Newsletter of the Translation Company Division of the American Translators Association

ATA TCD News

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Letter from Marina Ilari, Administrator of the ATA TCD

It is my wish that everyone reading this is healthy and well. We are now living in a "new normal" and many companies have had to adapt to a virtual work environment during the current global pandemic. Some companies have had to adapt their business model entirely and pivot. Most of us have had to leave behind the days of traveling for conferences and doing in-person networking. The new reality has pushed us to perform our work virtually.

The TCD plans have had to change and adapt as well. Our division would usually host an annual networking event during the ATA conference, among other networking opportunities during the conference. This year, we decided to focus our efforts on our newsletter and other virtual endeavors, such as webinars and the virtual conference. Adapting to an online setting can certainly be an adjustment, but I hope it also allows for more members to be present during the conference—perhaps members who wouldn't have been able to travel to Boston will now be able to join us from both near and far.

I want to thank our assistant administrator, Alaina Brandt, and the dedicated leadership council for all their work with TCD. This has been a difficult year for everyone and your support and enthusiasm for TCD's activities have been invaluable. It's important to mention that the division is made possible with the work of volunteers who believe in our mission to provide opportunities for division members to network, as well as to promote collaboration between translation companies and independent translators.

I hope to see you at our TCD annual meeting via Zoom during the virtual conference. We look forward to sharing what the division has been working on and providing a space for members to network and get to know one another.

Thank you again to our kind volunteers.

I hope you all stay safe and healthy!

Marina Ilari

Administrator of the Translation Company Division of the American Translators Association

Interview with Kit Brown-Hoekstra, Distinguished Speaker of the TCD for the ATA conference

Professional Background:

Katherine (Kit) Brown-Hoekstra is an award-winning writer and consultant with a background in the life sciences and 25+ years of experience in the technical communication field. She is currently the Principal for Comgenesis, LLC, which provides consulting services and training to clients on internationalizing and improving the usability of their documentation, developing a coherent content strategy and content model, as well as more traditional technical writing and editing services.

During her career, Kit has worked with technical experts worldwide to successfully develop strategies and processes for creating content for a variety of global audiences, ranging from government agencies to technicians, physicians, and software end-users. Her work includes content strategy, process improvement, content audits and other analysis, usability testing and other research, as well as content creation for multichannel publishing and more traditional writing and editing. Kit holds a Master of Science degree in Technical Communication and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, both from Colorado State University.

Kit is a certified trainer for STC's Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) program, a 2017 Winner of the Communication and Leadership Award for Toastmasters (District 26), a 2016 MindTouch Top 25 Content Strategist and 2017 Content Experience Influencer, a 2016 inductee of the Colorado State Media Hall of Fame, a Fellow and a former Society president (2014-15) for the Society for Technical Communication (STC).

She speaks at many conferences worldwide. In 2017, she edited *The Language of Localization*. In 2006, she coauthored (with Brenda Huettner and Char James-Tanny) *Managing Virtual Teams: Getting the Most from Wikis, Blogs, and Other Collaborative Tools*. In addition, she is a former editor of *IEEE-PCS News, and a contributor to Multilingual*, *TC World*, and *Intercom*, among other publications. Her blog is www.pangaeapapers.com.

We are very excited about your presentations at the ATA conference. Will you tell us more about your experience in the translation and localization industry?

Dick Crum (now deceased) was my first exposure to localization when he came and spoke at a chapter meeting for the Society for Technical Communication in 1991 or 1992. He was an entertaining speaker and great at explaining what we needed to be aware of. Later, my former employer (medical device co) had to develop a localization program to meet some new regulatory requirements. I was tasked with figuring out how to make it work, and Dick was our advisor in that process. When I went to a software company, they were working on an internationalization project, and I helped with the strategy for the user documentation. I was hooked!

In 2000, ILE advertised for a position in Boise, ID that seemed tailor-made for my background. By the time I started, they had merged with Lionbridge. I worked as a solutions development consultant and trainer for a couple of years, and then went out on my own in 2003. Since then, I've worked in the space between technical communication and localization helping LSPs work more effectively with their clients and with global companies to help them create better global-ready content and processes, so that my clients can serve their customers wherever they live and work.

