

## 10 Best Practices.



When you choose to lower language access barriers and communicate to your limited English proficient (LEP) patients or members (either because it is required by law, improve outcomes, or a sound investment that delivers a return), there are some industry “best practices” that you should be aware of.

The first, un-numbered “best practice” on this list almost goes without saying... but it’s the most important one. The fact is that using bilingual employees to perform translations puts you at risk. At best, you might end up with inaccurate translations; at worst, you would be risking adverse outcomes with potential liabilities or, in some states, breaking the law.

Here are three more reasons why hiring a professional language services provider with demonstrated experience in medical translation is the smart choice:

**Accuracy** Spoken and written can be two entirely different things. Your bilingual employee may speak another language well enough to communicate with others, but how well do they write that language? How can you be sure that grammar rules and standard or medical vocabulary are being followed when you rely on someone in-house?

**Consistency** A good language services provider (LSP) will maintain glossaries and style guides, which ensures a consistent message and adheres to your translation preferences. With the right LSP, you can also be confident that your message will be accurate, culturally sensitive and audience-appropriate.

**Cost** The right LSP saves you time and money by using translation memory software and offers year-over-year savings and volume discounts. Meanwhile, your staff stays focused on the job you hired them to do.

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Always look ahead to the future of translation in healthcare. When you begin to think of translation as more than just compliance, but as a tool to provide better healthcare service and reach new markets, you’ll see that quality translations aren’t just necessary; they’re part of an investment strategy that will eventually have a major payoff.

## 10 Other Essential Best Practices for Translation

**1 Be an educated translation consumer.** When it comes to selecting a Language Services Provider (LSP) you must get well-acquainted with their translation process and quality assurance procedures, as well as the costs. It goes without saying that the cheapest translation provider may not be the best one for your company, but a good provider will be able to find ways to save you money.

**2 Do an internal-needs assessment.** This involves asking some critical questions before you proceed. What languages are you dealing with? Is a particular linguistic group within your area not considered a “threshold” language according to some definitions, but you know the population is growing? What do I want to measure for identifying return on investment (ROI). What types of vital documents will you need to have translated? What data formats are the documents in? What are your volume needs?

**3 Allocate appropriate resources.** Some hospitals or providers of medical plans may already realize this, but any large company that is serious about translation should have a Cultural & Linguistics department or coordinator. It’s also essential to allocate an appropriate budget, since you will need to hire a certified LSP.

**4 Plan the translation process.** Work with your language service provider to determine your process, what steps will take place each time a document is translated and how your specific needs will be met. What external and internal regulations must you follow in regards to translation?

**5 Make sure all translations are coordinated from the top down.** This seems like common sense, but the head of the C&L department should work with the LSP to ensure consistency throughout all documents. Recurrent phrases that have to be rewritten to make sense in the target language should always be translated the same way... This leads to #6.

**6 Create style guides and glossaries.** Compiled manually, style guides and glossaries do not affect the cost of your translations. They can affect the time it takes to get an approved document. They increase the overall quality and consistency of your documents. A glossary contains important terms with their preferred translations, and the style guide lets translators know linguistic and stylistic preferences (such as the audience and tone of the document).

**7 Stay ahead of the game by standardizing vital documents and pre-translating non-standard vital documents.** If you know the need will exist to have a particular form or other document translated, it only makes sense to get it done ahead of time. Vital documents include applications, consent forms and letters. Non-standard documents usually contain information specific to one person, such as a health care service authorization.

**8 Design and write documents appropriately.** What does this mean? You have to assume that your audience may only read at the elementary school level. Keep information written for the consumer as simple and clear as possible. This will also help you when it comes time to have documents translated. Documents that require certain wording for legal purposes can still be written in words everyone can understand—it may just take a little extra effort.

**9 Design appropriate internal review processes.** How will you know when a translation is finished? ASTM STD. F 2575-06 is mainly used in the USA and will give you a good starting point to discuss the quality assurance process with your LSP. If your company works in Europe, you may need to use EN 15038 as a standard instead.

**10 Be an active part of the translation process and community.** To ensure that you get the greatest value out of your translation services, be an active part of the process. If you have one main LSP, consider having a backup available in case of emergencies. Work closely with them at all times. Join professional organizations that will help you stay on top of changes to the law. When you anticipate regulatory changes, it will be easier to comply.