

Terminology forms the basis of good quality translation.

A Terminology dictionary is a list of your key English terms with their corresponding translation or explanation, which translators can reference to select appropriate translations. This can be built from scratch, in consultation with your own internal resources or extracted from existing translations / glossaries.

Terminology is about accuracy and consistency, and is not limited to translation work. If your website advertises **tables**, your inventory stocks **desks** and your salespeople talk about **workstations** you need to get your terminology under control.

Think: What is correct term, what is the commonly used term, what is the term we want to use for our brand?

Doing this will mean your technical manuals match your marketing material and support content.

It delivers a better brand image and reduces the overall translation cost.

Quality

Human translation by professional translators with the relevant industry background is the benchmark for quality.

Professional standards such as ISO certification can be a quick method of evaluating competence.

Quality is about maintaining standards, which includes reducing risk of errors and correcting errors in the event of issues. Poor quality translation is usually not worth fixing – starting from scratch is usually a more economical use of your resources.

ISO9001 is the standard for quality processes. This shows the company follows a process for working and maintaining and fixing quality issues

ISO17100 is the standard for translation. It shows the agency has a process for recruiting, training and auditing its translators.


Look for  ISO9001 and  ISO17100 quality standards

HMI / Software / Machine Labels

Translate UI and Labels First

Best practice dictates that any machine / software / safety labels be translated first, and that manuals and other material should follow suit for consistency. Your manuals need to match your systems screens and interfaces.

If any / all of the content in these sources will remain in English, references in the manual itself should include the corresponding translation in brackets in order to provide context to the end user.

| Label as it will appear to end user | Reference in original manual | Reference in Italian manual |
|---|--|--|
|  | To perform an emergency stop on the current operation, press the "CANCEL" button | Per effettuare un'interruzione di emergenza dell'operazione in corso, premere il pulsante "CANCEL" [<i>Cancellare</i>] |

4. Plan for translation

Turnaround

Scheduling and estimating timeframes is a key aspect of project management.

- Has this turnaround time taken account of everything that is required in my workflow?
 - How much time is allocated for review, feedback, and updates?
- Is this a calculation based on approved final files, or a best estimate based on PDFs?
- Be wary of local holidays and schedules, e.g., Chinese New Year, Arabic work week etc.

How to Translate a 100 Page Manual

Here is a working example turnaround table for a new 30,000-word, 100-page technical manual for translation into German.

Some items you might need to consider are :

| <u>Service</u> | <u>Turnaround</u> | <u>Notes / Comments</u> |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Terminology Dictionary Creation | 2 working days | Terminology work is completed on the first project for a given language and added to over time. Customer glossaries can be used in place of creating new terminology dictionaries |
| Terminology Translation | 2 working days | |
| Terminology review by the sales team | 1 working day | |
| Professional (Human) Translation | 20-25 working days | 1 translator = 1,200 to 1,500 words per day. Additional translators can be used to reduce costs. Translation Memory Storage reduces future costs & turnarounds. |
| Separate Proofreading | 5 working days | 1 proofreader = 6,000 words per day |
| Customer Translation Review | 5 working days | Length determined at the client's discretion |
| DTP / Layout work | 3-4 working days | Typesetting and formatting to create ready-to-publish documents |
| Quality Checks & Delivery | 1 working day | Per ISO 9001 standards. |

Budget

Ensure that quotes list all the services you require in their workflow.

The level of translator specialism required by the content may impact cost

E.g., Specialist medical, legal, and highly niche technical fields could be as much as 30% more expensive than standard technical content.

Choose providers that will store Translation Memory (TM) for you so that you can benefit from cost savings over time. Translation memory can dramatically discount update costs, as well as translations of similar content in future.

Finalise files before beginning translation as updates can be very costly mid-way through projects.

With cost, languages matter. European languages are typically cheaper to produce than Asian languages. Similarly, DTP/layout work is more expensive in non-Latin alphabets and may require different software to process correctly.

DTP/layout work pricing scales with the complexity of the document, and the application used to produce it. Word documents are cheaper to translate than InDesign, which is cheaper than Illustrator or Photoshop (which should be reserved for more complex standalone graphics).

5. Review

☐ Stakeholders

Managing feedback in an effective and efficient manner

Do you have someone that wants to review the translation before it is published?

This could be your sales people, technical managers or your in-country distributors.