It's been an interesting and fun journey.

Will you give us a summary of your sessions "Measuring Value: Helping Clients Turn Content into Business Assets" and "Pulling Localization Upstream: Integrating Content and Localization Processes"?

Measuring Value: Helping Clients Turn Content into Business Assets

This concept of content as an asset rather than a cost center has been percolating for years. More and more companies have started to recognize this, which is why we are seeing some convergence in technical communication and marketing content. Think about all the things we measure during the localization process, such as turnaround time, word count, linguistic quality, reuse, terminology consistency, etc. Even more qualitatively, what are the things that your clients do with their content that is costing them money? That makes your job harder? That drives you crazy? These data could help our clients 1) make their content more global-ready, 2) improve localization quality by improving source quality, 3) save clients money 4) builds more of a partnership with the LSP and so on. (Many things that cause major problems in localization are relatively easy to fix on the source side if the client only knows about it). We will talk about all of these things and some strategies that you can use to work more effectively with your clients.

Pulling Localization Upstream: Integrating Content and Localization Processes

Technology in the past 10 years has matured to the point where we can now do things we only dreamed of at the beginning of my career. With content management systems, structured content, automation, we can provide higher quality content in the local language, in the right format, at the right time, for the right audience than ever before. We can personalize that content as well based on preferences, device, role, etc. In addition, customers expect local versions of products at the same time as the source versions are available. In this environment, localization teams can't afford to be the caboose on the product release train. To accommodate these needs, we need to pull localization upstream in the development process and make it more Agile. This means that both localization teams and technical communication teams needs to understand what the other side does and where their pain points are. We will talk about where tech comm and localization are similar and different and where you have opportunity for being a better partner with your clients.

What inspired you to present at the ATA conference?

I have always wanted to speak at this conference because there is so much synergy and similarity between ATA and STC, which are sister organizations in many ways. We could learn so much from each other by working more closely together, publishing articles in each other's journals/magazines, and taking the time to understand the constraints and limitations each team is under.

You currently work providing consulting on localization and content strategy. What do you like most about this type of work?

The tagline for my company is "Communication for a connected world." I firmly believe that we change the world by doing our jobs well. When we teach people how to communicate across cultures more effectively, we make the world a better and safer place for all of us. Our work is part of the infrastructure and is often invisible until it's broken. By connecting the dots between what we do and the impact it has on the world, we build bridges and friendships.

So, I love helping teams solve problems. I love it when teams connect what they are doing with how it affects other teams downstream from them. I love it when teams recognize the impact of their work on the larger world and how important what we do is. I love it when the cultural light bulb goes on and teams start looking at their content through new eyes.

What is the most important take-away that you will want from attendees of your presentations?

I hope each attendee finds at least one practical thing that they can take back and implement with their clients. I want everyone to come away with a renewed sense of the value and importance of their work.

Four Project Managers shed light on their careers, challenges, and futures

A few years ago, I was walking around the ballroom at the Welcome Celebration on the first night of the ATA Annual Conference alongside one of my Project Manager colleagues. As we made our way around the tables of all the different ATA divisions, we asked each other, “Where’s the table for the PMs?” This set the stage for a group within ATA for PMs to meet one another and to network, and it took the form of a Special Interest Group within the Translation Company Division.

Translation and localization project management has emerged as a profession in its own right, and careers in this field can be as varied as the translations we manage. In the ensuing years since that Welcome Celebration, I have continued to meet fellow PMs whose skills, responsibilities, and challenges were so interesting and varied, it sometimes seemed that we weren’t even in the same profession. PMs don’t often have opportunities to meet other PMs outside their own company or their specific industry sector, yet we all can benefit from learning about the career paths and aspirations of others who share our line of work.

In an effort to highlight a few PM careers and come to a deeper understanding of our role in translation companies and other language service providers, I interviewed four professional Project Managers in the translation / localization field about what their jobs look like, how they got into the business, what they do for professional development, and where they hope this career will lead. These four PMs work for companies ranging from small to very large, and in that order, their profiles are presented here.

