



Language Service Providers

The right language
service provider will
grow your business



Understand the differences and make a smart choice.

If you're in the process of selecting a language service provider (LSP) for the first time, you'll find some helpful guidance on these pages so you can make a smart choice. Our goal is to save you time, money and aggravation, and help make you more successful in your international growth.

If you're shopping for a LSP all over again, you may find some pointers here that you can add to the list of things you already learned the hard way.

Question #1: Should you price shop?

Don't even think about it. As is the case with any service, long-term value is a far more important measure of ROI. If you believe translation services are a commodity, this guide is not for you.

And, in fact, if you go with a cut-rate translation company then you should prepare yourself for a few unpleasant surprises, such as potential hidden costs, having to retranslate your content all over again, and worse, lost international revenue due to quality or compliance issues.

Action: Hire the best.

Where should you begin?

Your first order of business is to identify your needs. Consider the following:

- The quality of the translations needed
- Industry and subject matter expertise
- Scope of work – what all needs to be translated (product, legal, marketing, etc)
- Language requirements
- Turnaround times
- Company growth plans
- Technology requirements – both present and future
- Value-added services
- Pricing structure – make sure you understand ALL of the fees
- Escalation paths – what to do if things go wrong

Action : Know your priorities and create an RFP (Request for Proposal) calling for specific answers to each of your questions.

Who should you trust?

Without exception, trust only accomplished professionals. It's fair to demand that your translators have many years of industry experience as well as advanced academic degrees and accreditation from the American Translators Association, as well as their local, in-country translation associations.

Action: Ask for detailed credentials.

Does bigger mean better?

It doesn't. Does this mean you should avoid the large LSPs with 100 or more employees? It doesn't. It means you should understand how differently-sized LSPs operate.

Larger companies may indeed provide vast resources capable of handling multiple million-plus word assignments simultaneously. However, to cover their costs, they often concentrate primarily on major accounts. So, if you don't have millions of dollars to spend on them, you may not get the attention you need. They're also likely to have numerous administrative layers and force you to deal with more protocol and complicated process than you need or want. You may also get inundated with various sales and business development calls from different parts of the LSP.

On the other end of the spectrum, you'll find a large number of localization companies with very small in-house personnel. Smaller firms are likely to be more attentive, but may not have the ability to quickly scale their services to meet your needs. They may also not have the needed depth and breadth of industry experience to handle whatever you throw at them as well as budget and know-how to avail themselves of the latest and greatest technologies to help you streamline your workflows.

Action: "Right size" your search by considering your service needs and scale.

Is it wise to spread your work around?

Working with multiple LSPs is a common, but potentially dangerous, tactic. The temptation is obvious, as you don't put all of your eggs into one basket. The truth of the matter, though, is that dividing large projects and various content types up by regions, nations, or languages introduces all kinds of compromises with branding issues, compliance, layout styles, and inconsistent writing conventions. Not to mention the added headaches of keeping multiple Translation Memories (TMs) consistently updated.

Action: Find ONE translation partner capable of meeting your global needs.

Does “outsourcing” mean you should stay out of the process?

No. Don't confuse translations with online shopping. Getting results is a process, that relies on a partnership you're an integral part of. Your new LSP should be able to guide you through the onboarding process so that both sides can be successful. This will involve making your workforce available to your translation vendor. Especially at the outset of a new translation program, you should expect a learning curve and make your company resources available to your new business partner.

Your linguists should work closely with your teams and international stakeholders to develop an effective working relationship and not just engage on a purely transactional basis.

Action: Find a partner who demonstrates they really want to form a partnership.

Should you require ISO certification?

ISO certification is an indicator of how important (or not) quality management is to your prospective LSP vendor. With an ISO 9001 QMS (Quality Management System) in place, your vendor is able to offer standard controls for documentation, corrective and preventive actions, internal auditing, and project and resource management procedures.

Your potential LSP may not offer credentials such as ISO certification because it requires up to \$10K in annual audit costs and more than 100-man hours/year.

Action: If you have quality management concerns, ask about ISO certification.

What should you expect from your project manager?

The success of your projects depends largely on the professionals who manage them. It's smart to know how your account will be managed. Turnover is high in the LSP business and in an effort to grow fast, some companies will bring on project managers without academic degrees or any hands-on experience in language and localization.

Action: Ask for specific background information about the people who will manage your business. After all, these are the people with whom you will be working on a day-to-day basis and who you should come to view as an extension of your in-house team.

What are your technology needs?

Be sure to ask about your prospective partner's approach to translation management systems (TMS). Your TMS will perform vital roles in simplifying, streamlining, and accelerating localization processes for all kinds of content, while providing the team extensive analytics and reporting tools.

An LSP with no TMS to offer is likely to rely on antiquated systems such as FTP sites or even just spreadsheets. Larger firms frequently develop proprietary systems, which may require frequent updates and introduce some compatibility issues and/or integration limitations. It is often the case that larger translation buyers need to invest in making sure that their own systems work seamlessly with those of their large LSPs.

