

# Delivering Effective Multilingual Marketing Campaigns



# Comtec

Your translation partner

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**A guide to driving engagement with your brand worldwide through effective translation and localisation.**



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# Introduction

**The world is getting smaller. Thanks to technology, globalisation is now achievable not only for big corporates but also smaller businesses.**

Powerful communications inform and engage your clients, inspire change, and drive international growth for your brand. But communicating with an overseas audience can be challenging. How do you make your clients sit up and listen wherever they are in the world?

High-quality marketing translations are the difference between your brand connecting with its global audience, versus your message being lost in translation.

Whether you want to achieve more market share in existing overseas territories or expand into new fast-growing markets, this guide will help you use languages to boost your engagement with prospects and customers.

Let's start by looking at the six challenges you're most likely facing. These are based on conversations we've had with Global Marketing Managers over the years.



## Time

Translations add too much time to our process and we're on a tight deadline.



## Quality

I'm not a linguist, so I can't check the quality myself. I need to know it is accurate and represents our brand message.



## Global vs Local

I need to launch campaigns in a variety of countries and regions. I need to know that they will engage local audiences.



## Costs & ROI

Translation costs seem to easily escalate. I need to keep the budget and scope under control.



## Choosing an approach

We have a variety of channels and materials so I need to know we are choosing the right translation approach for each.



## Stakeholder management

I have colleagues in different markets who like to be involved in translations and I'm not sure how to best involve them.

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

## Keep reading to learn...

- **How to choose the most effective approach to global marketing translations**
- **Techniques to help you take control of the translation process**
- **How to brief in copywriters and designers early on to make the translation process easier**
- **Ways to develop a rewarding partnership with your translation provider**
- **How to involve local market colleagues effectively in the translation process**
- **Tips to maximise your translation ROI by improving the quality of your translations**

Even if your target customer does speak English as a second language, research shows that:

“Customers are far more likely to purchase products in their own language, and individuals in growing markets will expect to have access to quality content that they can read.”

(<https://csa-research.com/Insights/ArticleID/106/Plan-for-the-Future-Now-Must-Have-Languages-for-Global-Enterprises>)

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# How to balance global vs local

## Effective ownership can be easier than you think

If you've considered taking a marketing campaign to an international customer base, you'll have likely come up against the global vs local debate. Even in countries where regions speak the same language, there are cultural nuances to be aware of.

For example, ask someone in America what chips are and then ask someone from England. You'll get two different answers.

Whilst this is a more light-hearted example, not thinking about localisation when it comes to translation can have huge problems.

Often, it's not enough to simply translate your existing assets into another language. Your tactics, tone and positioning may not be relevant to this new audience.

As a marketer, you will undoubtedly be mindful of the need to create unique customer experiences. So how can you manage central global marketing drivers, alongside the nuance of local customer experience?

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## Here are some key elements to consider in getting this balance right

### Strategic intent

What is your organisation's strategy on global vs local? Does it strive for global power brands that cross all markets or does it favour local variations or even local-only brands? Understanding this will provide a strategic context for your marketing approach.

### Cultural variation

How different are the cultures across the markets you are operating in? If you operate in culturally similar geographies, then a leaning towards a global approach may be more appropriate. If the cultures are vastly different, then you may be required to create a more varied approach for each of the different

markets.

### Language variation

Similarly, if you operate in several countries but they all speak the same language, then there may be less requirement to develop local strategies.

### Creative impact

Even if the languages are similar, elements such as creativity, humour or analogies may not work across boundaries. For example, baseball analogies may not be understood in the UK or cricket in the US.

### Practicality

A local approach requires a local team to review materials, so if this is not in place, then delivering a localised strategy may be challenging.

**In most instances of marketing campaigns or products being launched globally, there will be some level of localisation. The difference between localisation and translation can be found on page 8.**



**If translating a website is part of your localisation plan, then take a look at our detailed guide: [6 steps to translating and localising websites](#).**

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## Reasons to think globally and act locally:



### Local variations

By using local marketing insight, customer needs can be incorporated into local strategies and campaigns whilst staying true to the global strategy.

