How to Drive Crucial Efficiencies in the AGE OF COVID-19 WITH TRANSLATIONS TECHNOLOGY

WORD360

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis has transcended all barriers, physical and imagined, to become a global zeitgeist. It's impact has been felt in economies across the globe and has squeezed industries in all facets of trade, many to the brink of collapse. The Dow and FTSE saw their biggest quarterly drop in the first three months of this year since 1987. There is, however, a route to growth even in the midst of the pandemic and one that applies whether your business is facing difficulty or not.

This route comes in the guise of globalisation. A hot button issue for some, globalisation is upon us, meaning that, as with every advancement in world history, those who fall behind will eventually falter. On the reverse of this, those who adapt first and adapt best stand to benefit the most.

Previously, globalisation has been an expensive hurdle with a number of factors holding businesses back. One of the largest among these are the language barriers involved in entering new markets that prevent sales and marketing teams communicating effectively with consumers. However, advancements in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Translation mean that translating large swathes of content is now faster and more affordable.

Becoming a global enterprise is now easier than ever and doing so with Machine Translations could be the factor that bolsters your business and gives you a vital competitive edge throughout the pandemic, Brexit, and beyond.

This whitepaper will explain the advancements involved and layout a path to business growth via globalisation and efficiency using Machine Translation as your primary tool.
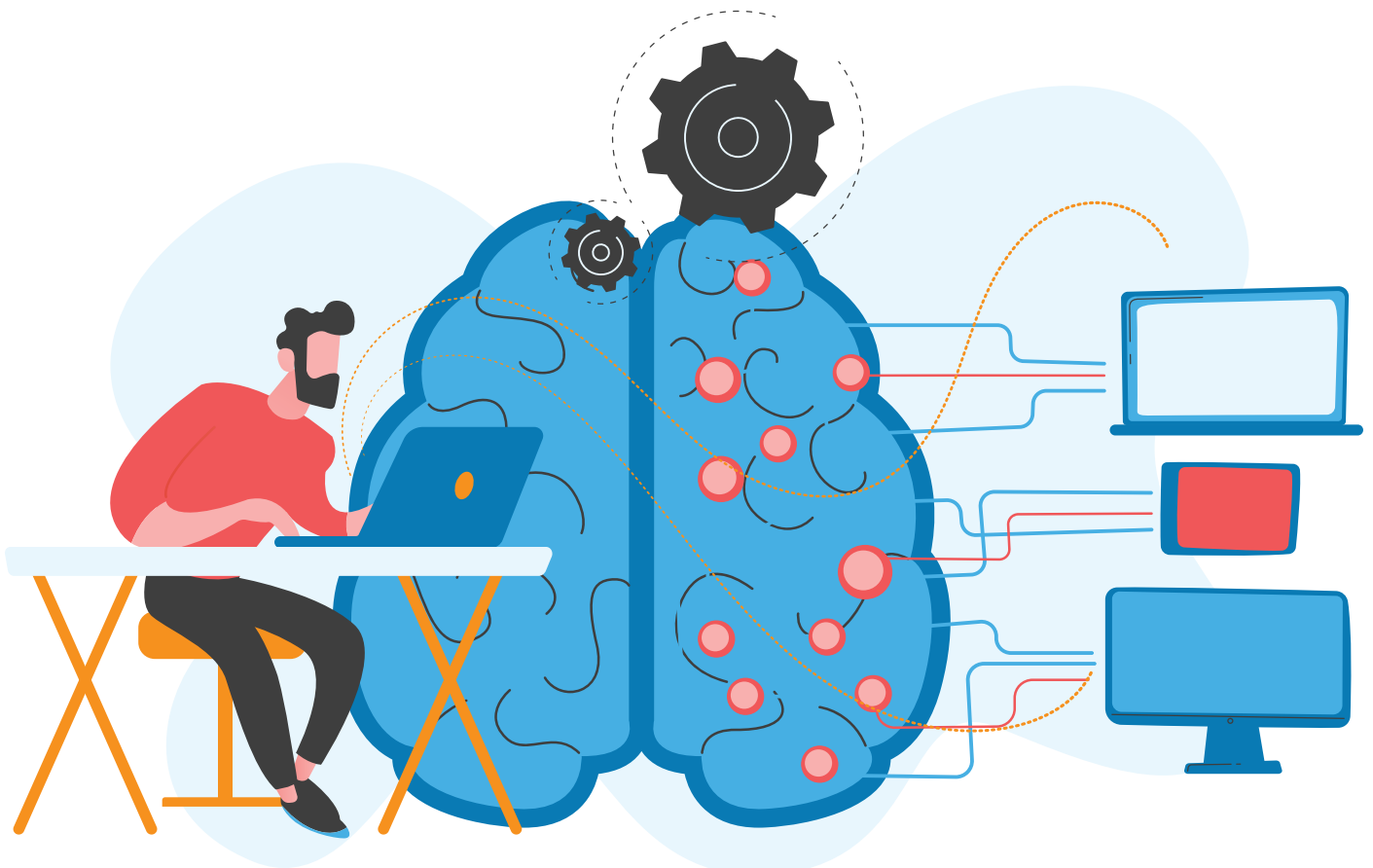
MACHINE TRANSLATIONS

Since time immemorial, translations have been conducted by means of a human translator spending a great deal of time pouring over a text and translating each word one-by-one. Now, in the age of digital, this is no longer the case. Advancements in Artificial Intelligence and machine learning mean that Machine Translators are now at such an advanced stage that they can be relied on to produce effective translations.