Profile 1: Our first PM (PM1) works for a small, women-owned translation company that employs a few freelance PMs on an as-needed basis. She and her sister run the business and handle most of their clients' requests. PM1 studied translation in college and her professional work as a translator led to job opportunities as a translation Project Manager. The experience and insight she gained in her advancing career as a PM made her realize that she wanted to manage her own translation company.

As part of her daily work, PM1 manages the entire life cycle of translation projects from initial client contact to delivery. This includes obtaining all necessary information from the client, understanding their requirements, making a quote, planning, outsourcing, managing the workflow, and preparing deliverables and invoices. PM1 stays active in the translation industry and works with professional organizations. "Professional development is key in this industry, which is why I always take time to attend events, training sessions, webinars, [and] conferences." She sponsors and organizes events on behalf of her company, giving her access to resources and training/networking opportunities. She also translates as part of her daily work, having obtained the education, experience, and certifications that have prepared her to work both as a Translator and a Project Manager.

PM1 sees her career in the translation / localization industry as her true calling, and she has found a good balance between her work as a linguist and as a PM as she continues to grow her company.

Profile 2: The second PM works for a small to medium-sized language service company, currently with three staff PMs but looking to add more. PM2 came to this career with a background in IT, project management, and engineering. He had extensive experience prior to working in the language industry, and noted, "Every position I held and academic course I took has been helpful at some point, including 30 years of military experience."

While PM2 is responsible for sales and marketing, quality control, and IT support, he also assists with reviews, and his company has a proprietary TMS that he is always working to improve. Much of his company's work deals with environmental, health, and safety regulations, so knowing which regulations to use as references and making those available in the translation memories and termbases to assist other reviewers is a key part of his job.

PM2 keeps on the top of new technology through webinars and web-based research. In the future, he hopes to shift to more of an advisory or consulting role in his job. In his company, a new PM can seek the opportunity to attain a Senior PM designation, typically around the five-year mark. From there, the option exists to become a member of the executive staff at the company in a director role.

Profile 3: The third PM owns and operates a multi-language vendor with 25 in-house translation/localization managers on staff. He began his career as a freelance translator in the mid-1990s and then worked for several years as an English-language abstractor. As owner of his company, PM3's daily work involves leading the multiple units of his business and guiding them strategically through their operations. He signs checks, works closely with his accounting department, and strives to run a tight ship. He also recognizes that he holds the primary responsibility in his company for customer satisfaction and for ensuring the wellbeing of all his employees. PM3 also translates as part of his job, and he thinks of himself first as a translator. "I've been translating for 25 years, and while we have teams of linguists handling our projects for us, I still see to it that I translate at least some of our projects." He keeps up on industry trends through extensive online research and through collaboration with his coworkers.

When asked about his career plans down the road, PM3 replied: "As the business owner it might be more proper to answer this with a view towards our plans for our own PMs." He hopes that in five to ten years, his PMs would be properly credentialled, highly trained, and self-sufficient decision makers who go beyond simply managing projects to running the "front-facing" operations of the company at a granular level. "I see [PMs] as accomplished analysts of situations, making the most of current circumstances to come up with results that will benefit all stakeholders."

Profile 4: Our fourth PM works for a large LSP that employs about 350 Service / Project Managers. She started her career prepared with an education in language, literature, and political studies as well as experience as a professional translator. While she no longer works as a PM, her initial PM work developed into a career in the language / globalization industry spanning more than thirty years. When she worked as a PM, her daily tasks would include CAT tool prep, file analysis, quotes, scheduling, and communication with the project team. She would keep up with the latest technology by reading industry news and publications. Her company would also conduct trainings and "lunch & learns". Her conversations with colleagues and her general curiosity also have helped in her development. PM3's career trajectory went from PM and Account Manager to Globalization Consultant, and she now holds the title of Director of Tools and Technology Support.