Map out stakeholders early – departments, distributors, sales reps, clients

Think about who wants to have input, who needs to have input, and who has strong opinions.

Establish who is the “*Single Source of Truth*” for technical matters, to avoid conflict and ensure consistency

☐ Feedback Management

Use one reviewer at a time to avoid “competing version syndrome”. Agree a single method of tracking inputs with all stakeholders, e.g., PDF comments or Track Changes.

Types of translation errors and how to address them...

Grammatical / Spelling

Professional translators seldom make mistakes. However, stakeholders can occasionally add a spelling mistake in last minute changes during the rush to get a manual out the door. Make sure that feedback does not introduce simple mistakes right before you go to print.

Terminology

Set this from the outset by sharing glossaries...

Tone / Stylistic

Translation should fit the tone of your organization. If you have a style guide be sure to share this with the translators early on.

Preferential

Sometimes it's insight, sometimes it's opinion. Whatever else – nobody knows your brand, customers and wider markets and industries better than you do. And if that means overruling your translator on a decision so be it!

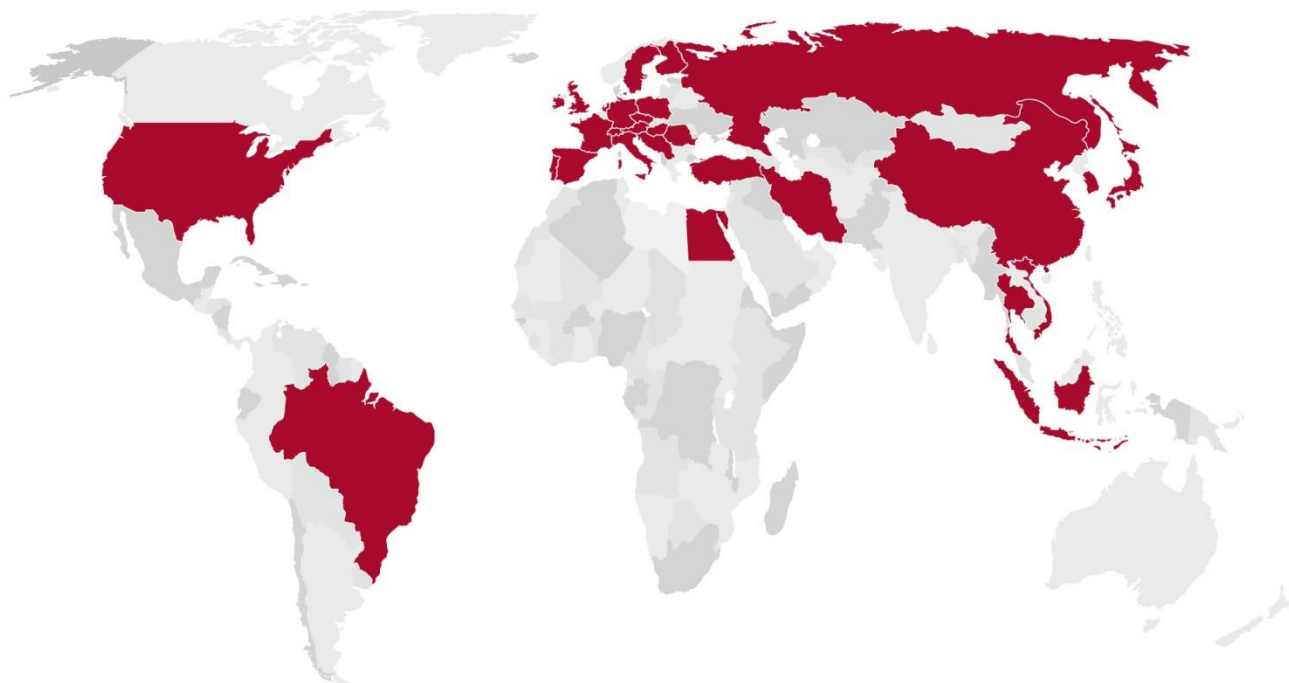


For tools to help manage this process, check out WebCheck - STAR's review management portal <https://www.star-ts.com/software/webcheck-online-review-system/>

If you found this guide useful you might be interested in our other guides:

- Software Translation
- Website Translation
- Marketing Document Translation
- Chinese Translation
- Arabic Translation





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