



MULTILINGUAL LEGAL WEBSITES

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AFFAIRS

Law firms with an international clientele are well aware of the challenges language barriers may pose. Law is a highly sensitive, culture-dependent subject field. Legal systems vary greatly from state to state, along with legal language, standards, customs and, naturally, the structure and terminology of legal documents.

Thus, the translation of legal texts requires a complex approach: the linguist must consider textual and procedural standards and conventions while rigorously conveying the legal content of the original text.

Legal translation, therefore, is a complicated field. But what challenges the translation of a legal website can add to that?

LEGAL WEBSITES NEED TO ENCOURAGE CLIENTS TO MAKE CONTACT

Despite all the difficulties posed by crossing language and procedural barriers, legal translation is viewed as a simple verbatim interpretation of documents. It is expected to be transparent, straightforward and to the point: a definite must for all law-related issues, contracts, court decisions, and legal disputes.

Business development purposes of law firms, however, require a different approach.

Similarly to commercial business organizations, law firms need to address their clientele in a way that encourages potential clients to make the first contact and existing clients to remain loyal to the firm.

A most convenient method to approach clients on a global scale is seemingly through the firm's website. Getting it translated appears to be a rapid and stress-free way to acquire an efficient communication tool and then sit back and forget all about it. But that's just not how it works.

When reaching out to clients and promoting services and added values, the matter-of-fact standards of legal translation no longer apply. A word by word translation of the original site may sound peculiar, or, what's worse, blunt to the foreign readers. **A 'plain and simple' translation is not sufficient and may prove counterproductive.** Instead, localisation is advised.

LOCALISATION

The term '**localisation**' refers to the adaptation of a product (i.e. a text) to a particular *locale*: in this case, creating a text in a foreign language to a foreign audience with a foreign mindset and cultural codes, while conveying a particular message. Note the word 'creating': the process of localisation results in a text that may be quite different from the original. It is intended for a different target audience; hence the wording, style and tone may need to be adapted as well but the message remains the same.



It is, therefore essential that the message – i.e. what the firm intends to communicate to the target audience – must be clear and unambiguous.

THE PROCESS

Localisation of a legal website requires the joint effort of the client (the law firm) and the linguist. At this point, advice from a marketing strategist shall also be taken into consideration. The content of the existing website shall be re-evaluated and adjusted to match the strategic plan of the firm. The target audience needs also be clearly defined and the texts to be translated must be relevant to the visitors.

MAKE YOUR CLIENT FEEL 'MORE AT HOME'

Stylistic changes, including the use of visual elements may also be required. In some cases, even the firm's pricing methods need to be reconsidered to make visitors feel 'more at home'.

The translation process is, as described above, extensive and requires long hours of research, consultation and an uncomplicated approval process on the client's side. It is, therefore, vital to find a competent language service provider with broad knowledge of both law and cultural background.

THE EFFORT PAYS OFF

The notion of localisation may sound odd to lawyers. It may seem a tedious and unnecessary effort and tremendous extra work. Losing control of the text for the sake of cultural adaptation might also seem upsetting. On the plus side, it most definitely pays off in the long term.

ABOUT LEXPERTIS

With a profound legal education and years of extensive experience in the translation industry, we are aware that legal matters are to be taken seriously in any language. Outstanding performance in this field takes a different approach to translation as well as a different mindset and sharp focus under any circumstances.

As committed legal professionals, we offer all that, using the latest technology to fortify traditional values and our love and respect for the law.



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