



Guide

Creating internal communications that engage and connect in every language



Comtec

Your translation partner

A guide to driving engagement with your employees worldwide through effective translation and localisation of your internal communications.



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Why are internal comms so important?

If you're reading this, then you already know how critical communicating with employees is. Not only for sharing important company messages, but in helping to build an inclusive culture.



An inclusive workplace is one that values the individual and group differences within its workforce and makes them feel connected. By speaking your employee's language and embracing cultural nuances, it can help to build the inclusive culture your business is striving for.

A study by the Australian Institute of Company Directors found that organisations with inclusive cultures have a clear advantage over those that do not. They are twice as likely to exceed financial targets and eight times more likely to achieve business outcomes¹.

Benefits include being:

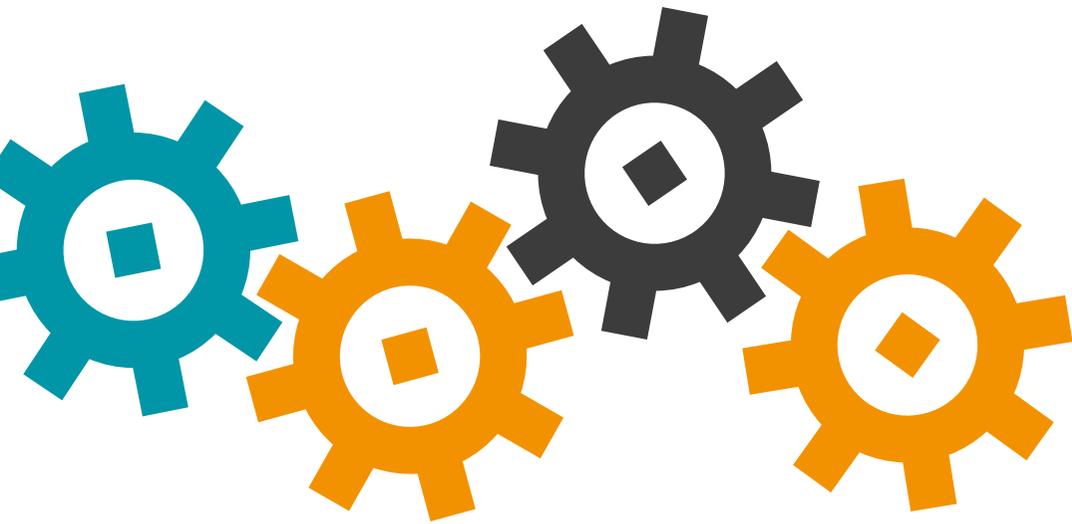
- Two times more likely to exceed financial targets
- Three times more likely to be high performing
- Six times more likely to be innovative and agile
- Eight times more likely to achieve business outcomes

No matter how challenging the circumstances, research has shown that communicating with your employees worldwide through relevant, timely and easy to access content will both engage and motivate them to deliver for their organisation. However, these communications are only truly effective when delivered in your employee's own language. Even if your multilingual workforce can all speak one language, say English, by delivering it in their second or in some cases third language, you run the risk of ignoring cultural nuances and your message being lost in translation.

That's why we've created this guide to help you to connect with your workforce, regardless of where they are in the world.

¹ Bourke, J. (2016) 'Which Two Heads Are Better Than One? How Diverse Teams Create Breakthrough Ideas and Make Smarter Decisions.'

Let's start by looking at the five challenges you're most likely facing:



Do these challenges sound familiar? This guide will help you find the answers.



Costs & ROI

Translation costs seem to easily escalate. I need more control of them at the beginning of a project.



Choosing an approach

I am new to translation. How do I choose the right approach and level of translation?



Time

Translations add too much time to our process.



Stakeholder management

My colleagues in the regions don't like our current translations and prefer to do the translations themselves, but I worry about consistency in messaging.



Requirement

English is our company language. My stakeholders don't see why we need to translate our communications.

Keep reading to learn...

- Why using only English for internal communications can be potentially limiting.
- How to choose the most effective approach to translation.
- How to take control of the translation process.
- How to brief copywriters and designers.
- How to develop rewarding partnerships with your translation provider.
- How to engage local market colleagues in the translation process.
- How to maximise your translation ROI by improving the quality of your translations.