**McDonald's** has a global strategy with local variations. Although their restaurants, processes and core menu offering are all standard, there are variations in the different local markets. For example, in Switzerland, you'll find the McRaclette on the menu. It is a beef sandwich with raclette cheese, unique raclette sauce, onions and gherkin pickles.



### Visuals and creative references

Creative ideas and concepts often rely on a level of cultural relevance. If the same creative idea, slogan or visual is applied in a different culture, it may at best, not resonate, at worst cause offence. In-market research helps to identify any areas where creative content won't work or could be improved.

**Red Bull**, the global energy drinks brand, has a distinctive blue and white can with red lettering. In China, red and gold are perceived much more positively than blue and white and so the can design was changed to appeal to their cultural preferences.



### Language and translation

Not only do campaigns need to be translated into local languages but they need to be translated accurately. Poor quality translation can heavily impact on the success of the brand and even brand reputation.

A **Ford** campaign with the slogan "Every car has a high-quality body." was translated in Belgium to "Every car has a high-quality corpse". Technically a correct translation but not the image Ford wanted to portray!



### Cultural symbols

The use of certain symbols or references may have different meanings in different cultures and so again, local market knowledge is critical. Even instances of colours, clothing or animals have the potential to cause offence or change meaning.

When **Pampers** used a stork delivering a baby on packaging in Japan, it confused customers as the stork is not part of Japanese folklore in the way it is in the US.

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Determining the most appropriate global vs local strategy is key to planning a successful international marketing campaign. But localisation should always be considered. Only local experts will have the knowledge to identify potential issues. If you spot these variations and requirements early on, you can make adjustments before your campaign launch.

**The nature of localised campaigns means that they can be complex. That's why the most appropriate approach must be chosen.**

# Getting a handle on global marketing campaigns

In the early stages of growing a brand overseas, companies often choose one of two routes. They either delegate translations to in-market colleagues, or they work with 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 markets. However, as your brand gains traction and sales build, 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 markets. This is especially true if other departments, such as HR and Finance, also need translations.



## Brand consistency:

You may find it harder to balance local and global requirements. This could mean it becomes harder to build a consistent brand when each market has its own understanding of what the brand stands for.



## Coordinating marketing campaigns:

You may find it time consuming to brief and co-ordinate translations as the number of countries involved and languages needed increase.

At this stage, many companies review their approach to translations and how it could be managed more effectively and efficiently.

## There are 3 common approaches to translation management

### Locally managed

Although products and strategic intent may be driven from global HQ, local teams are responsible for marketing design, execution and therefore translation. Budgets are managed locally and campaigns will differ across markets. This approach allows for local knowledge and customer insight to be included. Consistency of global messages can be difficult to manage. Due to separate approaches being taken, coordinating timing and results can also be challenging.

### 'Glocal' approach

Messages and design are chosen centrally and then passed out to local markets to adjust, translate and localise. This approach blends central control with local insight. It can be a good way of achieving consistency alongside local relevance.

A global approach relies on the local team to retain the right balance between a global brand message and then local adaptation. It would, therefore, be worthwhile considering including a step for review by the central team as part of the process.

### Centrally led

Campaigns are planned and localised centrally and then passed to local teams to execute. That way the local teams feel included in the process rather than just being handed the finished result. This way, even though the global team keeps control and budget visibility, engagement with local colleagues remains high.

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.

**Your translation provider can help you establish an effective process that enables you to maintain control of your budget, timescales, quality and your global brand.**

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# Working with local review teams

Local sales and marketing teams need accurate, compelling and timely translations to win new business and develop existing accounts. With a vested interest in the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns, they must take an active role in the translation process.

By building strong relationships with colleagues in the local market, you can incorporate their input into your centralised process, you'll maintain control and strengthen your campaigns.

**Every organisation is different, but the following steps may help your business:**

1

## **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.

2

## **Prove that you're listening**

Demonstrate your commitment by taking the time to understand their needs and by giving them plenty of opportunities to contribute ideas and feedback. Start by finding out what they feel makes existing content effective or ineffective in their particular region. You can use the lessons learned to develop a localisation brief which explores the style and tone of voice for each region.

3

## **Encourage collaboration**

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

4

## **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.

5

## **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.

6

## **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.

7

## **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.

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## How a translation partner can help:



Your translation partner can help you put together a localisation brief. They can also support you to streamline your review process by liaising directly with the local market to collect feedback.

