Translation & Client Review:

How to Create a Successful Client Review Process

Having a good translation team is very important when it comes to the successful completion of translation projects. The roles within the team — translator, editor, reviewer — seem to be straightforward, but there can be some gray area. For smaller projects, there may not be a need for a complete team of experts to provide an accurate translation. In those cases, the translator may also serve as the editor and reviewer. However, for larger projects, the role of reviewer is a very important one.

Some clients require an internal review of external translation work before the approval of the final project. A client reviewer is someone on the client's side who reviews and/or approves the final translation. The client review process should add value to the translation process. A proper client review can lead to increased quality, especially relative to specific terminology for your industry or your company. This is a good step, but it's easy for the review to negatively affect the quality of the final translation if the client reviewer does not have extensive experience and knowledge about the topic.

A good client reviewer must have a deep knowledge of the topic. This is essential, not optional. Far too often, clients will choose their reviewers based on language ability alone. For example, a technical writer needs input on a technical specification. He could choose an engineer that worked on the product, or someone from the accounts payable team. Obviously he should choose the engineer. More often than not, internal reviewers are not properly vetted or screened to evaluate technical translation. Typically clients are very diligent about making sure that authors of their source content are properly qualified, but that same level of diligence should be used for reviewers (and translators), too.

Qualities of a Good Client Reviewer

Requirements vary amongst projects, but client review candidates often include product managers, marketing managers and technical writers. More importantly, a good reviewer should possess the following qualities:

1. **The ability to set vocabulary preferences.** The reviewer should hold a position within the industry that allows them to steer the terminology of the firm in the given language pair. For example, a good reviewer for marketing projects might be a product manager in the target country.

2. **A deep knowledge of industry and company terminology in both the source and target languages.** The reviewer should understand the important terms used in the content being reviewed. Using a reviewer that can only read the target language is not conducive of a quality review. The reviewer has to fully understand the source language to properly evaluate the original message of the content.

3. **A neutral, but vested interest in the process.** The reviewer should have an interest in seeing the translation team succeed. Selecting a competing translation provider produces a conflict of interest that reduces the objectivity of the review. Choosing a reviewer that is completely disconnected from your organization is also not a good idea as they likely do not have a vested interest in the content.

The objective of the client review is not to re-write the translated text or make subjective changes, but to make sure your brand, company, and message are communicated effectively.

The reviewer should pay special attention to the way industry-specific or technical terminology is being used and be able to suggest improvements in accuracy if necessary. The reviewer should ensure that brand standards are being met and communicated effectively to the target market. It is also important that the reviewer evaluates the content from the perspective of the intended audience since words or phrases in the host language may not necessarily translate the same to the target language.

Client reviews can become challenging for a number of reasons. One of the biggest challenges is that two people can have very different definitions of the same term. Therefore, client review hinges completely on comprehension of the original source text and perception of the language used to describe or translate the original text. Perception is the key, but allocating the proper resources and technology also helps ensure the best quality client review.

Best Practices for a Client Review

For a successful client review, it is best to keep the process simple. One of the biggest mistakes made in this step is removing the content from the translation database. In other words, the review is handled in a printed version of the formatted document with handwritten markups. When that happens, the changes have to be manually retyped back into the document as well as the translation memory database. All of that manual effort opens the project up for error. The best practice is to review the translations in a 2-column, bilingual MS Word document that has been exported directly from the Translation Management System. The reviewer should turn on Track Changes and make their desired changes to the translated content in this file. Your translation service provider can then review and approve the changes before seemlessly importing the file back into their translation system. This way, the final formatted document can come from the translation management system and the memory will be up-to-date in one step, saving time and money.

Communication is the key to keeping the review process – and the project – running smoothly. A scheduled client review pass should be discussed in the beginning of a project between the client and the translation service provider. Knowing about the review pass ahead of time allows the translation service provider to set up the project to include the review step in the workflow. This will save time, money, and headaches when it comes to completing the project.

Organization is also critical to a smooth process. Reviewers and translators should have a clear timeline for the project, know exactly who to contact for questions, and be given proper instructions for using review tools. This becomes especially important for complex projects that involve multiple languages.

