

Frustrated by all of the formatting options for your multilingual IFU?

Idem's handy tips will help.



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Best Practices for Multilingual Formatting

Founded in 1983, Idem Translations, Inc. is a full-service provider of translation and localization services. Idem specializes in certified translations for medical device, biomedical, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as other organizations and entities working in the life sciences sector, such as contract research organizations (CROs), healthcare research centers, and institutional review boards (IRBs). The company is a WBENC-certified woman-owned business and holds certifications to ISO 9001:2008, ISO 13485:2003, and EN 15038:2006

Where to Start?

Prevent Time and Frustration

Knowing where to start and having a clear vision of how the document localization process works can save you a lot of time and frustration. If this is your first attempt at producing a multilingual document, below is a list of the first things you need to consider.



Final Document Size

When you start with an English text, the resulting translation usually expands or contracts. Slavic and Germanic languages, for example, tend to require more space than English, but Chinese requires less. In order to err on the side of caution if you are translating into more than one European language, a good rule of thumb is to multiply the English length by 20% for each new language added. This will give you a reasonable ballpark estimate of your final document length.

Printed Document Format

Now that you have an idea of the final length of your multilingual document, you need to coordinate with your printing supplier to determine which final printed format will best fit your needs. It may seem counterintuitive to start the formatting process by speaking with your printer, but you need to understand their capabilities so that you choose a format they will be able to handle. There are two primary printed formats, Accordion/Mini Fold Format or Booklet format.

Accordion and Mini Fold Formats

Accordion folding (also known as Z-Fold, fan fold or zig-zag fold) as well as mini folding (also known as pharmaceutical folding) allow for documents with multiple panels, thereby giving you as much (or little!) room as you need. It saves you the binding and stapling costs associated with booklets. The design can stretch across the entire face of the paper, but the maximum paper size that can be accordion- or map-folded will vary depending on your printer.

Advantages: The biggest advantage of using the mini fold is the resulting small size of the booklet. In fact, state-of-the-art folders can manipulate booklets to reduce a 27" x 39" sheet down to 2½" x 3".

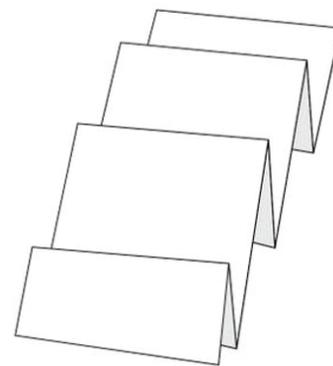


Figure 1 - Accordion Fold



Figure 2 - Mini Fold

Disadvantages: Documents formatted in an accordion fold have two major disadvantages. The first is a slightly higher translation cost per revision because additional formatting and engineering is required to prepare the content for translation. The second disadvantage is that, as your international market expands and languages are added to your document, you will eventually run out of space and need to move to a different format. This will trigger new packaging validation and additional translation costs to migrate to the new formatting.

Booklets

Booklets are, by far, the most commonly used format for IFUs and manuals. This is primarily due to their simplicity and flexibility, which reduces costs over the long-term. The three most common binding options are discussed below.

Saddle Stitching

Saddle stitching is a book binding method in which folded sheets are nestled together and then stapled through the fold line. Your printer can indicate the maximum number of pages recommended for this method. If you exceed the printer recommendation, books may become bulky when folded and may not lay flat once stitched.

Once a saddle-stitched booklet becomes very thick, the pages must be trimmed along the edge opposite the spine to maintain a neat, uniform appearance. To prevent potential problems, it is always recommended that you check with your printer in the early stages of booklet design to see if they can provide a recommended template that includes the appropriate margins.



Figure 3 - Saddle Stitching

“More than any other format, we see booklets for most of our medical device clients. The size and number of pages varies greatly, which is a testament to the flexibility of the format.”

*Norman Kral
Pharmaceutic Litho & Label*

Spiral and Wire-O Binding

Spiral binding, also known as coil binding, is another common method for binding booklets. It utilizes a durable plastic or metal coil that is inserted and twisted through small holes punched along the spinal edge of the book’s cover and pages.

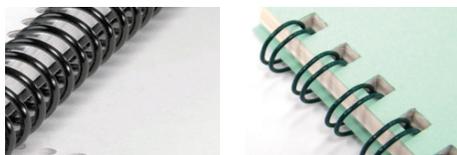


Figure 4 - Spiral and Wire-O Binding

Wire-O binding, also called twin loop, double loop, or duo-wire binding, utilizes pre-formed pairs of wire loops that are inserted through holes punched along the book’s cover and pages. These loops are then crimped together until they form a perfect circle, thus securing the cover and pages.

Despite a higher production cost compared to saddle-stitching, spiral and wire-O binding methods have several distinct advantages:

- The pages can be opened a full 360 degrees: a spiral bound book can fold all the way back upon itself and yet still remain flat. This improves readability and ensures that important information is never buried near the book's spine.
- The pages turn easily and stay put without having to be continually held open to view the contents.
- Spiral coils come in a variety of diameters and can accommodate both low and high page counts.