# The Localisation Spectrum

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.

## A note of caution

The British sense of humour may be considered unique. It can be ironic, sarcastic, cheeky or even cheesy. British consumers will understand the real meaning behind the words, but the joke may not translate to another language. If not adjusted, your copy can lose its impact or cause offence. Even children's jokes have the capacity to fall flat abroad, so it's no surprise that more subtle or sophisticated humour can be lost in translation. You can read more about this in our blog, [Do foreign jokes work in English?](#)



# Simplifying the translation process

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

## 1 Provide a great brief

Not sure how? Just ask your translation partner what they need. It's important to check as the information you share will help them to select the right translators for your project. You may be asked to provide material, such as existing translations, marketing collateral and brand positioning statements. Sharing a great brief, in a timely manner, helps the process run smoothly.

## 2 Develop a style guide

This will ensure a consistent style across all your marketing material. A good style guide will contain guidelines on the use of vocabulary, editing rules, tone and voice. It may also include advice on accepted wording conventions for spelling, terminology and common references. Working with your translation provider to put this together is a good way to make sure nothing is overlooked. You can also send a test guide to local review teams to make sure it's comprehensive enough.

## 3

### Review and approve

Your provider will ask you to review and approve your translations. You can ask your local market reviewers to help with this. You may be provided with guidelines to help you as well as a glossary of terms.

## 4

### Translation memories in action

Translation memory (TM) software captures 'pre-approved' translations for terms, common phrases or regularly used paragraphs of text. Once in the system, they can be recalled and used for subsequent projects across 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.

## 5

### Make TM part of your process

Once your translation has been reviewed by the local market reviewers, feedback can be entered into the TM. This ensures that any alterations your local market colleagues have made are acknowledged and reflected in future translations, saving time and avoiding frustration.

## 6

### Working with your provider

Managing translations can get complicated. But by working in partnership with your translation provider they can streamline and simplify the process for you. Ensure that roles within the process are clear and that everybody involved, including local review teams, understand their role and what is required from them.

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# Getting content translation-ready

Being aware of translation requirements during content development and design will save time and money.



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## 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).

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## 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.



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# Measuring and improving ROI

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

“You have to be careful you are addressing your audience in the right way. The things that cause people to share and engage with content varied tremendously with local nuances so you can’t just roll out a simple global campaign.”

Thomas Crampton, Global MD, Social@Ogilvy

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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

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.

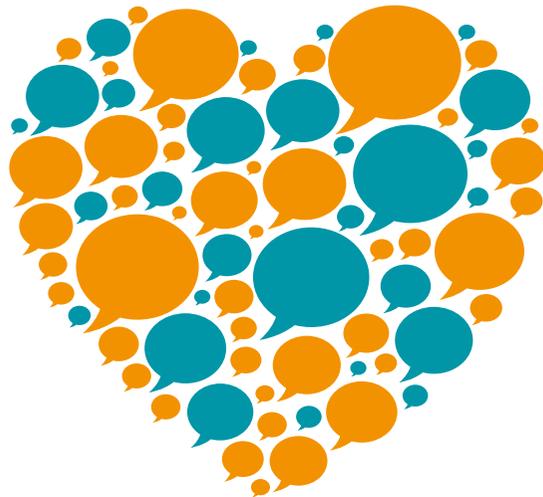
If you understand who was involved in these activities and the associated costs, you can calculate the financial rewards of switching to a centralised approach.

It 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

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# Key takeaways

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



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Here's a quick summary of the key points:

**1** Understanding your best approach for **Global vs Local** will allow you to effectively take your marketing message to customers in different markets, whilst retaining the most appropriate level of global oversight.

**2** **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.

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

**4** Thinking about the intended **emotional impact** of your marketing content will help you find the right translation method. This will help eliminate any quality issues and improve turnaround.

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

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

**7** 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.

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

**9** Involving your **local reviewers** will help get their buy-in and increase the effectiveness of multilingual marketing 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 James, he is here to answer any questions you might have.

Drop James an email on [jbrown@comtectranslations.com](mailto:jbrown@comtectranslations.com) or book a 10-minute discovery call [here](#) to see how we can support you in getting the best results from your global marketing campaigns.





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