The LSP capable of offering the greatest flexibility will support a variety of TMS systems. Some make the systems available to you free and offer solutions for integrating TMS with content management systems. The best vendors will have access to not only TMS but a variety of quality assurance, content management, automation, and interoperability technologies that will help your team become more efficient as well as ensure that you are ready for the future.

Action: Understand your options for translation management systems and be ready to engage your techs with theirs.

Can you stay connected?

You should expect 24/7 accesses to all your information—from program statistics, to individual project progress, quotes, purchase orders, billing, savings, invoices, and more.

Action: Ask your LSP if it can offer an always-on, secure, and free web-based project lifecycle solution.

Will you create multimedia?

Now that web content is largely audio and video, if you plan to create multilingual media, look into the support you'll get from your LSP. Most have no inhouse studio resources or direct multimedia expertise, so will have no choice, but to outsource the work and be dependent on their subvendors' schedules and rates.

Action: Think in advance about your multimedia content development and localization needs.

How safe is your international expansion?

To what extent can your prospective LSP be your in-country guide to help you steer clear of potential legal, licensing, marketing, and political issues in each of your target markets? While it is clear that going overseas is more than just getting your product brochures translated, many companies venture out without the sufficient local expertise so as to avoid embarrassing situations, blowing their entire international marketing budget, and getting eaten alive by the local competition – and worse – the local buyers and even authorities.

Aspects such as safe harbor consulting, legal counsel, market research, and per-country labelling guidelines, as well as minimum local language support guidelines, are things that you can learn about in two ways: one – getting burned by bad experiences, or two – having a trusted business partner who can help you navigate the international waters.

Action: Think beyond words and ensure that you and your products are locally compliant.

What else should you ask your potential LSP?

Our hope is the insights you've gained from this document help you understand how to make a savvy decision to select an LSP partner for the long run. Because the process generally involves a request for proposal (RFP), we offer the following suggestions as questions to pose to a prospective partner.

- How long have you been in business?
- How many clients do you currently have in our industry?
- May I talk to your clients?
- How many full-time employees work at your company?
- How long have your project managers been with your company?
- Do they have a specific localization-related degree?
- Where are your offices? Are they physical, virtual, or home sales offices?
- Can I tour your facility?
- Do you have and use a quality assurance manual, as required for ISO and EN Certification?
- Are your linguistic resources tested on an ongoing basis? How?
- May I see your resource evaluation tools and sample test records?
- Do you offer personnel for IS maintenance and support services?
- Can you provide DOD-level data security? Are you ITAR registered?
- Can you build an unconventional program tailored to my company's unique needs?
- Will you devote a full-time project team to my account? (Consisting at minimum of a dedicated Account Manager, Project Manager, and Localization Engineer)
- Is your team available for regular on-site meetings at my company?
- What are your rates and what specific services are covered by them?
- Do you provide machine translation and is your approach transparent?
- What additional services do you provide that would enhance our international launches?
- How are you uniquely positioned to be our ideal international business partner?

Lastly, to get to know any potential LSP, do some investigative homework by checking for quality web content in your candidate's blog posts and downloadable guides, perusing its social presence on Facebook or Twitter, and checking individual employee profiles on LinkedIn. There are over 20,000 LSPs worldwide. Many of them have flashy websites, but not all have a substantive production back office, technology know-how, nor permanent, well-trained staff.

You have many choices and MediaLocate may or may not be the right fit for you. However, we are happy to answer any of the above questions ... and more.



WE SPEAK HUMAN

If you've been searching awhile for the right language service provider, this may all sound familiar. Unlike some, however, **MEDIALOCATE** proves its value to you not just in our words ... but in our work!

Call us now at **1.800.776.0857**.

GET A FREE ESTIMATE

US REGIONAL SUPPORT

WEST COAST

995 Rosecrans Street
San Diego, CA 92106
Phone: 619-487-1394
SD_info@medialocate.com

EAST COAST

404 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10018
Phone: 609-216-5975
NYC_info@medialocate.com

GLOBAL PRODUCTION

SLOVAKIA

Podzamska 21
949 01 Nitra
Slovak Republic
slovakia@medialocate.com

RUSSIA

8 Rudnichniy Street
Stary Oskol
Belgorod
Russia, 309517
russia@medialocate.com

CHINA

Plaza 66 Tower II
1366 Nanjing Road West, 15th Floor
Shanghai, China 200040
shanghai@medialocate.com

SINGAPORE

#44-01 Suntec Tower One
7 Temasek Boulevard
Singapore 038987
singapore@medialocate.com

THAILAND

3703 B.B. Building (7th Floor)
54 Sukhumvit 21 Rd.
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
thailand@medialocate.com

KOREA

3rd Floor, Wonkwang Building,
283-4 Neung-dong, Kwangjin-gu,
Seoul, Korea
korea@medialocate.com

JAPAN

31F Osaka Kokusai Building
2-3-13 Azuchi-machi, Chuo-ku,
Osaka 541-0052, Japan
japan@medialocate.com