What types of communication can be translated?

It is not just written communications such as newsletters or leadership updates that can be translated. Presentation slides, videos, infographics, signage and digital tools can all be translated and localised.



Why an English only approach might be impacting on the success of your communications

It is common for large organisations to adopt a single language strategy. This is often referred to as a ‘lingua-franca’. This is often, but not exclusively, English.

There are areas and situations where having a single language could have unintended consequences. For example, it was found in a study by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta (2005) that having English as the central language resulted in non-English speaking employees being excluded from meetings and key decisions.

Whilst English might be the central language at your company, when you have a global workforce, you are, in reality, multilingual. This should be celebrated and embraced in communications in order to connect with employees, not only on important updates but to make them brand ambassadors. This is something Nestlé tapped into when they decided to translate their corporate values into 50 different languages².

Here are the red flags that relying on English for internal communication can raise:

Misunderstanding

When reading or hearing messages in a second language it's highly likely that staff may misunderstand key messages. Nuances or subtleties could be lost or even worse, critical safety, regulatory or legal information could be misinterpreted

Managerial distance

Messages often need to be contextualized and expanded upon by local managers. However, if the local managers feel distanced from communications by sharing content only in English, they may not give the necessary support to ensure key messages are relayed correctly. They may even choose not to communicate them at all.

Exclusion of ideas and best practice

It was found by Shenkar (2001) that in the case of a British-Italian joint venture, English was adopted as the common language³. But in practice that resulted in key systems and processes being adopted from the English partner rather than the Italian. By giving dominance to one language you isolate the other, meaning it's more likely for processes and ideas to be inadvertently ignored or lost in translation.

Indifference

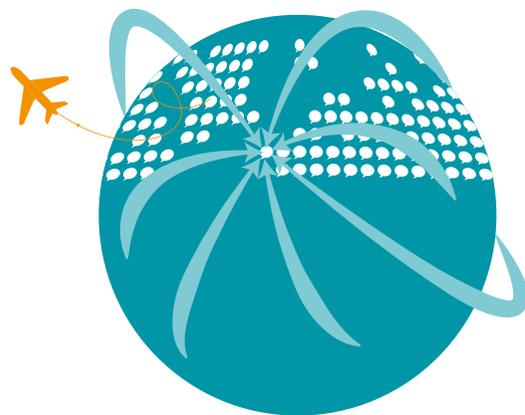
Effective communication is not just about the language. Throughout strong internal communication, there may be cultural references, humour or examples that simply won't land with global audiences. Opportunities to localise these creative concepts will be missed and therefore so will the opportunity to engage and create the desired impact.

² <https://www.nestle.ir/en/about-us/businessprinciples/in50languages>

³ Salk, J. and Shenkar, O. (2001) 'Social identities in an international joint venture: an exploratory case study'

Getting a handle on your global internal communications

When communicating global messages across different regions it is common to use in-house colleagues or work with different translation providers, both at the centre and locally.



A fragmented approach, like this, may work when you have few translation requests, or if you operate in a limited number of regions. However, as your employee base grows and communication requirements increase, you may experience some or all of the following difficulties:

Managing multiple requests

You may receive an increasing number of requests for translated materials across the different regions. This is especially true if other departments, such as Marketing and Finance, also need translations.

Messaging consistency

You may find it hard to control a consistent message when each region has its own approach.

Coordinating communication campaigns

You may find it time-consuming to brief and coordinate translations as the number of countries involved and languages needed in a campaign increase. This may result in communications being received by employees at different times.

The benefits of a centrally led approach

By coordinating translation management centrally, you can reduce the time your business spends managing translations and improve their overall quality.

This approach enables you to:

- Reduce the time taken to brief translation providers.
- Strengthen your communication by establishing a consistent message across all languages.
- Control your costs and monitor ROI.
- Achieve greater value by re-using content across different channels.
- Launch campaigns more quickly across multiple regions.
- Keep track of progress and manage deadlines.

By involving local stakeholders, you'll see even better results! After all, no one understands your target audiences and messages better than they do!

