

TCD NEWS

Featured Topic: Translation Companies Try to Define "Best Practices"

Volume 2, Issue 3 • November 2000

From the Editor

I for one have to vote the Orlando conference a great success. This can be judged by the fact that I hired a car for the duration of my stay, anticipating being able to take a couple of hours here and there during the conference to go see the local sights. In the event, the car gathered some very expensive dust, as the entire three days whizzed by in a blur of meetings and talks with fellow translation company owners, seasoned with the occasional excellent presentation.

The TCD seems to be really gathering momentum, with nearly 500 members and well-developed committees shaping direction, policy and creating worthwhile activities, such as the 2001 Regional Conference, planned for June 1-2 in Colorado Springs next year (see 'Mark Your Calendars'). I believe one meeting in particular will prove to be landmark in the TCD's history: the Best Practices Committee meeting that, straying from defining best practices, brainstormed the idea of the concrete benefits the TCD should offer members, that will also be of overall benefit to the industry. See 'Hitting the PR Trail' in the TCD Best Practices Committee meeting report inside this newsletter.

Thanks to everyone who attended and your contributions to making the TCD a force in the translation industry.

Robin Brown, Editor.

Steve's Foreword

Dear colleague,

Those of you who attended the ATA Conference in Orlando and joined us for the TCD Annual Meeting on Saturday morning will no doubt agree that it was exciting and information-packed! More than 75 people attended, and we accomplished a great deal.

Here are a few highlights:

- *Ann Macfarlane (ATA President) gave an overview of the different Membership categories (see the outline in this newsletter)*
- *Elections: Running unopposed, I was confirmed as Division Administrator, and Fred Meinberg as Assistant Administrator for 2 more years*
- *We are trying to sort out problems with sending e-mail to all members and having everyone who is interested subscribed to the listserve*
- *There was much discussion about a survey of members, the feasibility of an Administrative Affairs Committee, and the Best Practices Committee's progress*

Next year the ATA conference is in Los Angeles. To make sure that we have good representation in the program, we are encouraging anyone with a good, well-planned idea for a presentation to submit it to me by January. I will then review the presentations (with a small committee) and select those that should be forwarded to headquarters for consideration.

There are many ways to get involved in our fast-growing, exciting division! I welcome your ideas and input, as well as your willingness to volunteer time and resources.

Here's to a great year!

Steven P. Iverson, Division Administrator

About TCD

The Translation Company Division (TCD) is a division of the American Translators Association (ATA).

Mission Statement

To promote, develop and guide our rapidly changing industry through the cooperation of our membership.

Newsletter

TCD News is the newsletter of the TCD. Readers are encouraged to submit articles, which are subject to editing. Articles reflect the opinion of the authors only, and do not represent the views or opinions of the editor or the administrator of the TCD.

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See page 5 for more information

TCD Best Practices Committee Meeting Report

Robin Brown, Editor.

The TCD Best Practices Committee met in Orlando to continue the work of defining TCD membership criteria and to debate how to best set and uphold standards for TCD members.

Suzanne Robinson, Principal of Liaison Multilingual in Denver, presented the draft Best Practices/ Membership Criteria she prepared based on the European model (see TCD Newsletter, Vol. 2 No. 2) and it was debated and amended by the committee. The resulting draft will go through the approval process before being presented to TCD members, possibly at the TCD Regional Conference to be held in Colorado Springs June 1-2 2001.

An interesting spin-off discussion concerned delivering concrete forms of benefit to TCD member companies. We will follow this story as it develops.

Hitting the PR trail

We discussed the idea of raising funds from membership fees geared to annual gross sales of member companies, and using those funds to pay for a PR campaign on behalf of the corporate side of the industry in the US—i.e. translation companies. It was felt that the benefits of raising the awareness of using TCD-vetted companies (i.e. those that pass and adhere to the best practices adopted by

the TCD) to American industry and commerce could deliver some real benefit to members.

The idea is try and make sure that the TCD is presented as the first stop a corporation should make when looking to source a translation vendor and that inquiries to the TCD would result not in a recommendation



of any particular company or companies, but in the supply of a directory of 'approved' members. From this, the corporation could make its own selection of potential vendors and contact them direct. The directory might include such details of range of services, speciality areas, in-house facilities, contact personnel, reference to websites and the like.

How far?

How far reaching such a PR campaign could be would need to be tightly defined and would also of course depend on the finances available to a future TCD PR Committee. But if it could ensure that a steady supply of press releases, articles, feedback, reaction and comment on issues relevant to translation companies are supplied to relevant media, then it could begin to have a trickle-down benefit effect for those

companies fulfilling the criteria set by the TCD to be included in the directory.