I questioned all four PMs about burnout, and they all were in agreement that it is a common concern in this industry. Causes mentioned included inefficient time management, wearing too many hats, and the constant pressure to meet deadlines and exceed client expectations. One PM spoke about his company's success in dealing with burnout through the fostering of a culture of "collaborative pace-setting," an approach that allowed his team to be more flexible with the tactics they were using to achieve their goals. Another PM's advice for avoiding burnout was "knowing when to let go and making sure to always keep a healthy perspective." Another PM mentioned the value of rotating roles and allowing staff to perform different functions whenever possible. "Training someone outside their initial role builds their confidence and keeps the job fresh." Personal self-care is also an important skill to build in order to be more proficient and more productive professionals.

Are you a translator who has also worked as a Project Manager? Are you interested in networking with other Project Managers in the translation / localization industry and with the ATA? Come meet fellow PMs and share your stories with us at the Translation Company Division meeting at #ATA61.

About the author: Ray Valido (he/him/his) is the Coordinator of the Project Manager Special Interest Group within ATA's Translation Company Division. He is a Translation Project Manager at the Office of Language Services at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., and is in charge of the office's multilingual desktop publishing (DTP) program. Ray holds an MA in Translation and Localization Management (Spanish) from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Contact: ray.valido@gmail.com.


Image: freepik.com

Industry Standards Demystified – Part 4

By: Monika Popiolek, ATA TCD Newsletter and Blog contributor and ISO/CEN industry standards expert

ISO 17100:2015 Translation services – Requirements for translation services

ISO 17100:2015 defines a set of best practices for managing translation services and sets minimum requirements that have to be met in order to demonstrate a translation service provider's (TSP's) conformity with the standard. Adhering to these best practices and requirements helps to design and manage a translation process that delivers a quality translation service and product.

ISO 17100:2015 provides requirements for the core processes, resources, and other aspects necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service that meets applicable specifications. Applicable specifications can include those of the client, of the TSP itself, and of any relevant industry codes, best-practice guides, or legislation.

The use of raw output from machine translation, with or without post-editing, is outside the scope of ISO 17100:2015, and the standard does not apply to interpreting services.

ISO published this standard on 1 May 2015 as the first international standard for translation service requirements. While it is not the only set of best practices for translation out there, it is definitely the most important one, and adaptation of this standard by the industry has been phenomenal (at least 10,000 TSPs worldwide claim to have implemented this standard).

ISO 17100 was based on the previous European standard EN 15038:2006, which was developed within CEN and published in May 2006. In spite of the fact that ISO 17100 was based on EN 15038, it is a completely reworked and updated standard, and it went through the complete standardization process at ISO. The result is a really good standard which serves TSPs, buyers of translation, and the community very well.

There are several requirements to which the TSP must adhere in order to meet the requirements of ISO 17100. The TSP needs to acquire qualified and competent human resources, proper technical resources, and design process workflows which meet the requirements of the standard. The standard also states that the TSP is fully responsible for the entire translation project.

Human resources are very important to the standard. There must be a documented HR process in place. The standard sets out specific qualifications and competencies for the various people involved in a translation project such as translators, revisers, and project managers. However, it is not enough for the translation company to check that people have these competencies and qualifications. They must also be kept on record and these records must be regularly updated.

ISO 17100 states that there must be a written agreement between the client and the translation service provider. If the client and the TSP come to this agreement over the phone or email, the TSP is expected to write it up and send it to the client as confirmation of what has been agreed. The standard also requires that the client knows beforehand what the translation project will cost because they have to receive a quote from the TSP.

Communication is essential to meeting requirements of this standard. ISO 17100 states that queries in both directions must be dealt with effectively. The same applies to feedback which has to be relayed to all the individuals involved in the project. It also specifies that there must be a process for communicating any information relating to linguistic specifications.

In all cases the workflow for an ISO 17100 translation project shall involve translation as well as full revision of the translated target content by a reviser who has the same competencies and high qualifications as the translator. This ensures that the two pairs of eyes principle is applied in the translation process and is very important for translation quality assessment. The project must also be managed by a competent project manager who can demonstrate their qualifications.

