



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CROWDSOURCING AND COMMUNITY TRANSLATION? HOW ARE THEY USED?

“Crowdsourcing” and “community translation” are new buzzwords in the localization industry. You may also hear about collaborative or social translation. Often, these terms are confused, one for the other. All are ways of getting translation completed via a large body of translators, whether they are professional linguists, amateurs, volunteers, or paid resources.

What’s the difference between these approaches? When would a company want to use them?

The effort of producing large volumes of translated content by volunteers or users is called **Community Translation**. It is performed by members of a specific group, or users of a specific service, website, etc. As such, this is often called user-translated content.

Crowdsourcing, on the other hand, engages any mix of volunteer translators, employees, contractors, or language service providers (LSPs) in a single translation project. Collaborative translation and social translation refer to this approach as well.

Whatever the name of the approach, all deviate substantially from the traditional translation process, where one or two translators work on a piece.

How it Works

Community translation and Crowdsourcing efforts are new, and many companies are assessing whether they are viable options for them. Some are just getting started.

The basic requirement is that the community exists already; it is hard to build one just for the purpose of translation. The community also needs to believe that something is deserving of translation and its members must be motivated to participate.

The existence of communities make community translation possible: global communities around common interests have sprung up and matured on the internet, meaning that pools of potential translators are there before you start.

Why it Works

A number of companies have engaged a crowd to translate and have achieved success with it. Group translation (whether by paid professionals, by volunteers, or by a mix of the two) can be effective, due to a number of factors:

1. Technology has been developed to allow translators, editors, and other professionals to work on a translation all at the same time.
2. The use of translation memories, style guides, and glossaries is obligated, and it enables translators to produce consistent work (avoiding the “ransom-note” effect when multiple people work on one piece of text). These resources must be housed in a secure online location, controlled, and available to all collaborators.
3. Collaboration can and must happen in a networked environment, most likely via the internet.
4. Linguists and users all seem willing to adapt the way they work so that these translation models can become possible.
5. Companies are beginning to understand and accept that they need to find new ways of translating content and entering new markets if they are going to continue to grow.
6. LSPs are training their project managers and language leads to capably handle such projects. Although managing them is very different from traditional translation projects (with many more moving parts), they still require many competences that LSP employees already possess.
7. Old resources are taking on new and different roles. For example, the lead translator may act as a community moderator. Community projects require someone to guide and oversee work and possibly accept and reject suggestions.

Cost Factors

It’s important to know that even if your translators are all volunteers, your translation will not end up being entirely free. What are the cost factors?

- A technology framework needs to be in place to support the translation work.
- Subject matter experts may be required to verify that translated content is accurate.
- Dedicated resources are needed: moderators, administrators, project managers.
- Volunteers may need to be given motivation that bears a cost to the company; for example, free membership in the community, a free product, etc.

Reasons to Use these Models

A company may look into community translation or crowdsourcing in order to:

- Reach new markets.
- Better serve markets that are currently under-served.
- Get content translated that companies wouldn't spend the time and money to translate (however, as already stated, translations provided by volunteers are not entirely free — technology, review, project management all bear a cost).
- Increase the value of a global brand by further engaging users.
- Access terminology (via users) that is best suited to that community.
- Get things translated more quickly.

However, there is some content that you would want to leave in the hands of professionals (whether in-house or an LSP). For example:

- Legal content
- Marketing content (where preserving brand integrity is key)
- Highly technical content
- Final quality assurance/reviews

Additional Ways to Use the Community

A company can also use its community for different phases of translation. For example, the community could define the terminology, and an LSP could handle the rest.

Some LSPs may fear losing work because companies might choose to get their content translated by their user community. LSPs need to respond by modifying their services.

For example, an LSP could provide governance (e.g., reviewing to ensure politically correct or style-compliant translations), services to build and manage the community, and/or consistency and quality management in the form of formal reviews. An LSP could also provide the technology that would enable the process to flow smoothly.

What you should know

1. Crowdsourcing is engaging a mixed group (professionals and volunteers) to complete a translation product.
2. Community Translation is a large translation effort, handled by volunteers.
3. Neither are free; different costs apply to each model.
4. Online/networked tools to manage the process and drive consistency are absolutely required to make this work.

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge (Nasdaq: LIOX) is the leading provider of translation, localization, and testing services. Organizations in all industries rely on Lionbridge language and testing services to increase international market share, speed adoption of products and content, and ensure the integrity of their global brands. Based in Waltham, Mass., Lionbridge operates across 26 countries, and provides services under the Lionbridge and VeriTest® brands.

Corporate Headquarters

Lionbridge
1050 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02451
USA

www.lionbridge.com

Contact us: marketing@lionbridge.com