There would also be direct benefit to subscribing TCD member companies in being able to claim inclusion in the directory—perhaps a special 'seal of approval' could be developed for this purpose?

Differentiation

How to differentiate 'approval' of such subscribing TCD members vexed the committee, as it was felt that the term 'accredited' should be avoided so as not to become confused with ATA accreditation. 'Credification' was, I believe, the term we chose for the time being, but if anyone has a less awkward-sounding suggestion—it will be welcomed!

Input please!

Naturally, this idea will be discussed further along with other ideas to provide benefit for members, such as an Industry Survey to be held amongst TCD members, standardized templates for forms for such functions as Project Management, Complaint Handling, Invoicing etc., and Retirement/Health/E&OE plans for members.

In the meantime, any input from members on the subject will be appreciated!

Robin Brown,
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Background Information about ATA Membership Categories

Steven Iverson, TCD Administrator

ATA Membership Status

At the TCD Annual Meeting, Ann Macfarlane, ATA President, gave us a perspective on the issue of membership status for those of us who are not accredited translators, and therefore do not have voting rights in ATA. She noted that it will take a long time before the association agrees to grant voting privileges to company owners, regardless of our level of membership. If you are a translator who is also a company owner, the issue is different. What follows is the copy of a handout that Ann distributed to summarize the membership issue according to current ATA bylaws.

The American Translators Association has eight membership categories: Active, Corresponding, Associate, Student, Institutional, Corporate, Life, and Honorary.

ACTIVE: To become an Active member, one must meet three requirements:

- a) be professionally engaged in translation, interpreting, or closely related work;
- b) be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States; and
- c) have passed an accreditation examination administered by the Association or have achieved demonstrable professional status as determined by peer evaluation.

The class of Active members includes both members who have passed an accreditation

examination, and those who have passed the peer review process as persons with demonstrable professional status. Translators, interpreters, teachers and terminology researchers all may qualify for Active status under peer review. To become an Active member does not, however, mean that one is accredited. *Only passing the Accreditation examination makes one accredited.* U.S. citizens residing outside the United States may be Active members, as may permanent residents who are temporarily not within U.S. borders.

Active members have the right to attend any of the Association's membership meetings, use all of its membership facilities, and receive all of its regular publications free or at special membership rates. They also have the right to take accreditation examinations, to vote, to hold

Association office, and to serve on the Board of Directors and all committees of the Association.

ASSOCIATION OFFICE: There are only four Association offices: President, President-elect, Treasurer and Secretary. An Active member who lives outside the United States is eligible under our Bylaws for one of these offices, or to serve on the Board of Directors. The Administrator and Assistant Administrator of a Division are Division officers, but not Association officers.

CORRESPONDING: To become a Corresponding member, one must meet all the qualifications for Active membership except U.S. citizenship or permanent residence. Corresponding members have all the rights and privileges of Active members except the right to hold Association office and to serve on the Board of Directors or standing committees.

VOTING MEMBERS include Active and Corresponding members, and Life and Honorary members who are qualified for one Active or Corresponding status.

Associate, student, institutional and corporate members do not have voting rights.

Steven P. Iverson,
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First published in SH3's own newsletter, this article has been edited to apply to clients buying translation services from a highly-reputable translation company.

A good reviewer can provide valuable input; a poor reviewer can waylay your translation project.

Your company's overseas personnel are important to its success. It is natural to want their input on translated documents. Including them in a review of the translation before it is published gives them a chance to contribute their knowledge. If all goes well with this process, everybody wins. The translator receives valuable input on industry terms, the client feels more confidence in the translation, and the in-country distributor is satisfied that the translation meets his standards.

On the other hand, sometimes the review does not go so well, and even creates problems. Understanding the purpose and structure of the review can help you avoid trouble down the road. Here are the details you need to consider in advance:

What is "client language review"?

This is your chance to have in-country personnel review the translation before the project is completed. After translation, but before the final production work

such as desktop publishing or video narration, the translation is returned to the client for review. The reviewer returns the copy with suggested improvements. The document then proceeds to completion.

What if I don't have a reviewer?

Client language review is optional, and is not a required part of a translation project. In many cases, a document is translated by an experienced professional, then edited thoroughly and proofread by a second translator before it arrives on the client's desk. If the client does not intend to carry out review, there should be no need to worry about quality and there should be no need to hire an outside translator to proof it.

When do I need to decide about a review?

