

**Hidden costs of in-house translations**  
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“We don't need a translator, all our engineers are bilingual”. This phrase illustrates a commonly shared sentiment in the corporate world, where translators are considered an expense, not a necessity. Most companies don't consider how expensive NOT using a professional translator can be. First of all, when you pull someone away from their normal duties to translate, their normal performance is impaired. Now they are forced to deal with something that seems to be within their area of expertise, but in reality is not at all. Understanding something does not qualify most people to teach. Likewise, being an expert in a given field does not necessarily mean the expertise can be expressed in another language. Bilingual or not. Secondly, assuming a person does have enough knowledge of the second language to be able to express the concept appropriately, will they be able to do so in writing? How often do you issue full letters instead of a quick informal memo or e-mail? Most people suffered through grammar and essay writing in high school, in their native language. Isn't it to be expected that pulling off a formal paper in a second language will be that much more difficult? Also, how much time will the employee need to invest into translating, digressing from their own work?

Basically, using your employees as translators means a) having your communications in another language prepared by someone that is at best not proficient, at worst, not qualified, b) issuing your communications with poor grammar and frequently, poor spelling (spell-check only helps if you already know; and c) distracting your employee from their regular duties.

Translators have the language knowledge, offering a high quality rendering of the original meaning into the target language. You can rest assured that the written output will be professional and well polished. This means you're not accidentally offending someone by misusing a word that "sounds" like it should translate easily,

and for all the bilingual people out there - you'll share my amusement at overhearing an American man tell a Mexican woman, "Espero no la embarace". I overheard this out of context, it was a public place and they didn't seem to be well acquainted. I think he meant to say he hoped he hadn't embarrassed her and not impregnated her... but who am I to judge? Finally, if you do the math of how long it takes an employee to translate something, and consider the hourly wage, overtime, plus health insurance, employee tax, AND the time not spent on their job duties, how much are you really paying for that in-house translation? Factor the time they will have spent complaining about the translation to anyone who will listen. Now the translation is costing you at least two man-hours.

That freelance translator gets more attractive. First, they are off site and will not distract anyone in house. Second, it's what they do, so a professional translator will know what the terms are and how to express them. Third, a professional translator will work with your preferred terms and will make sure they really know what you want to say and to whom. Your employees are free to proceed with their own work, without incurring additional expenses, and wonders! the translator is being paid per word, usually with a time constraint, so you don't have to worry if they choose to sleep all morning or take a two-hour lunch.

As a professional translator I can only say, of course I am biased, but I assure you that the peace of mind and high quality of work I will provide to you is worth every cent per word above and beyond the savings in your employee's time and company money.