

Considerations for Translation technology in the pharmaceutical industry



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Pharmaceutical companies are currently looking for every edge to increase their international sales and reduce the costs of drug development. This is a difficult task considering that they must also maintain perfect compliance with local regulations in any country where they market their drugs or conduct studies.

CROs are increasingly helping sponsors conduct their testing phases abroad, which means localizing COAs carefully to meet local regulations, ensure linguistic validation, and maintain safety and ethical standards¹.

Achieving high quality translation and adherence to protocols while dealing with significant cultural differences is the primary challenge of localization when it comes to Clinical Outcome Assessments (COAs), including PROs, ClinROs, ObsROs, and PerfOs.

Language about experiences such as pain, happiness, anxiety, breathing, or comfort has a high degree of cultural and linguistic complexity and is challenging to translate. A mixture of talented professionals, linguistic validation, and technology is the best tool in the toolbox to confront these challenges.

In this article, we interview **Brahim Aïoun, Senior Consultant, Life Sciences at Wordbee**, to discuss the impacts of translation management and linguistic technology and other important considerations for the localization of COAs in the current technological and business climate.

Q. What are the challenges faced by those localizing in the life sciences industries?

Localization managers in the life sciences industries have advanced localization and linguistic validation workflows that include various methods for back translation and validation.

The primary challenge is obtaining top quality translations to ensure compliance with local regulations, adherence to protocol, and highly reliable trial data. The industry has invented unique systems for linguistic validation as a method to address these challenges.

Efficiency in management is also important. Efficient operations help localization and linguistic validation teams to spend more of their time focusing on the quality of the translation and less of their time keeping up with rudimentary tasks.

Besides technology and process, an always-present challenge is recruiting linguistic talent. The professionals who work in this field are always in demand.

Not every company is using a translation management system. Many are using an outdated translation product that no longer suits the market. Such companies may not realize that they are missing out on better quality, cost efficiency, and team performance.

Q. What does a translation management system have to do with compliance?

Because regulatory compliance is essentially a matter of management workflows, linguistic tools, linguistic validation, and specialized reporting, it is mostly a

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¹ JHPR. Hosp Pract Res. 2017 May;2(2):29-35

question of specialized people using specialized technology.

When you have outstanding translation management technology, not only can you ensure that your workflow is followed each and every time and that you follow linguistic best practices, but you can also track every revision, query, comment, and collaboration, all of it per user and timestamped. This allows you mitigate risk and demonstrate how you mitigated that risk at every step in the process.

Therefore, so far as the regulations are concerned regarding your linguistic performance, the technology you use is intimately acquainted with the success of that mission.

Q. What are the advantages of deploying a translation management system?

The benefits are wide-ranging. I've mentioned benefits related specifically to compliance and compliance reporting, so we'll cover some other benefits.

Management automation helps your team focus on linguistic validation instead of pushing spreadsheets. This means you can do more with less, and it does affect your bottom line, reducing both costs and turnaround times.

Wordbee, which allows different stakeholders to work on a translation simultaneously, is naturally collaborative. Comments and replies can be made within the system and with specific references to the translation. They can be marked resolved, and the appropriate stakeholders are always notified.

As a powerful enterprise software, Wordbee has several options that will improve your operations. In fact, you'll not only see immediate improvements, but also continued improvement as your management team levels up their usage of Wordbee. For example, you can make certain stakeholders perform an automated QA check before they close a translation task, or you can add a workflow step for documenting terminology in the Wordbee terminology editor.

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Collateral work like managing linguistic talent, prices, and invoices can be organized and automated as well.

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Q. How does using a translation management system help to demonstrate compliance?

With outdated systems and methods to manage linguistic validation and translation in the pharmaceutical industry, achieving complex back translation workflows and making it work is already a challenge.

Demonstrating or reporting your quality standards is a next level capability. Being able to demonstrate every revision, comment, reply, or other change to management, clients, or authorities, is highly valued in the industry.

Wordbee is a centralized system for managing all aspects of localization. All the data is in the system. Our existing clients in the pharmaceutical industry helped us to build reporting tools to report this data in a way that helps them demonstrate their work thoroughly, and in-context.

Q. What are the best options for increasing efficiency in localization?

Efficiency in localization is all about process and technology. Because translation in the pharma and pharma adjacent industries is process laden, efficiency gains through technology and automation are that much larger. If you automate some of your workflow steps, where your software is automatically delivering jobs to the next person in your workflow, and you lift all that work out of email and into structure, you can save a great deal of time.

The second most important thing is to use a collaborative translation platform, where translators, LQA professionals, managers, and other stakeholders can all access the work. This enables instant and unified communications, as well as instant, shared linguistic resources.

Being able to see a real-time summary of where each project is at, what has been done, what feedback has

been created, and where you are needed *right now* is a real comfort to your team.

Q. What are some of the concerns with security in today's localization climate?

In the pharmaceutical industry, security is of course a concern. Sensitive personal information or trade secrets may be present in the content. Data security, privacy and contractual agreements are of the utmost importance.

Wordbee is a cloud-system, hosted on secure servers, with different options available for different countries or different industries, including self-hosting. The system itself has enterprise-grade security features like SSO, and is used by governments, financial institutions, and pharmaceutical MNCs.

An underrated security aspect of cloud localization systems is that you don't have to send files or translation packages to persons involved in the process. Even the largest pharmaceutical MNCs are often sending sensitive files to third-party companies, who send them to freelancers or other third-parties. Each time a file hits a different inbox, the security risk grows.

In cloud architecture, you don't send the files, and they never hit an inbox outside of your network. You can limit translators or other stakeholders to only what they can access via the online editor and prevent them from downloading files. This decreases your security risks significantly.

Linked NDAs that ask everyone in the chain to encrypt the files and delete them after a job are difficult or impossible to enforce.

Q. Do I need to have any other systems to work with Wordbee in order to produce translations?

Depending on what type of content you are localizing, you may have different content management needs. Wordbee can work in conjunction with different management systems.

In some cases, Wordbee's powerful file management and integrations with cloud storage technologies is an improvement over antiquated file management systems.

Large MNCs may have content management systems for their website and marketing collateral, like Adobe Experience Manager, Censhare, or Sitecore. Wordbee integrates with several such systems.

Q. What are the considerations when planning for a new translation management system?

The most important consideration is *scalability*. You want a system that is going to support your existing workflows, but also one that will take your organization to a higher level for years to come.

Otherwise, besides asking how you can duplicate what you are doing now, it's good to take the opportunity to reimagine what you are doing now. When you migrate, your new system should give you new ideas for operational excellence.

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Q. How does terminology management affect translation and linguistic validation in the pharmaceutical industry?

Terminology management is an important part of the industry. Some terms or phrases are regulated in some local markets, and those regulations are sometimes updated with new preferred terms.

The ability to create and maintain a terminology database that can be searched by your linguists or LQA team at any time is very useful. In Wordbee, terminology matches are piped directly into the automatic suggestions, and can be searched in several different modes while translating.

Maintaining such a database is a serious investment. Some industries overlook terminology management for that reason, but companies in pharma (or other regulated industries like banking) do not have such luxury.

About the Author

Brahim Aioun is a Senior Consultant and Sales Engineer at Wordbee and has 10 years of experience helping companies across the Life Sciences and Gaming sectors define their technical requirements and strategy for deploying a new TMS.