Incorporating local knowledge – working with local review teams

Local communication teams or champions need accurate and compelling translations to communicate with employees effectively. With a vested interest in the success of your campaigns, it's important that they take an active role in the translation process.

We recommend building strong relationships with local teams. If you incorporate their input into your centralised process, you'll maintain control and strengthen your campaigns.

Your regional teams will have first-hand insight into what will resonate with the employees in their area. They will know of local examples, stories and case studies which when incorporated with the central messages will enhance the impact of that communication.

Similarly, having a central approach to translations will have benefits for them. Some of these are:

- **Providing them with high quality localised communication material.**
- **Making their lives easier and reducing their workloads.**
- **Ensuring their local employees get the same messages at the same time as colleagues in other markets.**
- **Helping to build an inclusive global company culture and employer brand.**

We would suggest that working collaboratively with local teams up to, during and after the translation process can help to achieve globally consistent communications with local relevance and engagement.

Every organisation is different, but the following steps may help your business to build effective relationships and streamlined processes with your local teams:

Recruit local market champions

Identify someone in each region who can review translated content and/or manage a team of local reviewers. They can help you ensure that nuanced messaging remains impactful.

Consider sharing the English-language version before translation

By reviewing it at this stage they may identify content that doesn't work effectively in their market and suggest ideas to make it more relevant and engaging. It is much easier to make changes at this stage rather than during or after translation.

Work together to create local style guides and glossaries

Work in collaboration with your local region and translation partner to establish a style guide and glossary. This ensures the right tone of voice and terminology is used. It also considers key cultural considerations in localising the content. Collaboration on this also allows regional colleagues the opportunity to influence how local employees will be communicated with.

Provide the tools to support collaboration

Create an easy-to-access digital space where your local champions will feel comfortable sharing their insights

and local knowledge. Work with your translation partner to provide an easy-to-use platform to review and approve content.

Establish clear guidelines

Set out what you expect from your local reviewers, so they understand their role, the translation processes, and what the limitations are. This can be done together to strengthen your collaboration.

Make them feel appreciated

Find ways to recognise their contribution. The entire company will benefit from higher-quality translations delivered to tight deadlines, and their input will help your budgets stretch further.

Build consistency into your approach

Use local style guides, glossaries of terminology and review guidelines to achieve consistency across multiple campaigns. Translation memories can also help as can using the same local review team.

Develop a clear translation and review process

Set out what your process looks like and define roles and responsibilities. Make sure your local champions understand how you manage projects and are familiar with the platforms you use. Ensure that any changes to your process are clearly communicated to all stakeholders to avoid misunderstandings.

The Localisation Spectrum

Just like internal comms, translations are not one-size-fits-all.

Localisation is the art of adapting content to suit local cultures and geographical contexts. There are different degrees of localisation depending on the emotional impact you want to generate. This is illustrated in the Localisation Spectrum below.

If you've been frustrated by poor quality or slow translations, or your content has failed to achieve the results you anticipated, it could be that you need to localise your content more.

If your message is intended to be highly emotive, you'll need to spend more time localising the content to make it relevant and compelling for each region. This means adjusting cultural references, humour and language contained within the copy, so each reader will feel like it's been written for them. If your copy is purely factual, a straightforward translation, with limited localisation will effectively communicate the message.

Fortunately, there is a model to help you choose the right level of localisation for your communications.

LOW  CREATIVITY/EMOTIONAL IMPACT  HIGH

Machine Translation with post-editing

Source content is translated using machine translation and then post-edited by a translator.

—
Lower cost, faster turnaround, reduced accuracy

When to use?

Suitable for large volumes of content, including product descriptions, user reviews and certain internal documents.

Light Translation

A professional native-speaking linguist with sector-specific expertise translates the source content. Proofreading is not included.

—
Lower cost, reduced accuracy

When to use?

For basic translations of content when reduced accuracy is acceptable or regional colleagues can proofread.

Pro Translation

The team includes both a translator and proofreader, each with sector-specific expertise, working together to ensure the highest level of fluency and appropriate cultural fit for the content. This approach is also suitable for technical content with specialist terminology.

—
Popular approach, highly localised

When to use?

