



A Meeting of Creative Minds

Sophie Howe, Director of Comtec Translations, and David Jones, Group Account Director at Cogent Elliott, have worked together on several high-profile marketing communications projects. In this article they talk about the processes involved in global creative project management and advise on how creative agencies and translation houses can work together effectively to develop marketing material for international clients.

Creative agencies looking to develop their customer portfolio are increasingly likely to work with clients who are expanding their operations overseas. In order to capitalise on the business opportunities which this presents, and deliver the highest quality service in an increasingly competitive market, it is critical for the creative agency to team-up with a professional and reliable translations house.

As is the case with delivery of all professional services, the project brief, timings, internal communications, feedback and handover are crucial. When working in a global setting, often in several languages, the challenges are far greater and require not only professional skill but trust at all times in the selected translation partner and production process.

The opportunity to work on a major international marketing contract can be a daunting as well as exciting prospect. The successful creative agency may have known their client for several years, delivering well targeted and effective campaigns to the UK market. An opportunity now arises to take those same messages to expansive new markets abroad, but are they really the same messages or do culture and language present a whole new set of challenges?

Starting Well

Midlands-based creative team Cogent Elliot has appointed Comtec Translations to help deliver translations projects on behalf of their clients, the automotive giant **Jaguar** and the prestigious motorcycle manufacturer, **Triumph**. Both brands

communicate through a multilingual web presence and print material in a wide range of languages, from Western and Eastern European to Japanese and Chinese. Both have a global, centralised communications strategy designed to deliver consistent brand messages and tone of voice with the right look and feel, taking into account particular markets and their associated cultural requirements.

It is often the case that the agency's client wants the work done quickly but it is also crucial that the lead creative managers avoid the temptation to cut corners. From day one, Cogent provided Comtec with a clear brief and timescales, agreeing staged delivery of translated text from first checking to final approval. This way, the client could gradually assimilate and integrate each new piece of marketing collateral.

For the Jaguar project, familiarity with the brand message and tone allowed the Cogent team to prepare the new master documents alongside existing brochures and web content for cross reference. The brief was then to ensure that, in completing the translations, the tonality and integrity was maintained at all times. For Triumph, Cogent's brief had been to develop a new style of copy representing a re-invigorated brand. The copy was more abstract and therefore required a more creative approach to the translation.

A major role for Cogent was to bring the local market on board, to involve them in the early planning stages and keep them informed of project progress. The key contact in the local market, often the marketing manager, is able to bring a unique insight into the particular cultural characteristics of the market or region, consumer behaviour and perception of the brand. A global communications strategy simply won't work without local market involvement and support.

With this in mind, Comtec was able to advise on securing the involvement of the local market in the translation process. This involved providing a sample translation at the start of the project together with a glossary of key terms compiled from existing material. This way the market had the opportunity to provide feedback and outline their particular requirements. Any issues were then highlighted and resolved early on.

Staying on track for the best results

With experience of several high profile international projects under their belt, Comtec set about the translations process using key tried and tested procedures. These included regularly providing sample text for review by the market using feedback templates to record changes or corrections.

It also meant, in the case of the Jaguar and Triumph projects, putting together a translation team which combined an expertise in the handling of technical terminology specific to the particular industry and expertise in the localisation of marketing copy. This involves the complex linguistic task of ensuring copy reflects the unique cultural expressions and values of the target market. Employing high quality professional translators is a given for Comtec. Only working into their mother tongue, all translators used by Comtec are selected based on their extensive experience and expertise in a particular field.

A further crucial step which Comtec employs to ensure projects run smoothly is the use of a translation memory facility. This software allows Comtec to store translated copy and then to retrieve the copy to assist with subsequent work. The translation memory is continually updated with copy approved by the market in the form of particular phrases and occasionally whole sections of text. Use of the translation memory facility not only ensures consistency in style and terminology across all marketing collateral, but also provides a more cost-effective solution for the client in the long term as it avoids unnecessary re-translation. Cogent and Comtec can return to the translation files and build on existing knowledge rather than starting from base each time.

Creative challenges overcome

There will always be small issues to tackle in major translations projects, but Cogent and Comtec suggest there are two particular challenges, which others can learn from.

The first concerns engagement with the local market, in this case the Jaguar marketing managers. Brands as strong as Jaguar have a universal image and commercial standing, but will be perceived differently according to a country's economic position, culture, wealth and values. Gaining the trust and cooperation of the local market takes time and sensitivity which should be built into the project timescales. If this is handled well, the result will be excellent quality of copy, which meets local market requirements and remains in line with the agreed global brand message.

The second challenge is in maintaining a consistent style and tone across the range of different communication channels, i.e. web and print. In our experience this is best managed by ensuring that the agency only works with one translation company who

use the same translation team, and also importantly, maintaining an up-to-date translation memory which can be continually accessed and expanded as more marketing collateral is translated.

Selecting a creative translations house

Outsourcing parts of a major project is second-nature to most creative agencies and many of the criteria for selection centre around looking for a company with a proven track record, the ability to turn work around quickly and to integrate well into the overall team.

However there are specific requirements you should look for when appointing a translations house. Not only should the company have a proven track record, but it must have the technology and infrastructure to cope with major multilingual projects. The translations memory facility is a good example of the technology which needs to be in place. The company's scope for language must be truly global with a sound network of professional local, mother-tongue experts. Cogent were looking for a combination of technical expertise in the translators, together with excellent project management skills when making the approach to Comtec.

Finally, the ability to work together, to trust each other, to be open to new ideas and welcome recommendations for improvement are all factors you need to consider when building your project team.

Creative outcomes

The right combination of creative minds and language expertise can achieve spectacular results for the agency's client. It is all about building a robust world class process which ultimately contributes to building the clients' business. Taking a product or service from a UK market base into the international marketplace does present a different set of challenges. By following clear professional guidelines, and recognising how the translations process is executed, creative firms will find a whole new world of contracts opening up in 2010.

Five cornerstones of creative translation projects

1. Develop project plans with timescales and communicate effectively between both the agency and translation house teams so everyone is on-side

2. Bring local market managers on board as part of the team by providing sample translations and glossaries early on in the project. Value and use their feedback
3. Ensure that your chosen translation partner selects translators with both the technical understanding and ability to localise marketing messages.
4. Request use of a translation memory as this will save both time and money
5. Use one translation house and the same team of translators if you want your global communications project to hit home.

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