Machine Translators, or most commonly now Neural Machine Translators, such as Google Translate, work by storing millions of translations of set words and phrases and combining them with user intent to provide instantaneous and increasingly accurate conversions to other languages. Not only is the design of these tools improving, as showcased by advances in Google Translate, but their increased use is feeding their learning, fuelling continuous development. The already expansive Machine Translations industry is expected to grow by a further 3.13% by 2024.

Google's translation tool, while improving, is still basic when compared with the software developed by the translations industry itself, with platforms capable of translating a much broader range of language to a significantly higher degree of accuracy. When these dedicated Machine Translation platforms are combined with CMS solutions, they become a comprehensive and rapid translation tool which aids everything from the translations themselves to workflow management.

Many of you familiar with Google's platform would likely be tentative about using software to translate their entire written assets, given its famed ability to produce erroneous and even comical results. This is where the human touch is required.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

An Artificial Intelligence requires nurturing much like the mind of a child; if you feed it with the wrong information it will produce the wrong results. This is a lesson that Microsoft learned on our behalf in 2016 when they unveiled their Twitter-enabled AI, Tay. Tay had a lifespan of just 16 hours before being disabled, its exposure to the darker parts of the internet through a targeted attack warped it into a racist, misogynistic, Holocaust-denier at amazing speed.

In order to develop a sophisticated and dependable AI-driven Machine Translator, you must feed it with expert information that only human translators can provide. It must then also be kept on track with similar expert guidance to ensure it is not misled at any stage.

As well as guiding and safeguarding AI, humans are required at the final stages of the Machine Translations supply chain. Firstly, while Machine Translators produce increasingly impressive results, they are not yet 100% accurate and require a degree of spellchecking.

Secondly, if you asked an AI to write you a novel it would likely produce something that fitted the definition of a novel and read like one, but it wouldn't give you Shakespeare. Human communication is incredibly complex and its nuances and subtleties are not things that Artificial Intelligence can yet understand. As such, in order to market and sell yourself in another language as effectively as you can in your own, a human being is required to shape and mould the end result into something that accounts for regional variations. These regional variations could be anything from differing understandings of certain words and phrases, especially colloquialisations, to differences in folklore and cultural context.

What this means is that the role of human translators isn't diminished by Machine Translations, it is simply morphed. Humans are no longer required to conduct the back-breaking labour involved in translating the same words and phrases over and over, imagine how much time a translator would take translating just the words "Artificial Intelligence" over and over in this whitepaper for example.

INCREASING EFFICIENCY

In traditional circumstances, using only human translators, feeding consumers with enough translated content to match their consumption rates would be impossible. The average American adult interacts with media for around 11 hours a day and in that time consumes around 49,500 words' worth of written content. A very optimistic and caffeinated translator could maybe manage to translate 3,000 to 5,000 words a day. This means that to provide this average American adult with the 49,500 words that they require that given period, the translator would have work almost 10 days. Matching the rate of translation to this rate of consumption say by using multiple human translators would likely run you costs of just under £6,000 every day.

However, Machine Translators are able to produce near-instantaneous translations of huge volumes of text. While these texts will then require checking and, depending on the level of localisation deemed necessary, possibly editing by a human translator, the amount of time that the translator has to spend with each text is just a fraction of what it would previously have been.

Additionally, as we've discussed, Machine Translation platforms can be merged with CMSs. This means that the entire translation process can be managed and viewed and you can also get to your finished translation faster via your ability to access the same platform. The result is less time spent waiting for the translation to be finished and less time wasted waiting for the translator to send you the end product.

This results in massive leaps in efficiency and translations that are better, faster, and more cost-effective as a result. The benefits of these efficiencies for companies are potentially game-changing.

GOING GLOBAL

In a 10 country survey, 60% of respondents agreed that they would rarely or never buy from English language sites. In spite of this, because of the initially daunting task of translating content, many businesses will not translate their materials before approaching foreign markets or even avoid these markets altogether. This is not only a missed opportunity but potentially dangerous, allowing yourself to become overtaken and walled out of foreign markets before you even get to them.

We are now firmly in the age of globalisation and keeping your business within the confines of just one country will likely become eventually unsustainable. Not only this, but the definition of 'going global' has changed. Going global means more than simply branching into your neighbouring nation, it now literally means global. Only those who can market themselves in every country and in every language are truly 'global'.

