



## Avoiding self-inflicted translation costs

**Mike Dillinger, PhD**  
Principal, Translation Optimization Partners  
mike@translationOptimization.com

April, 2010

Translation Optimization Partners

### Cause > effect

**Translation costs work by simple cause and effect:**

Poor process =  
high costs

Poor content =  
high costs

**Your process and your content cause changes in what translators do.**

**The effects show up as differences in translation cost and delivery time.**

**The causes of translation costs are under *your* control.**

## Take charge

### Three ways to take charge of your translation costs, even before you talk to your LSP:

1. Re-think your translation process
2. Improve your source content
3. Refine your vendor management strategies

Avoiding self-inflicted translation costs:

Re-think your **Translation Process**

## Cause &gt; effect

## Sample causes:

## Effects:

Not doing topic-level reuse with a CMS	15-20%
Using multiple proprietary document formats	10-20%

- The translators have to convert files, improvise, edit, and re-translate – for *each* language.
- You need to change this even if you don't translate anything.
- Your LSP didn't decide this. You did.

This **25%** of your translation spend is self-inflicted

## Cause &gt; effect

## Sample causes:

## Effects:

Translation-unfriendly screenshots and layout	10-20%
Not doing terminology management	5-10%
"Churn": poor version control	5-10%

- The translators have to reformat, re-draw, re-paginate, and re-translate – for *each* language.
- Your LSP didn't decide this. You did.

This is **20%** more of your translation spend that is self-inflicted

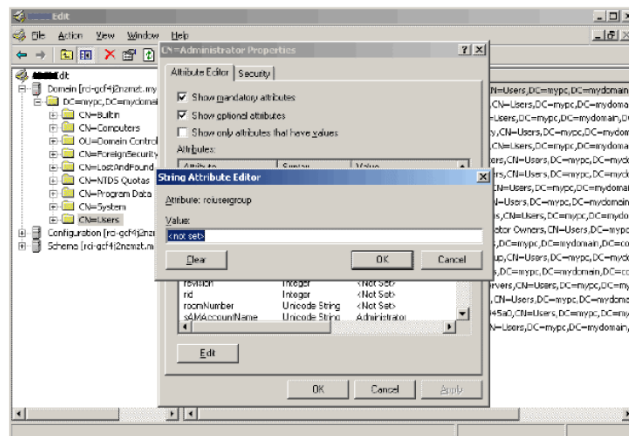
## Screenshot of the month:

10. Click Edit. The String Attribute Editor dialog opens:



## Screenshot of the month:

10. Click Edit. The String Attribute Editor dialog opens:



## Proactive Procurement

### Rule #1 of Proactive Procurement:

*Ask not what your translators can do for you.*

*Ask what you can do for your translators.*

(With apologies to JFK)

Decrease your costs.

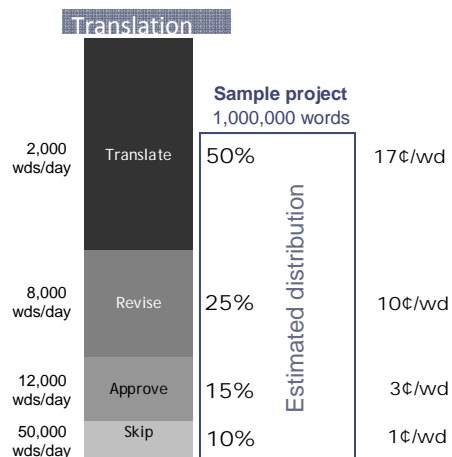
Accelerate your delivery time.

Increase your options for translation.

All by anticipating translators' needs.

