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Glocalizing Marketing Materials

An interview with Sébastien Chipot from Eurologos in Brussels.

by Bert Esselink

Sébastien Chipot is a Project Manager at the Eurologos Group Head Office in Brussels (www.eurologos.be). He has held this position for four years now, after obtaining his degree in Translation from the University of Portsmouth and a degree in British linguistics from Reims, France. He has chosen to apply his linguistic skills to the marketing aspect of translation. Language International asked him about how Eurologos operates, and more specifically, how marketing collateral and marketing content from websites is localized.

Language International: Please tell us about the company you work for, the Eurologos group, and more specifi-

cally about the Brussels office where you work.

Sébastien Chipot: Eurologos was founded in 1977 and is currently present on four continents and hopes to have more than 50 offices by 2005. The Head Office's in-house staff, some 20 people, is made up of translators, terminologists, account managers, project managers, as well as IT specialists, infographists, and web designers.

LI: Eurologos has 30 offices worldwide. In addition to specific target languages, do the various offices specialize in certain vertical industry translations or other activities?

SC: The *raison d'être* of each office is to ensure localization of the services to the entire Group. Understandably, the Milan office has ended up specializing in the fashion and luxury goods industry. Our New Delhi office has expertise in the supply of Internet and Intranet applications thanks to the computer expertise as well as very competitive prices. However, all Eurologos offices, existing and future ones, pursue a unique "glocal" model—global and local—of structure and functioning.

LI: On the Eurologos.com website, the company's motto is described as: "the 're-localization' of languages" (because all products can be 'de-lo-

calized' except cultural products). Can you explain?

SC: Take a car, for example, you can produce it in any country. A language, however, is linked to psycho-linguistic (geo-stylistic) factors that are only present in the country where the language is spoken. Therefore, Spanish is translated in Spain and, if necessary, Latin American Spanish will be translated by our colleagues in our offices of Monterrey or Bogotá. You can *delocalize* production of any factual product, but not the production of linguistic services. Not only is the terminological and stylistic quality produced on location beyond reproach (no phraseological interference), it is also generally cheaper!

LI: Have you ever been involved in projects that involved mainly marketing-related material or commercial websites?

SC: Daily activities in our offices are by definition centered on the *geo-marketing style*. In effect, almost all our linguistic services deal with commercial, technical, and advertising texts. Their quality depends on the compliance with what is called the geo-style of the target market. Hence our tagline "*Translating and publishing where the languages are spoken*". When we translate a catalog or a website, we often publish two versions for the same language (UK and US English, Portuguese and Brazilian, and even Flemish as opposed to Dutch).

LI: Where do you feel translation of marketing material differs most from translation of "regular" technical documentation or web material?

SC: Technical translation can be done thanks to a great number of technical glossaries available on the Internet. But the

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true solution is to count on your own translation memories used by the translators and terminologists. However, when you have to do marketing-related translation, you almost always have to rework the concepts in the target language. I often deal with advertising agencies and that's where re-creation is most involved; an ad containing a pun can work in one country and, once translated, no longer fits into the

cultural-economic context of the target country.

LI: Where does Eurologos draw the line between translation and copy-writing when producing foreign language versions of marketing material?

SC: Translation implies only the restitution of semantic and ortho-syntactic structures from the source text to the target text, whereas with editing the ob-

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jective is more complex: we get a full briefing from the client with guidelines relative to the copy and the target audience: age, socio-linguistic context, and country. That is why Eurologos has defined three levels of quality during the contracting phase. Our customers can choose between a translation, an *adapted* translation, or a "zero fault" final quality level (including DTP, printing or online).

LI: What is the aspect of translating marketing material that is most challenging, both for translators and translation agencies managing the client relationship?

SC: The biggest problem we run into every day, is the primitive level of traductological culture present on the market. How to explain to clients that, in order to produce good translations, we should first translate their *technolects* into the languages of the markets to be conquered? On a daily basis, these clients get texts realized by unlikely "specialized" translators that are available at will, from almost all translation agencies. We—the professionals—are to blame for client ignorance and their unwillingness to pay the right price for the quality of these texts. It is always the supply market that should "educate" the demand market!

LI: What, if any, additional quality steps or validation cycles would you recommend for the translation of marketing material compared to regular technical documentation?

SC: Translation quality depends on a series of checks. Our team members (project managers, translators, terminologists, coordinators, and other infographists) work on

successive corrective actions (quality loop) until the quality level that the client has contracted is guaranteed. Writing is not a standard product. We have never ceased to fight the profession's primitivism, which continues to offer only one level of quality!

LI: Have you experienced that marketing material originating from the United States still requires heavy adaptation to various European cultures, or has globalization made marketing messaging also more universal?

SC: All activities in our sector present this kind of problem on a daily basis. It's not by coincidence that we continue to invest to complete our "glocalization", i.e. our globalization on increasingly global markets and our specific localization in each language. We think that if we don't have a real global organization of homogeneous offices that validate texts internally, we cannot speak of real quality.

LI: Is there a tip you could give to everyone involved in translating marketing material?

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SC: To turn to a translation multinational or else directly to freelancers. Thus, avoiding useless intermediaries (exclusively local agencies) that are not structurally able to read and write (hence check) texts to deliver to their clients. Their quality promise can only be a publicity overclaim, unavoidably misleading. We say that this myriad of agencies must constantly ask the intervention of Saint Jerome, the patron saint of translators, for freelancers to always come up with perfect texts as far as terminological relevance and faithfulness to the marketing positioning are concerned.