Specify that you want to review the translation when you submit the job, so that it can be routed to you at the proper time. Don't wait until the job is done and a final copy is delivered before you decide to have somebody look at it. Ideally, the reviewer's changes should be returned before desktop publishing (or video narration) so they can be verified by translators, and updated in translation memories for future use. Making editorial changes in a desktop publishing program is less efficient.

What is my reviewer's responsibility?

Make sure your reviewer knows that the review is restricted to technical accuracy and terminology recommendations. The reviewer is not to make content changes, or rewrite the translation in favor of his or her own personal style. Your reviewer also needs to be informed if your translation is intended for use in a broad market. You don't want him to narrow the focus by substituting words that are only appropriate in one specific locale.

Reviewers are susceptible to "red-ink syndrome"—put a pen in their hands and they will start changing things. Circumvent this tendency by clearly defining his or her responsibilities.

Detailed instructions should be provided when the review copy is sent to you. If you wish, these instructions will be provided in the target language so that you can forward them to your reviewer, along with the translation. This helps assure you that the reviewer understands the instructions.

What can go wrong?

The number one problem seems to be that reviewers do not return the review copy within a reasonable period of time, or ever. A long delay can sidetrack a translation project. Unfortunately, it's not that

unusual for many weeks, even months, to pass before the review copy is returned.

Other problems center on the changes your reviewer makes. Your reviewer may completely retranslate the document, or make an excessive number of strictly preferential changes. He/she may add or subtract from the content, or make errors with technical terms. Worst case, the reviewer can undermine the project by insisting that the translation is awful and that nobody outside of his company is qualified to translate the material.

These are all reasons why you need to be very wise with your choice of reviewers. Choose a native of the target language, and somebody that is familiar with your products, such as an in-country distributor. A few years of college language classes, or vague familiarity with your products, does not equip a person to be a reviewer. It's also vitally important to make sure the person has time and wants to work with you on the review. Attitude can make a critical difference. Is the reviewer really interested in contributing to this process?

How can I make sure the review is returned quickly?

Your project is on hold until the review copy is returned, and your translator has no control over how long that might take. Once again, communicate clearly in advance with your reviewer, giving him a deadline

for returning the translation. Have a plan for what you'll do if the review is not returned by your deadline. If you've been careful in your choice of professional, experienced translators, there's no reason to be afraid to publish the document without your reviewer's approval. You can always make adjustments, if needed, when the document is next revised.

Wouldn't it be better to have several people approve the translation?

Remember the purpose of the review—to focus on technical terms, not to re-author the information. With that goal in mind, one qualified reviewer is the best choice. Two reviewers may make conflicting changes requiring your translator to spend time resolving the conflicts, and costing you money. Three or more reviewers are overkill and create more problems than they solve. The review may turn into an editorial rewrite—adding significant expense and diluting the quality of the final product.

Should I be worried if the reviewer marks a lot of changes?

Don't automatically assume that your reviewer's changes are translation errors. More often than not, changes represent a different way of saying the same thing. Some reviewers get carried away being creative, and sometimes reviewers even make mistakes. There's always the

possibility that the reviewer does not understand the content of the English document as well as the original translator.

With some planning and forethought, your review can go smoothly and be an important step in the overall translation process. If you don't understand what's involved, discuss it with your translator ahead of time. Be careful in your choice of reviewers, communicate their responsibility in the process, set a firm deadline for return of the review, and make it a "win-win" situation for all involved.

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Have you moved?

Don't miss out on important announcements. Please contact ATA (see below) if your contact information has changed.

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TCD listserv subscriptions

<http://www.ata-divisions.org/TCD/listserv/email.cgi>

Your message will be distributed to the whole TCD membership.

Newsletter Advertising

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Mark Your Calendars

TCD Regional Conference, Colorado Springs, June 1-2, 2001

Following the success of this year's Regional Conference in Minneapolis, the TCD is holding a two-day get-together in spectacular Colorado Springs.

We will meet once again to discuss common industry problems, issues and goals with other translation company owners. Draw inspiration from a great line-up of presentations.

Watch this space for more details!

American Translators Association Financial Translation Conference

May 18-20, 2001

Hosted by New York University's SCPS Translation Studies Program

On Friday we will offer financial translation background sessions in English. On Saturday and Sunday, financial translation specialists will present language-specific sessions.

Participants will be asked to sign up for a specific language pair, but will be free to attend sessions in other languages. Languages offered will be based on early registration figures (mid-February cutoff) as well as availability of speakers specializing in financial translation.

Please send suggestions for speakers (any language pair) and offers to serve on the organizing committee in any function (**we need your HELP**), and sponsorship offers/ideas to:
msgreenfield@compuserve.com

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