**How?**

## "Translation" includes different activities & costs



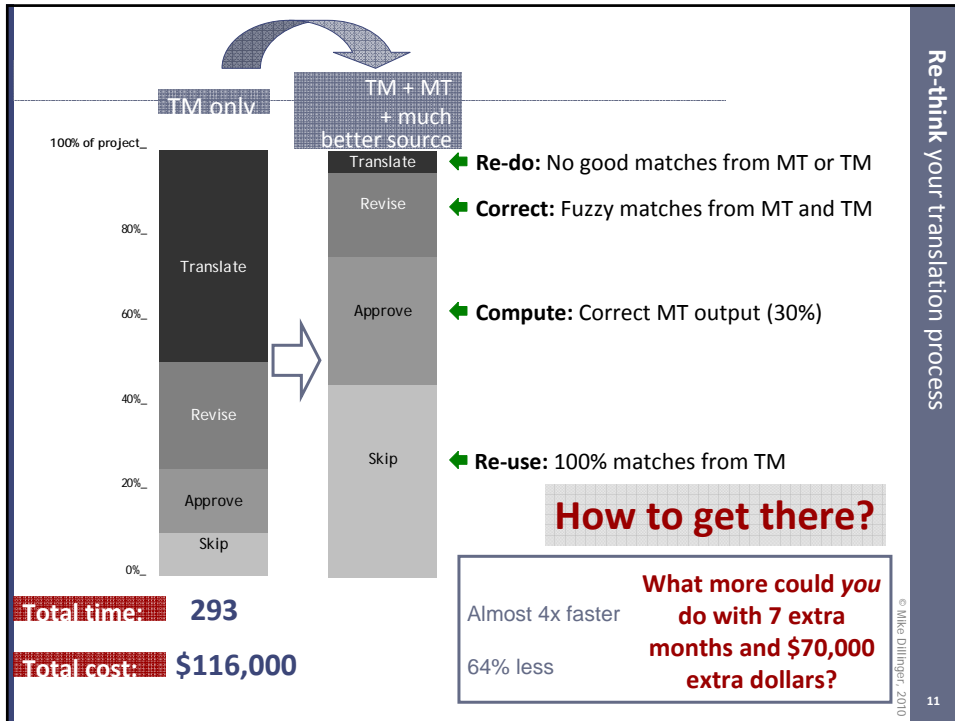
### Cause and effect

Your process and your content cause changes in:

- how much of each activity translators do;
- how long the project takes;
- how much the project costs;

**Total time:** 293 person-days

**Total cost:** USD \$116,000



Avoiding self-inflicted translation costs:

Improve your **Source Content**

## The multiplier effect

Part of the translators' job is to **multiply every single error that you make** by the number of your target languages.

**... And to charge you each time for increasing your headaches.**

**So high-quality source content is extremely important.**

Your content for writers

Your content for readers

Source text quality affects everything!

- **BUT, writers have little awareness or training about how their linguistic choices affect localization**
- **...or about how their choices affect the end user's understanding**
- **...and translators are often blamed for the results**



[http://www.forwardedfunnies.com/the\\_dolphin\\_stress\\_test\\_000109.html](http://www.forwardedfunnies.com/the_dolphin_stress_test_000109.html)

Cause > effect

**Sample**

*[The] guidelines are described in detail on the following pages but the basic premise of these guidelines is to essentially electrically connect the equipment being serviced, your body and the workbench together to a good Earth ground in a particular way so that it is virtually impossible for any one of these materials to build up a static electrical charge relative to the others.*

**Rewrite**

Ground the equipment, the workbench, and your body to avoid discharges of static electricity.

Even if the translation is perfect, will anyone understand?

(65 > 14 words; **78% waste**)

Cause > effect

Variety

- 18 After completing this module, the participant should be able to:
- 16 After completing this module, you should be able to:
- 15 After completing this module you should be able to:
- 13 After completing this module the participant should be able to:
- 7 By the end of this module, participants will:
- 4 By the end of this module, participants should be able to:

Translation Cost: **\$8.29**

Consistency

79 After this module, you will be able to do all this:

**\$1.87**

**( = 77% waste )**

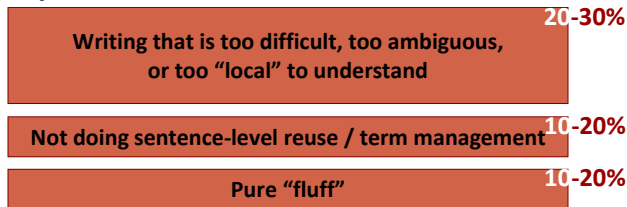


## Cause > effect

The causes are under your control.

Sample causes:

Effects:



- + Cost of technical support for unclear documentation
- + Erosion of brand equity: hard to read = hard to use

This **40%+** of your translation spend is self-inflicted

## Proactive Procurement

Rule #2 of Proactive Procurement:

***Increase quality to save money.***

*In any supply chain, upstream investments yield great returns.*

- Decrease your costs.
- Accelerate your delivery time.
- Increase your options for translation.

All by anticipating translators' (and clients') needs.

## All of it?

### Is *all* of your content worth translating?

If you only had half of your budget,  
which half of your content would you translate?  
Would anyone miss the rest?