Suitable for key communications such as website content, emails, newsletters, brochures and 'Town Hall' presentations.

Transcreation

A creative translator and proofreader fully adapt, revise and edit, moving away from the source text where needed to create a fully localised piece.

—
More creative, higher cost

When to use?

For content that needs to be motivational and highly targeted, such as slogans and taglines.

Copywriting

When copywriting doesn't translate effectively even with transcreation, a native-speaking copywriter is given a brief to write original content.

—
Most creative

When to use?

Suitable for source content that is highly targeted at the original region, which does not translate effectively in the new region.

Streamlining the translation process

Here are our top tips for streamlining the translation process and working effectively with your translation provider.



Reference material

Provide relevant reference material, such as existing translations, previous communication material and details of tone of voice and brand guidelines. Your translation provider will handpick their translators based upon this information so comprehensive and timely information will be invaluable.

Recruit reviewers and confirm their roles

Your provider will ask you to review and approve your translations, so you may need to establish a team of local reviewers who will be responsible for checking translations in line with the approved style guide. In some cases, your translation partner will do most of the liaison with them on your behalf.

A style guide

Work with your translation provider and local colleagues to create a style guide to be used as a reference by the translation team for every project. This helps to ensure a consistent style and tone of voice for all communications.

Approve sample translation at the start

Your provider may ask you for feedback on sample translations to ensure they have used the right style and tone. This establishes a good reference point on which to base translations, avoiding the need for style changes further down the line. Feedback on the sample also strengthens the style guide if needed.

Translation memories in action

Translation memory (TM) software captures 'pre-approved' translations for terms, common phrases or regularly used paragraphs of text. These can be easily retrieved and used again for subsequent projects across various channels. They can also be updated with feedback or learnings from one translation to the next. It is therefore important that your translation partner is given any feedback from the local review teams so they can update the TM. That makes it more efficient and consistent for next time.

Getting content translation-ready

Although a good translation partner will be as flexible as possible, being aware of translation requirements during content development and design will save time and money.



Adopt a localisation mindset

The more creative the content is, the more involved the localisation process will be. Ensure the content writer understands the localisation spectrum so they can review their own copy and ensure any emotive text or cultural references are necessary and appropriate. Ask them to flag up content which will need to be carefully adapted.

Follow the rules

Follow global guidelines on how to handle the tone of voice and the employer brand. It may be necessary to dial-up or down specific characteristics depending on the audience.

Use clear English

Use clear, concise sentences to make translation easier. Standard English should be used, where possible.

Be consistent

By being consistent in the use of terminology and common phrases, translation will be faster, more consistent and more transparent.

Check their copy

Eliminate the unnecessary use of location-specific symbols, numerals and text (e.g. £ signs, dates, times and English words).

Three things your designer can do

Leave white space

Translated text can often be significantly longer than the original. Allow enough white space in their designs to accommodate text expansion after translation.

Keep things separate

Separate text layers in the source file rather than embedding text into graphics.

Remember to replace location-specific imagery

Jointly decide if you're going to restrict the use of location-specific imagery. Using more generic 'global' versions will keep design costs down, speed up production and reduce the risk of an inappropriate image slipping through the net.



Measuring and improving ROI

Translation and localisation should save you time and money. But how do you measure your ROI?



There are many ways to measure the effectiveness of your translations. Some of the most popular are:

- Engagement with content by colleagues in different regions (email opens, link clicks, intranet comments)
- Improvement in communication and engagement results in employee surveys
- Increased understanding of corporate messages (pulse surveys, focus groups or employee feedback)
- Increased understanding of critical safety or regulatory messages (floor walks, spot checks and safety inspection results)
- Time to get communications issued
- Percentage of communications being issued on time in the different regions

The value of time 'freed up' (see below) by moving to a centralised approach (if applicable)

Freed-up time

If you understand who was involved in these activities and the associated costs, you can calculate the financial rewards of switching to a centralised approach.

It's easy to overlook how much time was previously being spent on translations.

From the time taken by in-house translators to the hours spent managing multiple translation providers, a fragmented approach to translation can be time-consuming.