Read the full article here: http://ata-tcd.com/industry-standards-demystified-part-4/

References: https://www.iso.org/standard/59149.html

About the author: Monika Popiolek has an MA in English, an Executive MBA and is a graduate of a PhD Management Programme. She has been a specialist translator and interpreter for over thirty years and is also an authorised certified legal translator, CEO of MAart Agency Ltd. since 1991, President of the Polish Association of Translation Companies (PSBT) since 2009, Head of National Delegation and Chair of the ISO TC 37 Mirror Committee at PKN, OASIS, ISO and CEN expert since 2007, the EUATC Liaison Rep. to ISO TC 37, member of ATA, and many other organisations. Monika is the author of many publications, member of the editorial board of the JIAL journal (John Benjamins Publishing Company) and has presented at more than 25 international conferences. Her research specializations are: quality management, translation quality assurance, specialist translation and standards (particularly ISO 17100, ISO 9001, ISO/IEC 82079-1, ISO 27001, ISO 20771). She was one of the editors for the ISO 17100 (Translation services – Requirements), Project Leader for two ISO standards (ISO 20771 and ISO 21999), and is the manager of the ISO TC 37 LinkedIn Industry Standards Group.

You can find and contact her on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/monika-popiolek-a7a296/.

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Pricing Primer for Language Service Providers

This article complements my presentation entitled Pricing Strategies in a Service Industry offered at the 2020 ATA Annual Conference.

Pricing is a major lever in business profitability. According to Deloitte, a 1% improvement in pricing, holding everything else constant, can boost company profits by roughly 11%.[1] That is a much greater impact than what is typically achieved by improvements in costs (both variable and fixed) or volume sold, again holding all other variables constant.

Yet, my consulting experience in the language services space shows that few LSPs make optimal use of the many (legal and legitimate!) strategies that could improve their pricing and, consequently, profitability.

The most basic rules of thumb for setting prices are based on costs. A business simply (and often indiscriminately) calculates the costs of (all) their inputs and applies a markup to arrive at a target price to charge. As straightforward and fool-proof as this may sound, it completely ignores two most important factors: customers and competitors. Your cost plus an X-percent markup may be way below or well above the amount your buyers are willing to pay (i.e., the value they derive from your services). Your cost and/or your markup may also be out of line with those of your competitors.

Knowing all your relevant costs IS important. It tells you how much you must charge at the very minimum in order to be profitable. A common source of mistakes in calculating costs is their classification. Not all of the costs that firms commonly keep track of are relevant for day-to-day pricing, and some less obvious costs must, in turn, be included in any such calculations. Salaries or office rent that you have to pay, at least in the short or medium term, regardless of whether new projects come in are not costs relevant to your pricing decisions. On the other hand, with limited (human/time/space/IT) resources and when operating at or near capacity, there is a highly relevant opportunity cost, or simply put, the income you or your resources could be generating by doing something else. In short, costs matter for pricing only if they are incurred once a project is accepted.

While your costs set your floor, the ceiling for your pricing decisions is generally set by your customer's willingness to pay, which will be capped at the value they derive from your service. Unlike basic cost-based pricing discussed above, customer-driven, value-based pricing is far from simple. Your customers have no incentive to report truthfully how much value a service they are about to buy from you will add for them. It takes thorough knowledge of your customer's line of business, plenty of data, and sophisticated data analytics to get any actionable insights here.

However, even these two buckets of considerations do not give us a full picture without taking into account what your competitors are doing. You may have your relevant costs calculated and have a good estimate of what your potential client would be willing to pay. However, if you don't know who else they have solicited quotes from and how much those providers may charge, you still stand to lose out. Quoting too high will cost you the business entirely. Quoting too low means winning the business but unnecessarily leaving money on the table.

The economic value customers derive from language services varies greatly, not only from customer to customer but also from one type of content to another for the same account. Any analysis starts with determining the closest substitute to the service in question, which represents the reference value. For new translation buyers, the substitute would be not buying the service (and, for instance, talking to customers in their non-native language). For existing buyers, the substitute would be their existing provider. The second step is to identify any differentiating factors of your service, which represents the differentiation value. By adding up the reference value and the differentiating value, you arrive at the economic value.

Now, how do you account for the substantial differences in value to your customers when what you offer is typically a rather standardized service? The answer is threefold.