## Relevance?

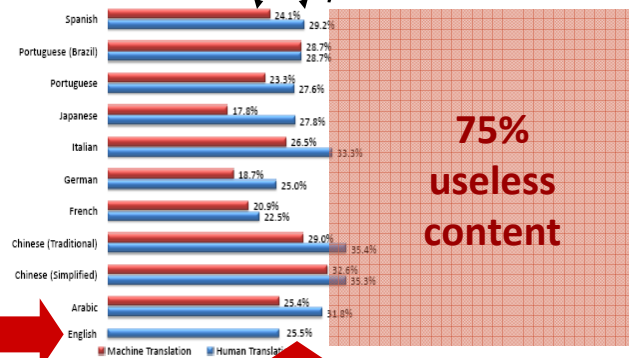
Microsoft

### Provide feedback on this article

Did this article help you solve your problem?

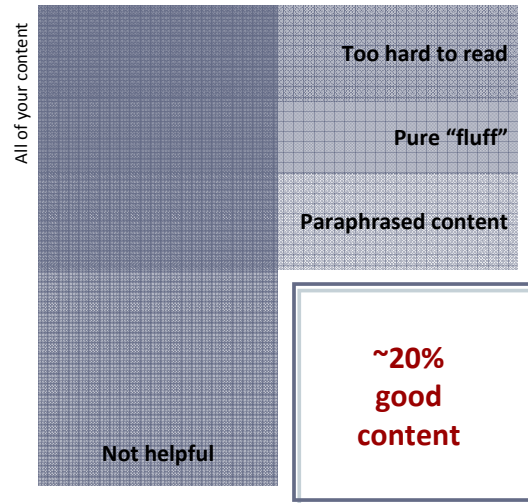
- Yes
- No
- Partially
- I do not know yet

Knowledge Base – average resolve rate of human translated vs. machine translated articles



75%  
useless  
content

## Kinds of content you pay for



You have *much* more control over your translation costs than an LSP does.

## Proactive Procurement

**Rule #3 of Proactive Procurement:**

***Publish less  
so clients can understand more.***

**Move from  
*Just-in-case* publishing to  
*Just-what's-needed* publishing.**

Avoiding self-inflicted translation costs:

## Refine your Vendor Management strategies

## Should you focus only on word rate?

### Or on delivery time?

1,000,000 words

Cost per word	Total cost
0.30	\$ 300,000
0.25	\$ 250,000
0.20	\$ 200,000
0.15	\$ 150,000
0.10	\$ 100,000
0.05	\$ 50,000
0.00	: )

**Cheaper, sure.  
But slower...**

\$ 10,000,000 Sales per year  
\$ 27,397 Sales per day

Delivery time (days)	Lost sales
10	\$ 273,973
30	\$ 821,918
60	\$ 1,643,836
90	\$ 2,465,753
120	\$ 3,287,671
150	\$ 4,109,589
180	\$ 4,931,507

7 \$ 191,781

Translation savings vs. Lost sales

## Align content value with translation price

### “Coarse” Vendor Management strategy

- Translate (with best quality) **vs.** not at all
- Translate everything **vs.** translate nothing

### “Nuanced” Vendor Management strategy

- Align content value with translation price
- Translate different content different ways, or not at all
- Use different vendors for different processes
- **Challenge:** what’s the important content?

## Proactive Procurement

### Rule #4 of Proactive Procurement:

***Align content value with translation cost.***

**Measure and monitor which content is important for clients.**

## Take charge

### Take charge of your translation costs:

1. Re-think your translation process
2. Improve your source content
3. Refine your vendor management strategies

**The causes of high translation costs are under *your* control. The effects are, too.**

## Audits & Edits & Plans

### Translation Optimization Partners

	<b>Our Services</b>	
<b>Pinpoint your missed opportunities</b>	<b>Source Content Audit</b>	We pinpoint where & how, and then quantify just how much your source content interferes with translation, understanding, and branding.
	<b>Translation Process Audit</b>	We pinpoint where & how, and then quantify just how much your current processes create self-inflicted costs.
<b>Reduce self-inflicted costs and increase efficiencies</b>	<b>Pre-translation Editing</b>	We optimize your source content for translation.
	<b>Author Training</b>	We train your writers to optimize source content for translation.
	<b>Decision Support for Translation Automation</b>	We guide you past the hype and confusion when you choose tools and vendors, plan process improvements, define requirements, develop RFPs, calculate ROI, identify risks.

Contact us: [mike@translationOptimization.com](mailto:mike@translationOptimization.com)

Thanks for your attention.

# Questions?

**Translation Optimization Partners**

Independent Consultants who help you to

Optimize content

Optimize translation

Optimize opportunities

**Mike Dillinger, PhD**

[mike@translationOptimization.com](mailto:mike@translationOptimization.com)

[www.translationOptimization.com](http://www.translationOptimization.com)