It may also be possible to measure the value of the activities your team are now freed up to achieve. Perhaps they can create more and better communication campaigns, spend more time on strategic plans or invest in more sophisticated digital channels? All of these will benefit overall employee engagement

The hidden cost of poor translations

The six hidden dangers of poorly translated internal communications:



1

The delay dilemma

If your communication has to be reworked for one region, you're left making a difficult decision – do you postpone your global release or let that country hear the news after all the others? It's a no-win situation which is guaranteed to divide stakeholders' opinions.

2

The distraction trap

Badly worded messages divert attention away from your real meaning. Distracted or confused readers may react badly to your message or even take inappropriate action (if your message is critical, this could have far-reaching consequences). If you consistently release badly worded translations, your employees may learn to ignore your future messages and only react to local instructions, putting compliance with processes and policies at risk.

3

Engagement loss

Poor communication zaps employee engagement. Messages intended to bring employees together can have the opposite effect if badly translated. Even a few disengaged employees can have a negative effect on a workplace so if you're trying to build a cohesive global team, e.g. after a period of acquisition, it's essential that your translations are accurate and appropriate for each territory.

4

Risk of litigation

Badly translated HR and Health & Safety documentation puts you at risk of litigation – not just from employees but from affected customers too.

5

The loyalty leak

Unless you work in international communications, it's easy to assume that the translation process is easier and cheaper than it actually is. This can lead your employees to mistakenly believe that poor quality translations are an indicator that you don't value them or their contribution. Employees who consistently feel undervalued are unlikely to recommend you as an employer (as any users of Glassdoor will testify) and are more likely to be tempted to jump ship. Such employer brand damage is hard to rectify.

6

Them and us

Every employee wants to feel like each communication was written just for them. Consistent failure to put yourself in your audience's shoes and deliver the information they need in an appropriate way can lead to a 'them and us' situation with employees forgetting that you're all working on the same team! This can make employees feel vulnerable or even disposable, hastening the 'loyalty leak'.

Your eight key takeaways

We hope this guide helps you to achieve the best possible results from your global communication campaigns.



Here's a quick summary of the key points:



Optimising source content for translation and localisation will save you time and money. Handle cultural references and region-specific elements in a way that makes it easy to replace them with an alternative version for each market.



Reducing costs can hurt quality. Speak to your translation partner about ways to **save money** without compromising on the effectiveness of translated content.



Thinking about the intended **emotional impact** of your communication messages will help you to find the right level of localisation, and thereby tackle any quality issues while improving turnaround times.



A **centrally-led strategy** can improve the quality and consistency of translated content, preserve tone of voice and streamline the translation process.



Agreeing to a range of ROI metrics before a campaign will help you drive **future improvements**.



Developing a **collaborative approach** with your translation partner will help them deliver high-quality translations on time. Make sure they understand your requirements, processes and objectives before they begin to translate.



Working with **experienced** content writers, internal communication linguists and desktop designers who understand how to handle different types of communication materials will pay dividends!



Involving your **local reviewers** will help get their buy-in and increase the effectiveness of multilingual communication campaigns.

Why Comtec?

For almost 40 years Comtec has enabled international businesses to streamline their translation process and get better results from their global comms – in over 200 languages.



Our mission

We work with a wide range of innovative organisations, from high-growth start-ups through to established FTSE companies, to help them deliver their message worldwide. Wherever you need multilingual content to engage, inform and inspire, we've got you covered. However large or complex your project, we ensure your message is strong, compelling and ready to resonate in every region – from websites and social media posts to elearning programmes and training videos.

Our people

Our people have a passion for languages, expertise in translation and a real desire to make a difference for our clients. Clients value the focus we place on delivering the highest possible quality, building a partnership with them to share our experience and providing a service they can truly rely on.

Our commitment to you

We're not just a translation company – we're a translation partner. No matter the scale or complexity of a project, we ensure all communication materials are fully localised to resonate in every region and culture. That's why we're trusted by leading global organisations, together with their communication teams and creative partners, to localise content, for every market, in every industry and in every language.

Looking to find out more?



This is Sophie, she's here to answer any questions you might have.

Drop Sophie an email on showe@comtectranslations.com or book a 10-minute discovery call [here](#) to see how translation can transform your internal comms to connect with your global workforce.





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