1. *Price-discriminate by offering a vertical product line.* Knowing your customer's true willingness to pay is a challenge. To induce self-selection, offer a menu of prices based on different levels of quality promise. In translation, the menu of choices may look something like this: translation by a senior linguist vs. junior linguist vs. lightly post-edited MT. Another type of vertical differentiation can be based on the level of service received: a dedicated team of project/account managers available 24/7 vs. a self-service online system. This strategy may have another added benefit: it sets a certain benchmark at the top and allows the other options to appear comparatively cheap. An unwelcome side effect of a vertical product line is clearly cannibalization: the risk of existing customers trading down; this can and must be accounted for when setting the exact specifications and prices for each of the service-level options.

2. *Be flexible with your margin.* Once you know your costs and have an idea of what your customer's willingness to pay is and what sort of competitive quotes they may be considering, you can adjust your target margin to win the business. An X% margin is great as long as it allows you to win the business. You certainly do not want to leave money on the table. But you also don't want to entirely

miss out on the opportunity. Realize that half of X% is just as acceptable---it is free money, after all, as you already have all your relevant costs covered. The half of X% is acceptable as long as it doesn't undermine your ability to charge your full target margin in other instances / for other accounts. One way of justifying a lower price (lower margin) is, once again, using an automated solution with less white-glove treatment. Also, consider lowering your margin on more standardized, easier-to-compare services when you know you can achieve a higher margin on a collateral service for which your client doesn't have a benchmark so readily available.

3. *Unbundle your services.* Translation has historically been a bundled service, very much like a traditional newspaper is composed of a bundle of sections and articles that cannot be purchased separately. Yet not every use case requires TEP (think low-risk documents with a short lifetime), DTP (online-only copy), or even project management (where the client serves herself through an automated system). It is in your best interest to allow customers to buy exactly what they need and not more than that, while certainly highlighting the preferred/recommended options and pointing out in very clear terms what essential components are not included and what risks are involved in any of the cheaper options.

Even with sophisticated corporate buyers, psychology of pricing plays its role. A discount always sounds friendlier than a surcharge even if the final price works out to be exactly the same. Psychologically, $99 seems a lot more than 1% less than $100. Spending plastic money / paying online typically hurts less than paying cash. Recurring subscriptions are sometimes easier to stomach than seeing the total rise with every word/minute ordered (the "taxi meter effect"), again even if the customer ends up paying more with the subscription.

This is a very brief primer highlighting some of the fundamental concepts of service pricing. For more context, do attend my presentation at this year's ATA conference. With any further questions, feel free to contact me at daniel@dsebesta.com.

About the author: Daniel Sebesta has worked as a linguist since 2003. He has an MBA with a specialization in pricing and strategy and is a member of the Professional Pricing Society. In addition to his translation work, he consults with companies on pricing, profitability, and language technology adoption. He serves as assistant administrator of ATA's Language Technology Division and is a member of the Divisions Committee. He divides his time between his two homes in Czechia and in the U.S.

Thank you, volunteers!

Our thanks to the ATA-TCD leadership council Marina Ilari, Alaina Brandt, Monika Popiołek, Ray Valido, Virginia Joplin, Graciela Isaía y Ruiz, Cynthia Penovi, Paula Penovi, Afaf Steiert and Larisa Horback.
Our thanks to webmaster Luciano Oliveira for managing the ATA-TCD website.

Call for social media!

Curating relevant and up-to-date content for TCD social media accounts on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook requires the contributions of many. Have you encountered an article or piece of media that you believe is relevant to our Division? When you do, please consider submitting the item to the ATA TCD Social Media Posts web form!
http://ata-tcd.com/project/social-media-posts/

Items submitted will be reviewed by the TCD Communications Committee prior to being posted on social media accounts. Submission does not guarantee that the item will appear on TCD social media accounts.

Other ways to get involved?

ATA-TCD is solely supported by volunteer-members. Please get involved!

- Help moderate our social media channels
- Write blog articles
- Present webinars (https://atanet.org/webinars/index.php)
- Present conference sessions during the next ATA Annual Conference in 2021
- Join the Leadership Council
- Plan events like the annual ATA TCD dinner

If you are interested in one of these or other opportunities and want to learn more, contact us.
http://ata-tcd.com/project/contact-us/

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