

1

Freelancer or translation agency

Problem: translation required

Freelancer

Advantages of freelancers

- + always the same translator
- + always the same quality
- + opportunity to build up a partnership with the translator
- + reliable consistency and continuity
- + queries dealt with directly between you and the translator
- + you give your instructions directly to and discuss your style and terminology requirements directly with the translator

Disadvantages of freelancers

- freelance translators generally work alone
- they are not in a position to translate several hundreds of pages overnight

Translation agency

Advantages of agencies

- + can quickly translate large volumes of text
- + cover many language combinations and many subject-fields
- + work together with a large number of translators
- + one single point of call

Disadvantages of agencies

- no control over who actually produces your translation
- possible that a different translator will translate your text each time and that the quality will vary
- the best qualified and most experienced translators generally do not work for agencies
- no direct contact with the translator, i.e. your instructions to the translator and any questions the translator may have will not necessarily be passed on
- agencies frequently send out confidential documents to several translators at once for quotes and then choose the cheapest one
- the agency has often not yet worked with the translator who is now being commissioned to translate your document

2

The right translator for your translation

How do I find a freelance translator?

Professional translators are members of professional associations such as the Chartered Institute of Linguists in the UK. These professional associations usually have a searchable member database on their websites. Here you can enter your required language combination and the relevant subject-field. Members of these professional associations must meet certain requirements and are therefore a safe choice in an industry which is unfortunately not regulated in any way. Members of these professional associations work in a professional manner and abide by the codes of conduct of their associations. They regularly attend CPD events, are familiar with the most recent developments in the translation industry and are up-to-date in their subject-fields. The website of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) can be found at: www.iol.org.uk.

Where can I find a translation agency?

A word of caution: there are a large number of translation agencies on the Internet which advertise the fact that they specialise in numerous languages and subject-fields. As a lawyer you almost certainly do not practise corporate law, family law and criminal law simultaneously. An extremely wide range of subject-fields indicates that the agency or the translator does not have in-depth knowledge of the subject-fields offered. In order to produce an accurate legal translation, it is necessary for the translator to be familiar with both of the legal systems involved and to also be acquainted with the specialist language. Beware of cheap prices and very fast turn-around times. If you do decide to work with a translation agency, do look for an agency which specialises specifically in legal translations.

3

Commissioning the translation

What else can I do to ensure that I get the best possible translation?

To save time, you should send the translator the text to be translated with your initial enquiry and also address the following three questions, if they are relevant:

• What is the purpose of the translation?

Is the translation going to be published? In this case you will certainly want the translator to carefully edit the final text. Perhaps you would like the translation to be revised by a second translator.

Are you and your client in the middle of time-critical contractual negotiations? In this case you will want a swift and precise translation but will not be interested in a final revision.

• Would you like the translator to use a particular variant of the target language?

There are not only orthographical differences between British English and American English but also terminological differences. Which variant do you want?

• Do you have a glossary or a list of terms which you prefer?

Reference documents also help the translator to produce the best possible translation.