

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

15 Questions You Should Ask Your Language Service Providers in Order to Make the Right Choice

Question #1- Linguist Staffing: how do you recruit your linguists, confirm their experience, run background checks, assess their legal work status?

Hint: Translators have to be native speakers of the target language. Translators, editors and other vendors should be selected according to specific requirements relating to their education, linguistic, research, cultural, technical and other competences, and based on their language proficiency and subject-area specialization. Being a bilingual person (without necessary competences/experience) is not enough for completing a translation project.

Question #2 – Industry Expertise: do you have proven experience in my specific industry?

Hint: In the translation services industry, just as in any other professional field, there are translators with specific areas of expertise. You must look for professionals that have proven/ documented experience in your specific industry. Such professionals will be familiar with the concepts and terminology used in your documents, and therefore capable and competent to deliver accurate and ready-to-use translation.

Question #3 – Trained Professional Translators: how do you train translators in legal, financial, technical, medical and other specific terminology, or for use of necessary style guides, technical tools; how are they certified?

Hint: Upon initial selection of translators according to standard requirements, professional Language Service Providers (LSPs) regularly monitor performance of their vendors, and encourage them to pursue training opportunities such as web-based training in modern CAT tools and specific industry terminology offered by professional websites. Professional LSPs offer their own training programs to their in-house staff and contracted vendors; systematically develop and monitor the application of their own specific style guides and glossaries for specific translation projects, and rigorously follow the style guides/glossaries provided by the Clients.

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Please keep in mind that translators are normally certified in one language combination, and not all language combinations have certified translators. Certified translators are mostly needed when people translate personal documents (academic transcripts, certificates etc.). Being certified as a result of passing a standard examination that is based on generic texts, does not mean that the translator has experience in particular technical/medical or other field. A professional LSP that has all necessary government permits and licenses to conduct translation business will guarantee that your documents will be translated by professional translators that have relevant training and expertise in your specific field.

Question #4 - Professional Credibility: are you a member of any professional and/or industry associations?

Hint: *Verify membership in professional and/or industry associations, such as ATA, Boards of Trade, Better Business Bureau; check the website pictures of the office, real people/employees; call the contact telephone numbers to make sure you don't always get a voice mail.*

Question #5 - Technology Infrastructure: do you own and operate your own computer systems and infrastructure? Describe them in detail.

Hint: *Professional LSPs necessarily have standard hardware and software for computer network functioning, as well as relevant equipment of individual workstations, and ensure sophisticated IT support in operating their computer systems and infrastructure. For example, a standard Microsoft Office suite typically includes a wide range of components such as word processing with relevant fonts and formatting features, spreadsheet tools and presentation programs. Modern telecommunications solutions often include VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), multi-line telephones, voicemail system and other customer-oriented solutions.*

Question #6 - Technical Competence: do you use any computer-assisted software for translation projects?

Hint: *Technical competence means that a professional LSP will have necessary technology to deal with various document formats and technical requirements. Your documents that require translation may be in hard copies or soft copies. Professional LSP will always take your specific needs into consideration and will offer you the best solution for your specific situation. For example, electronic documents can be translated using CAT tools (computer-assisted translation software, such as translation memory, terminology management etc.), which can result in savings of up to 50%.*

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Question #7 - Efficiency: what is your average time to start a project, what is your on-time delivery rate and can you validate your numbers?

***Hint:** An efficient LSP will normally respond to your initial request for quote within 24 hours, and sometimes within minutes. Keep in mind that a professional LSP will not take your project without checking the availability of necessary resources/ not being sure that it is capable to deliver the requested translation on time. In case of unforeseen circumstances, most professional LSPs will offer a guarantee that, for example, if you translation is late 5 hours or more without due cause, you will receive 5% off for each next hour of delayed delivery up to 5 more hours, after which the project is free.*

Question #8 - Quality assurance: how do you maintain control that is necessary to guarantee translation quality and translator accountability? Do you subcontract or outsource jobs in specific languages?

***Hint:** A professional translation agency always applies a number of quality assurance procedures tailored to your needs and budget to ensure that your documents are properly and accurately represented in different languages. Such procedures are based on a standardized approach to project management and quality assurance and, in addition to pre-production project needs analysis, post-production assessment and revisions etc., might include such services as in-country expert review, back-translation, editing and proofreading, post-Desktop Publishing review and many others.*

Please keep in mind that no translation agency can afford to have in house translators in all language combinations times numerous specializations. But the standard process of professional LSPs is always based on relevant quality management system, and therefore quality assurance procedures are applied to all translation projects to guarantee the final product/ service quality.