Establishing Guidelines for the Reviewer

Before handing off a translation to an internal or client reviewer, guidelines should be reviewed so everyone understands what should and should not be changed. Here are some suggested guidelines:

1. **Stylistic changes are not errors.** Stylistic changes are not necessarily errors! While a stylistic change might be important to the reviewer and their perception of what the final document should look like, do not necessarily consider that type of change as translator negligence. Proofreaders or peer reviewers often provide options that might sound better. That is a normal part of the creative process and collaboration.

2. **Collaborate, collaborate, and then collaborate a bit more.** The internal review process is not a competition between reviewer and translator. When you work together with your translation provider, you can make the review process run smoothly. The goal is for the translation team to continually learn about the client's preferences for style, terminology, and tone of its content. Over time, the amount of markups should decrease and the translation team should produce translation that works for your company.

3. **Reduce friction in the process.** Work with your translation provider to create the most efficient way to collect the review feedback so that the changes can be placed into the final files and the translation memory as efficiently as possible. Handwritten changes can be very difficult to deal with. It is considered a best practice for the reviewer to use tracked changes in an exported, 2-column, bilingual MS Word document. Using Adobe Acrobat or similar software to cleanly annotate changes onto the the translated PDF is another acceptable option.

4. **Use the same diligence to choose a reviewer that you used to choose the author of the source.** The following story illustrates the importance of this step: A client once called and said that a Spanish reader at a trade show was unable to understand the translation we created for a spec sheet for a punch press. We started asking some questions only to discover that the reader was a 7th grade student studying Spanish in middle school. He was attending the trade show with his dad. For those who studied a language in middle school, there certainly wasn't time to learn such complex topics as technical specs for a punch press. Be sure to understand the limitations of your reviewer and match the appropriate person to the project.

With a little planning, the review should be a valuable exercise for both the customer and translation provider.

Translation Project Workflow

It's best practice for your translation service provider to export the raw text from their Translation Management System in a 2-column, bilingual MS Word file. This way, the translations can be reviewed and imported seamlessly back into the system. This happens as the 3rd step in a typical project's workflow (refer to the workflow diagram on the next page). All of the changes from the review will be captured and present in the final translated deliverable, along with your Translation Memory.

1. **Translation**
   Linguist translates in Translation Management System.

2. **Editing**
   Linguist edits in Translation Management System.

3. **Client Review (optional)**
   Client reviews 2-column MS Word file. Linguist reviews and implements client markups, and Argo Translation updates the translation memory.

4. **Desktop Publishing**
   Argo Translation handles page formatting.

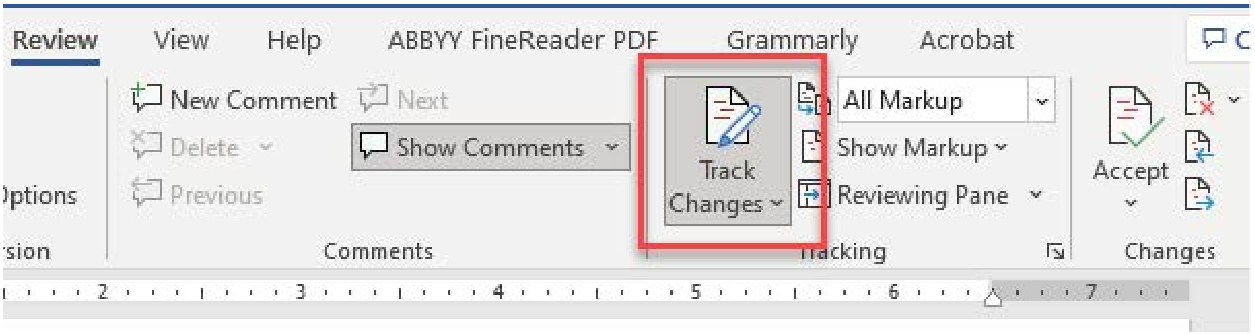
5. **Proof**
   Linguist proofs PDF.

6. **Implement Markups**
   Argo Translation handles proof markups.

