

Fed up with your current vendor?

It's time to  
simplify translations.



## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Five Reasons You Keep Using That  
Mediocre Translation Vendor

(and How to Find a Good One!)

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 ISO 17100:2015.

Say that your current translation provider is not delivering on initial commitments. Perhaps the quality is inconsistent, your assigned project manager is unresponsive, or deliverables don't match your stated specifications. As much as you'd love to do something about it, you simply don't have the bandwidth to change anything. After all, your provider is integrated in all your systems and is trained on how you operate. You have enough to worry about without trying to launch another RFP cycle, interview vendors, comb through sample translations, and negotiate pricing. So you stick with the devil you know because it will take too much time and you risk far too much disruption to the current process.

But are the obstacles truly insurmountable? Might the risk be worth the reward?

In this brief, we look at the most common reasons to avoid changing translation suppliers, discuss the assumptions behind each reason, and empower you with the knowledge needed to plan your transition to a new provider.

## #1 It'll cost too much to bring in someone new.

As an outsourced process, translation can feel overly opaque, especially in the squeeze to get projects completed on time. There are two key things to know here about your existing translations:

- a. The translations you have paid for are yours; you own them.
- b. If translation quality wasn't the problem with your old provider, you won't need to re-translate your existing content.

First, it is a common misconception that you could lose your translation history if you switch providers. But if you regularly manage your translation assets, you retain control and can transition seamlessly between translation companies. These assets include:

- Your completed translations, in their native file format (e.g. InDesign, MS Word, etc.)
- Your terminology documentation (i.e., glossaries and style guides)
- Your translation memory database, a.k.a. TM, in standard .tmx format. (Read our recommendations for [TM Best Practices](#).)

A new vendor can integrate these assets into their own system to leverage your translation history, allowing

them to keep costs low and step in where your previous provider left off.

Second, your desire to switch vendors may be unrelated to the translation quality you have been receiving. Rather than starting from scratch, you can ask a new vendor to review your existing translations and re-certify. If they indicate that they need to re-translate a particular language or document because the existing quality is insufficient, you can request specific examples of errors that warrant immediate correction.

### What You Can Do Today

Organize your translation assets and request anything you are missing from your current provider (before you start talking about making a switch). Not only does this guarantee that you can give your new provider a clear overview of your translation history, it also puts you in control of your assets to increase your understanding of the translation process as a whole.

## #2 Our current vendor already knows our content, and we want to maintain that consistency.

Unless they are very small, your current vendor has likely been using multiple translators on your content. They maintain consistency across your projects over time by:

- Referencing a style guide
- Managing terminology (in the form of a glossaries)
- Managing past translations (in the form of a translation memory)
- Integrating the feedback of your in-country teams

In order to keep your translations consistent in the future, you don't need the same provider, you just need their tools.

### What You Can Do Today

Once you have organized your existing translation assets, check to see what's missing. Have your in-country partners been providing consistent feedback on their preferences? Has this led to a clear glossary of approved terms? If not, consider building this terminology management tool in-house or using its creation to launch the relationship with your new translation provider. This process of managing your terminology in translation has the added benefit of streamlining any future in-country reviews because your team and your provider will be able to reference a shared document.

## #3 It takes too much effort to get a new vendor on the approved supplier list.

Managing suppliers is a complex effort. Even if your company doesn't do formal requests for proposal to select translation vendors, you still have to wade through pricing, process, and certifications. Worse still, translation vendors are notorious for pricing their services differently from one company to the next, making it difficult to perform a true apples-to-apples comparison. Despite these complexities, the effort spent on getting approval for a new vendor is worthwhile if they will save you time and headaches on each project.

### What You Can Do Today

Communicate your current frustrations with your colleagues to gain their buy-in for a switch. Then build a case for the Quality or Procurement decision-maker to garner their support. By understanding the supplier requirements for your system, you can limit your search for a new provider to those companies that will meet those requirements right from day one.

## #4 We'd have to train a new vendor on our processes and preferences.

Onboarding any new vendor can be a lengthy process. More often than not, vendors learn your processes and preferences organically over time as you fine-tune your working relationship. Take a step back and ask yourself these questions:

- Do the problems with your current vendor stem from a lack of communication?
- Have you thoroughly communicated your expectations?
- Have you complained when these expectations were not met?
- Are you doing everything possible to mitigate misunderstandings between your internal teams and external vendors?

### What You Can Do Today

Start documenting the ideal translation process for your team. Consider how you want to request translations, how you want to receive them, and how you want to be invoiced. Gather information from different providers on what options are available for the exchange of files and archiving of completed projects. Then discuss these details with suppliers, old and new alike, to gauge how effective you think they will be in meeting your future needs.

## #5 There's no guarantee that the new vendor will be any better.

Changing providers, especially for something as integral to your business requirements as translation, can feel like stepping off a cliff. At least with the current provider you're already aware of their weaknesses and where they fall short. But you are dissatisfied enough with the current process that you've spent five minutes reading an executive brief on switching suppliers.

Clearly it's time for a change.

### What You Can Do Today

Write down your translation pain points and your priorities. The best way to ensure that your new vendor does a better job for you is to know exactly what you want from a translation partner, communicate it clearly, and keep your eyes on the prize: a pain-free partnership. To increase your team's confidence in the transition, consider giving a prospective new vendor a test job to see both how they perform and how they respond to your team's feedback.

Bringing in a new supplier is an investment. You'll spend time researching your options and finding the optimal solution. In the end, however, you should be rewarded with a more clear understanding of your own needs, a translation vendor who better meets them, and a translation process that is more effective in serving your team.

When you're ready to make the switch, check out our brief on how to streamline the process of [transitioning to a new translation provider](#).

## 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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