Perfect Binding

Perfect binding can accommodate page ranges from 40 to 1000 (20 to 500 sheets) and involves gluing the pages and cover together at the spine. This method is used more frequently for large manuals.

Although the highest cost option, the benefits of perfect binding are:

- Professional look
- Clean stacking
- Printable spine
- Ability to accommodate a large number of pages



Figure 5 - Perfect Binding

Print Specifications

Once you have decided on the printed format, your printer will be able to provide basic specifications, such as: paper size, margins, folds (columns), maximum number of pages, and, for accordion folds, an indication of where the cover and back pages need to be positioned within the layout. To the right is a spec sample from Pharmaceutical Litho & Label, a specialized printer used by many of Idem's clients.

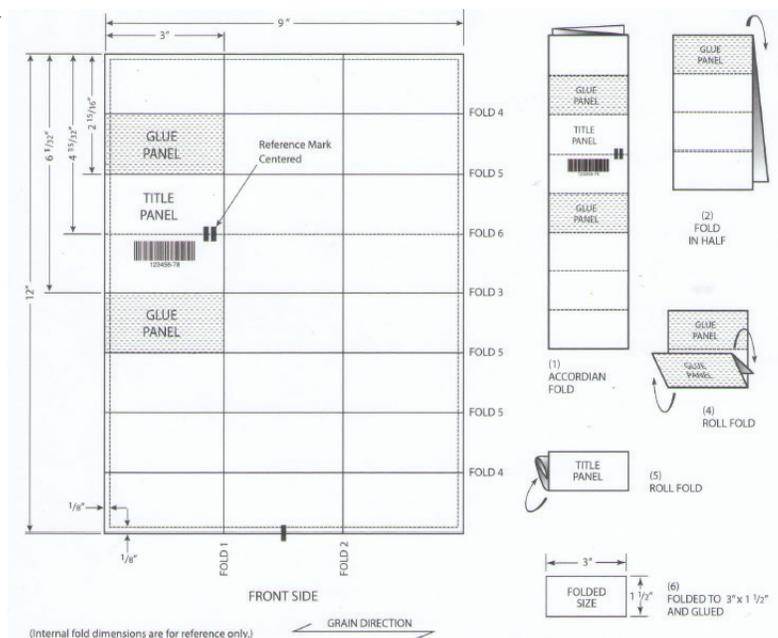


Figure 6 - Sample Specifications

Selecting the Right Software

A plethora of applications and tools are available to technical writers and range from off-the-shelf Microsoft Word to complex, enterprise-wide content management tools. Below are some tips to help you decide which application is right for your organization.

Content Management Tools

Content Management Systems (CMS) are typically used by large organizations that need to re-use content across different divisions and different channels. Managed content leads to better consistency, which in turn improves the customer experience and streamlines regulatory processes. It also helps manage risk by consolidating the various risk points within an organization and the content lifecycle. Most importantly for the vast majority of organizations, managed content greatly reduces the cost of the content itself and, by extension, the cost of translating, localizing, and updating that content over time. These benefits, however, come with a hefty price tag and substantial investment to migrate content into a CMS and maintain it year after year.

Adobe Products

These two Adobe products are the most commonly used tools for the creation of IFUs (DFUs) and manuals in the medical device space. They both perform well for technical documentation, each with its own advantages and drawbacks:

FrameMaker

FrameMaker is a powerhouse geared toward larger documentation, such as user manuals. It is designed to handle multiple chapters, tables of contents, and indexing, and has strong XML conversion capabilities.

InDesign

InDesign is the ideal solution for shorter documents, such as IFUs or procedures. Its key strength is its typographic composition features and design flexibility.

Microsoft Word

Although many companies use Word as a starting point for document creation, it is not a good long-term solution for multilingual documentation. Microsoft Word is a word processor, not a desktop publishing tool. As a document grows in complexity and length, it can become unstable. Word's performance degrades when graphics files are imported. Most importantly, Word is very limited in the available templates, which leads to higher formatting costs in the long-term.

“In my daily work, I create documents with FrameMaker. Idem Translations, our LSP, also uses the same version of that software, plus a well-known and accepted translation solution. This makes the entire localization process easier, more efficient, and less expensive. I think it’s vital for an LSP to use the same tools that their clients do.”

*Julia Brown, Technical Writer
Cutera, Inc.*

Space Savers

Once you have all your required, regulatory-approved content in place, have translated into multiple languages, and have formatted it into the ideal layout using the most appropriate application, how do you ensure you are maximizing space? Below are a few ideas to keep translation and printing costs to a minimum by optimizing valuable document real estate:

- Avoid including a language table of contents: use the header/footer to indicate the language for each section. In fact, avoid tables of contents altogether if your document isn't a large user manual
- Consolidate symbols: include a multilingual symbols chart at the end of the document.
- Create text-free images: embed the translatable text from your figures within the primary layout file (not the image) or use a numbering chart to avoid the costs associated with localizing graphics.

Get Help

For more information about how we can take the risk out of translations for you and your team, please visit us online:



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