Question #9 - Accessibility/reliability: how do you guarantee accessibility/reliability? Will I be able to come back with my questions/ any justified revisions after I receive the translation?

***Hint:** Professional LSPs are equipped with relevant on-line tools and apply modern technologies in their communications with the Clients. You should be able to call/e-mail your translation project manager at any stage of the translation project. If you have questions/wish to make changes in your document after you receive the translation, professional LSPs will offer a reasonable time period for addressing justified concerns free of charge.*

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Question #10 - Tight deadlines: Are you capable of meeting my tight deadlines? Do you have enough backup resources?

Hint: *If you have a rush project, you should keep in mind that the average translator can do 1,500-2,000 words a day. Therefore in order to complete your rush project, the translation will have to be split among several translators, and then quality assurance procedures will have to be applied to ensure consistency in terminology, style etc. It will require such services as editing and finalizing. Professional LSPs use their international resources that allow working around the clock/providing all necessary services and backup to deliver a ready-to-use translation, and meet the deadlines.*

Question #11: Project management/ document management system: do you have a project management/ document management system in place?

Hint: *In modern business, where everything is done online or over the phone, you have to make sure that you are speaking to someone who can fully understand the purpose of your translations, your goals and requirements. If the project manager does not understand what you need, you can imagine what kind of translation you will receive in the end. The LSP of your choice must have professional project managers, and such sophisticated translation management software as, for example, XTRF or OTM.*

Keep in mind that you have a lot of documents, some of which may be very similar, you might not realize that some of your documents were already translated last year, and in this and other similar situations, a professional LSP can help you save money by properly identifying and tracking documents. Professional project manager will help you categorize your documents and determine an appropriate level of service/minimize your expenses. Your documents might be critical or non-critical or just intended for information purposes. Therefore only the first category will require certification/will be most costly, while the third one, where you just need to find out key information, can be done at a minimum cost using less qualified linguists or maybe Machine Translation tools.

Question #12 - Confidentiality of information: how do you protect confidentiality of information?

Hint: *Most countries have laws and regulations requiring every corporation to protect confidential information. Such laws are rigorously enforced around the world, especially in Canada and the US. So you if you are dealing with a professional LSP, the latter will abide by the laws of the country where it is incorporated, and will guarantee the protection of confidential information in your documents. Professional LSPs will be ready to sign Non-Disclosure or Confidentiality Agreements with their Clients.*

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Question #13 - Privacy: what measures do you have in place to ensure data security, customer privacy?

***Hint:** Professional LSPs guarantee that privacy of your communications will not be jeopardized in any manner, as all employees of professional LSPs are bound by the obligations of Non-Disclosure Agreements with their employer. Data security is guaranteed by usage of secure data servers, such as, for example, Samba, Egnyte cloud file server, that are always password-protected. Dealing with a professional LSP you should rest assured that all communication tools and equipment will guarantee safe and confidential handling, storage, retrieval, archiving and disposal of documents and data.*

Question #14 - Business Continuity: how does your technology enable you to scale services for surges in demand, ensure complete redundancy and recovery during unanticipated service disruptions? How quickly can you do that?

***Hint:** Professional LSPs will ensure that your electronic files will be stored in a secure world-class data center with redundant back-up and internet connection options. So there is a very low or no risk of service disruption due to technical reasons/ server or application failure when dealing with a professional LSP. Most professional LSPs use their resources/vendors in different countries/ time zones that allows them to work around the clock, during holidays and weekends, and respond to increased client's demand with relevant supply engaging necessary resources of their international teams.*

Question #15: How can I pay for your services?

***Hint:** Professional LSPs always try to accommodate their Clients' needs and preferences to the maximum extent possible, and offer flexible payment terms. Payment methods might include wire transfer/ direct deposit to the LSP account, online payment by credit card, a check, or cash payment and many others. Keep in mind that if you work with a professional LSP as opposed to an individual translator overseas you don't have to worry about overseas payment charges, different time zones, taxes and other expenses that might end up costing you twice as much as the translation itself.*

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS.

Contact ABC Language Solutions

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