

Working Together

The 2009 theme for International Translation Day invites translators around the world to take a fresh look at why and how it pays to join forces.

The days of the fiercely solitary translator working in splendid isolation are numbered, say many industry observers. Not that massive collectivization is in sight: in this language-sensitive profession—or, more accurately, set of professions—a large share of added value remains intensely personal.

But technology and changing markets have broken down barriers. Today translators from around the globe can plug into a truly worldwide conversation that casts new light on traditional ways of working—and creates new opportunities. Even as the arrival of more demanding clients, more complex projects and tighter deadlines underscores the advantages of exchanging ideas, information and best practices.

Consider:

- Personal interaction between translation providers and buyers leads to better understanding of a text's purpose and increased awareness of the impact an outstanding translation can have. From literary and technical translation to interpreting, terminology, subtitling and more, there's no doubt that clients who get involved in the translation process—be they across the road or five time-zones away—make for better quality texts, and, ultimately, better working conditions. Q: How can translation users best be brought into the process?
- New translation standards emphasize the importance of revision. At its most basic, this means four-eye review, but in practice far more people can be involved. Q: Are too many cooks spoiling the soup, or is revision an opportunity for stimulating exchange among peers?
- Multilingual projects are on the rise, encouraging coordination and interaction between language teams; a solution found in one language pair may provide insights for partners around the globe. And as more and more projects require linguists to join forces, project management has taken on new importance. Q: How can translation providers adopt, adapt or create methods for working together quickly and efficiently?
- Practice meets theory meets information management: increasingly, translators and interpreters draw on the work of terminologists and, in some cases, academics, to better serve monolingual exporters and publishers, promote cultural exchange and enrich scientific debate. Q: How can the insights of this multitude of players, who once worked in relative isolation, be harnessed to best effect?
- For professional associations and other bodies serving the translation industry, access to once-remote contacts has never been easier. Cross-border contacts are an email away, and networking expands the reach and influence of institutions in ways that past generations of linguists could only dream of. Q: How are the most innovative associations using these new resources to raise professional standards and enhance their clout?

These and other challenges will be in the spotlight in 2009, as participating associations examine how “Working Together” in new ways, both formal and informal, can enhance translators' ability to use the power of language to help people around the world live, learn and work together.

The International Federation of Translators is the world federation of professional associations bringing together translators, interpreters and terminologists. It has 107 members in over 60 countries and represents more than 80,000 professionals.