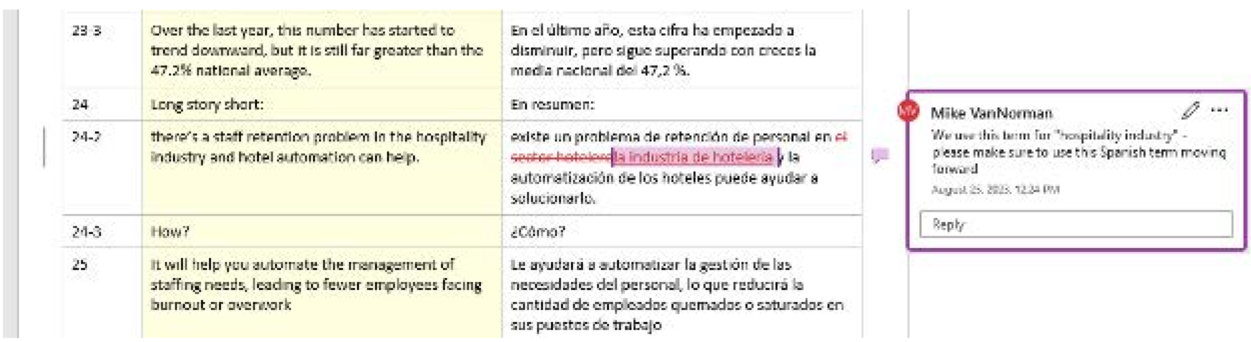
7. **Publishing**
   Final files are created.

How to Review Translations in MS Word with Track Changes

Make sure to turn on Track Changes before starting to make any edits:



Then, simply make your proposed changes to the translations in the righthand column. It is encouraged to use the Comment function to add comments to your changes and explain why you made them. For example:



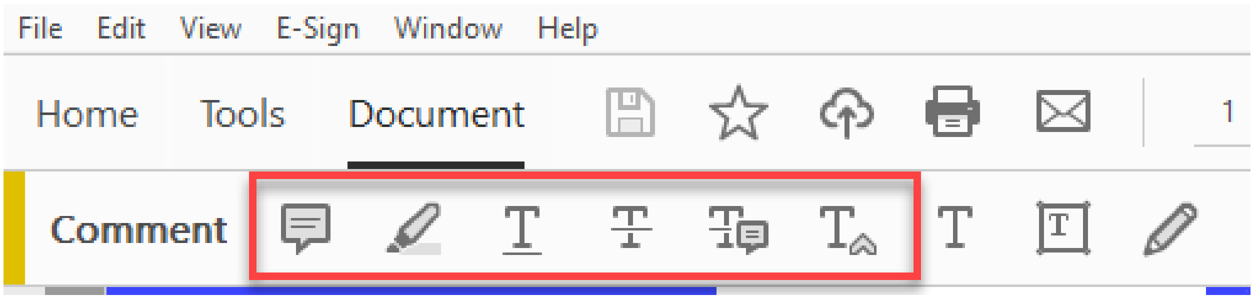
23-3	Over the last year, this number has started to trend downward, but it is still far greater than the 47.2% national average.	En el último año, esta cifra ha empezado a disminuir, pero sigue superando con creces la media nacional del 47,2 %.
24	Long story short:	En resumen:
24-2	there's a staff retention problem in the hospitality industry and hotel automation can help.	existe un problema de retención de personal en ~~el sector hotelero~~la industria de hotelería y la automatización de los hoteles puede ayudar a solucionarlo.
24-3	How?	¿Cómo?
25	It will help you automate the management of staffing needs, leading to fewer employees facing burnout or overwork	Le ayudará a automatizar la gestión de las necesidades del personal, lo que reducirá la cantidad de empleados quemados o saturados en sus puestos de trabajo

Some clients (and reviewers) prefer to review the translations at the end of the project -- after the content has been formatted and in its final layout. Or, the client didn't realize that the document would be reviewed by an internal stakeholder of theirs or even their end client. In these cases, it's certainly acceptable to review the translations in the final PDF. To do this, Adobe Acrobat's annotation tools should be used. The downside to performing the review in the final PDF is that it's more of a manual process than the 2-column Word method, as the reviewer's annotations need to be manually implemented into both the final formatted document and the Translation Memory. It adds more time and cost to the project.

How to Add Markups to a PDF

Make sure to have both the source PDF and the translated PDF open side-by-side so that you're reviewing the translation against its source.

Open the Comment panel and use the following annotation tools to mark your desired changes on the translated PDF.



Sticky notes can be used to provide general feedback and comments. The highlight tool should be used for making comments on specific text. The other tools should be used for actual changes to the translations, like deletions, text replacement, and text insertions.

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