



# How to Maximize ROI on Translations

When you're paying for quality translations, you want to make sure that you get a solid return on your investment. What concrete steps can you take to make sure that your money is well spent? This brief walks you through three key considerations:

1. make a plan
2. stay organized
3. be consistent

Let's dive in and maximize your return on translation investment!

## Planning

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Start at the beginning. Better yet, start before the beginning! There are three key budget hogs that you want to avoid with translations:

- unnecessary rush fees
- a slow trickle of tiny requests that prevent project batching
- scope creep when the source content is changed after translation has begun

The good news is that all of these are avoidable if you keep an eye on the flow of your team's translation needs and plan accordingly.

### Never Pay Rush

Rush surcharges often feel inevitable when your team suddenly discovers an urgent need for a translated document. From a strategic perspective, however, there are two ways to avoid rush surcharges: start the translation earlier or accept a later deadline. But how do you start a translation earlier than when it hits your desk? If you keep your translation provider in the loop for upcoming (and even potentially upcoming) translation needs, you can get a leg up. Here are two simple examples:

1. You know that the window between finalizing the English document and needing the translation is very narrow. In this case, ask your provider to translate the draft version of the document while your team hashes out the details of what will be in the final. Just let your translation provider know the plan so that they can schedule the change order at the most optimized part of the project schedule.
2. You know you will be getting an urgent document to translate, but you don't even have a draft. If you know the approximate length of the document and when it will be ready for translation, ask your translation provider to pre-book the appropriate linguists so they are waiting for your document as soon as it arrives.

### Leverage the Power of Volume

Every translation project, regardless of size, has setup costs. Often, these involve coordinating the schedules of the translator, the editor, and any other members of the project team. If each individual document that you need translated is small, you can optimize your budget by accumulating a few of them to translate together. Some translation providers will even work with you to establish a regular schedule so that you can batch together your needs on a weekly basis. For example, you might collect documents and drop a weekly batch to your provider on Monday with the agreement that they will deliver the translations that same Friday.

## Rein in Scope Creep

Planned and pre-scheduled change orders are one thing, but even simple, unplanned changes to the source document can endanger your project budget and timeline. In order to ensure a quality product, translation providers typically build multi-layered processes that involve translation, independent editing, quality control, and so forth. Naturally, you want any changes you make to go through the full verification process to ensure that the final translation exactly matches your final English content. Unplanned changes to the content can throw a proverbial wrench into the project schedule and, depending upon where the translation stands at the time the new change is requested, may incur additional costs. The best way to avoid last minute changes is to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have a voice in crafting the source content before it is routed for translation. One important group who is often forgotten are the in-country reviewers. When you have such reviewers in place, it pays to let them comment on the source content, prior to translation, so that you can integrate their feedback before translation begins. In this way, you limit post-translation review to the key terms used in the translation and avoid eleventh-hour revisions to the actual messaging of the document.

## Organization

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Time is money, right? The more organized your team is, the less time you will spend managing files and hunting around for the document you need! When it comes to translations, here are the top two ways to keep your team organized:

### Prohibit Duplications

Each additional version of your source document is one more thing to manage. Whenever you make a tiny change, you have to remember to make the same update in every version. And the more things you have to remember, the more likely one of them will slip through the cracks, leaving you with a problematic content discrepancy to resolve. Although it requires more up-front work, you will save yourself time, money, and headaches if you plan a translation strategy where each document exists in only one, controlled version.

A common related pitfall is treating the “content” as separate from the “format” for your key documentation. Unless you are using a robust content management system, the separation of content and format inevitably forces a copy/paste maneuver onto your document management processes. Copy/paste is significantly more risk-prone than automated import/export operations, which are the standard for professional translation processes. What’s more, if your approved content lives outside the required format, each document update requires an additional verification: first, you must confirm that you put the right content into the right format; then, you must confirm that you’ve got a translation that matches. Of course, it’s equally important that your content lives in the right application in the first place as not all formats are equally compatible with standard translation tools.

### Create a Library for Graphics

When you embed graphics into your documents—such as diagrams, flowcharts, or any other pretty image that contains text—keep the original files easily accessible and orderly. If you haven’t translated them before, your translation provider will need the native format (.psd, .ai, .eps, etc.) in order to create an attractive, translated version. Once they have been translated, you will want your provider to drop the final, certified version into future projects unaltered.

# Consistency

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Fewer deviations = more efficient processes. The more consistent you are in how you handle your source content and your translations, the further your translation budget will stretch. Here's how:

## Content Re-Use

Translation providers offer discounts for repetitious content. You can save money on future translations by drafting "chunks" of text (also often called "topics") that can be re-used across your documentation. This means that you will need to draft the original version of each topic with a broad vision as to how it might apply to future updates, related documentation, or next-generation products. Once the original version exists, be careful to borrow it word-for-word when you want to re-use it so that it is 100% identical to the original. (Most providers will also give you a discount for highly similar text, but it won't be as steep a discount as a true duplication appearing in a new document.) To learn more about how content re-use helps your budget, check out our brief on [translation memory best practices](#).

## Build a Shared History

If your annual translation spend is over six figures, it may make sense to have more than one vendor. In this case, it is important to manage your multiple vendors wisely. A common pitfall is treating each new project as a bidding war to see which provider will offer the lowest cost. This puts the relationship focus on trying to undercut the competition rather than on the addition of long-term value to your organization. A better approach is to carve up your translation workload to take advantage of the strengths of each provider. Let each vendor "own" a product so that they can easily offer you consistency across clinical, regulatory, and marketing materials for that product. If you are in this boat, our executive brief on [how to manage multiple translation vendors](#) offers many additional tips.

## Vet Your Vendor

Nothing sinks a translation budget faster than hiring a "quick and cheap" provider only to discover that their work won't pass muster with your international stakeholders and quality system requirements. Before you cut a purchase order for your first sizeable project (for example, if you're about to launch the initial translation of your IFU into multiple European languages), be sure that you have done your homework on the vendor. By selecting a qualified vendor who will be a longterm partner for your organization, you will avoid the costs of translation re-work down the road. Read more on [how to evaluate translation suppliers](#) and, particularly for medical device manufacturers, how to [ensure compliance with ISO 13485](#).

Stretch that translation budget wisely! By making a plan, keeping organized, and remaining consistent, you can ensure that your translation dollars are well-spent, which leaves you with more room in the budget to expand to additional markets and translate the marketing materials that will further strengthen your international sales.

## About Idem Translations

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, healthcare research centers, and institutional review boards. The company is a WBENC-certified woman-owned business and holds certifications to ISO 9001:2015, ISO 13485:2016, and ISO 17100:2015.

## 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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