The definition has shifted because of what is possible thanks to, among other things, the efficiency benefits provided by Machine Translation. That being said, marketers and salespeople looking to make the march towards becoming a global enterprise are often faced with a form of chicken and egg dilemma. Do you spend to translate your materials prior to entering a new market, hoping that operating in the native language will bolster sales and provide return on investment? Or do you enter the market in your own language and wait for sales to prove the worth of paying for translation?

The smart answer is a middle ground again only made possible by Machine Translation. Those looking to truly go global can have all of their materials simply translated using automatic Machine Translation, producing a sort of one-size-fits-all copy. This allows you to enter new markets in the correct language without massive spends. Then, you use marketing and sales data to determine which markets you should spend more time on developing custom translations for.

By deploying resources with this data-driven approach, you avoid the chicken and egg dilemma altogether and approach all of your consumers in their own languages, creating a more positive first impression. You also reduce the risk involved in expansion by reducing the potential for losses if sales unfortunately dwindle in one region or another for whatever reason.

USING EFFICIENCY AND GLOBALISATION TO SURVIVE COVID-19

"Every single social and global issue of our day is a business opportunity in disguise."
– Peter Drucker

The crux of this and perhaps the most relevant point to be made here is how machine translations could help your business survive and even thrive throughout the pandemic and beyond. As we've established, automatic machine translators, guided by human expertise, make translations better, faster, and more affordable.

This, in turn, makes the barrier of globalisation much more scalable. During the pandemic, markets around the world have shrunk, meaning that there is likely less profit to be generated in any one given market. However, if you can expand your operations into other markets or even all markets, you're effectively trading in a larger space than your competitors.

In the short term, this will allow you to soften the blow of COVID-19 on your business or even negate it altogether. Where this leaves you after the pandemic is with a presence in multiple markets as they begin to strengthen once again and become yet more profitable. You'll be poised to gain everything possible from the recuperation on a global scale, putting you well ahead of the competition and establishing a consumer base that will provide impressive return on investment for years to come.

Additionally, as the UK transitions out of its member of the EU, globalised businesses will be have to foster new opportunities in a wider range of markets. While our departure from the bloc impacts trade with its member states, it opens doors to other nations such as Japan and South Korea, with fundamentally different language and cultural characteristics from our European neighbours.

For many who already operate on a global scale, this will necessitate the more accurate translation of written communication into these new languages in order to make the most of new trade agreements. By 2022, the Government intends to have trade agreements to secure at least 80% of the UK's international trade. This means an ever-increasing list of new nations with which it will be possible and profitable to do business.

CONCLUSION

Advances in technology have been transforming the translations industry for years, but the huge leaps forward made possible by the advent of AI have made this progress even more rapid in the past few. Additionally, an accelerated increase in the uptake of AI and machine translation technology caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has allowed these systems to improve yet further, as they feed on user input to deliver better outcomes.

Far from replacing the human element in the translations supply chain, machine translations have transformed the role of human translators. While it is no longer necessary for humans to translate bulks of text, they are required to execute the more sophisticated elements of communication that AI is still far from understanding.

Those who adopt the use of machine translation technologies and make full use of their potential for greater efficiency, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness stand to put themselves head and shoulders above the competition. By moving into new global markets, companies will be able to benefit from the post-pandemic economic recovery as well as gain a competitive edge in current circumstances by trading in a greater number of markets.

The route to this globalisation lies in achieving total translation of communications materials at great speed, and using intelligent, data-driven analysis to determine where best to allocate further spending on more refined translations. This way, globalisation can be achieved on a large scale, at speed, and with greater efficiency than ever before.

Finally, Brexit presents new, additional challenges but also new opportunities. The list of non-EU nations with which we will have favourable trade agreements will grow in coming years. Grasping these new opportunities to their full extent will require focussed translations of content into new languages.

THE WORD360 SOLUTION

At Word360, we specialise in providing expert translation and interpretation services through a huge variety of mediums, from video conferencing to face-to-face. We are the Midlands' leading translating and interpreting agency, and work with some of the most prestigious and respected organisations in the region.

Our Machine Translation offering is founded in our sector-leading use of a dedicated, in-house platform, Wordskii. Designed and built with intimate knowledge of the needs of our clients and our translators, Wordskii allows for the rapid and accurate delivery of unbeatable translations. The use of this expert solution allows for all of the benefits of Machine Translation discussed above to be passed on to our clients, providing a platform for growth like never before.

Thanks to our extensive roster of dedicated linguists, we translate in more than 350 languages and are able to deliver sector-specific knowledge and nuances to all of our work. Power your journey to success through communication with Word360.

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Celebrating 30 years in business, Word360 is the Midlands' leading translations and interpreting agency, working with major global clients to help remove language barriers where it matters most. Operational in over 55 countries through a network of more than 9,800 specialised linguists, they enable global conversations and provide award-winning support across multiple industries and sectors.