

# International Business Report 2022-2023

An exploration of the challenges and opportunities faced by  
UK businesses trading internationally



**thetranslationpeople**  
*love language.*

# Introduction

The last few years have seen a plethora of challenges for businesses. Brexit, the Coronavirus pandemic, war in Ukraine, rising material costs, cost of living crisis and the effects of climate change have combined to create a particularly turbulent landscape, leaving business owners wondering what their next steps should be to protect their people, their profits and the planet.

But exactly how are UK-based businesses that trade internationally responding? What steps are they taking to futureproof their business? And what do they see as the biggest opportunities and challenges ahead of them in the immediate and long-term future?

For more than **40 years**, The Translation People has been working closely with businesses around the world to support their operations by providing high quality translation and associated multilingual services from nine offices in Europe and the USA. The Translation People recently undertook in-depth market research with UK-based businesses that trade internationally to understand their thoughts and responses to recent and current challenges, as well as what's dictating how they manage their overseas operations.

**In this whitepaper, we explore the research findings to reveal how businesses are responding to current market conditions, providing insights and guidance on how different services and approaches to operations – from HR to marketing – can help to navigate these uncertain times, and explore how translation can support businesses to achieve their international objectives.**



**We wanted to find out more about how international businesses are successfully growing against a backdrop of global issues, some of the challenges they are facing and the future opportunities that are available.**



**Alan White, Business Development Director**



01

# Research methodology

The Translation People conducted research with 500 individuals in senior positions all with direct involvement in international trade, including:

- Business owners
- Export managers
- Sales directors
- Finance directors
- Marketing directors
- Logistics managers
- Operations managers
- HR managers

**All respondents work for UK-based businesses that export abroad, have teams abroad and/or carry out their business activities internationally, and have a turnover of at least £1 million.**



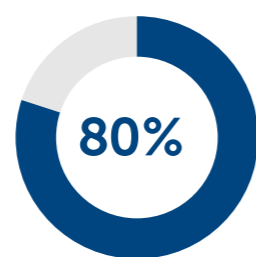
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# Homegrown challenges and international aspirations

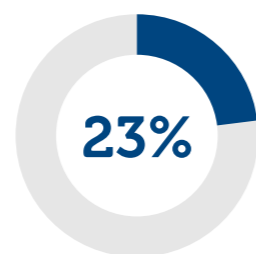
In August 2022, government data revealed how businesses' operations were impacted by various social, economic and political obstacles in the UK. Operational concerns included price inflation, energy prices, global supply chain disruption and increasing people costs.

However, despite the multitude of challenges facing businesses, The Translation People found that there is optimism amongst those based in the UK that trade internationally.

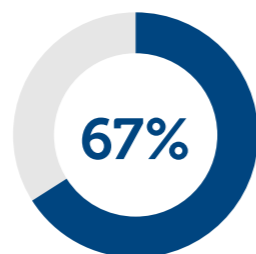
According to the research from The Translation People, four fifths of businesses say they plan to grow internationally in the next five years. Since Britain left the European Union on 31st January 2020, **almost a quarter (23%)** say they've experienced an increase in international trading and just **over a fifth** have seen an increase in international exports. Additionally, **25%** say they have increased their targeting of different markets overseas.



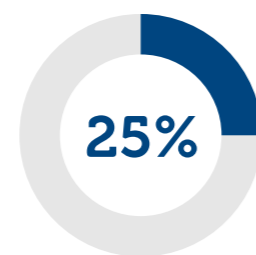
80% of UK-based businesses that trade internationally plan to grow their overseas footprint in the next five years



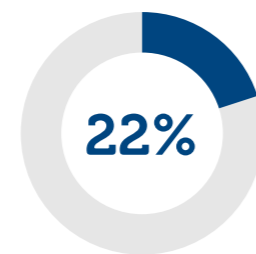
23% say they've achieved an increase in international trading



67% use website and SEO translation services to grow their businesses



25% say they have increased their targeting of different markets overseas since Brexit



Over a fifth have seen an increase in exports

That said, businesses with their sights set on an increase in international trading face specific challenges. For example, according to the research carried out by The Translation People, **54%** of respondents said language barriers prevent them from expanding and growing as much internationally as they would like to, whether that be in terms of sales or the size of their teams on the ground. So while businesses say utilising marketing tools like social media (**78%**), paid digital ads (**75%**) and SEO (**64%**) will be important to their business in the next 12 months, that will only be effective at an international level with the right translation services in place.



Despite ongoing global issues, it's encouraging to see that a good proportion of UK businesses still believe that international growth is a reality for them over the next five years," said Alan White, Business Development Director for The Translation People. "Communicating with people in their own language is a key factor in developing relationships and we expect to see ongoing requests from companies needing to produce content in different languages to cover the different markets being targeted."

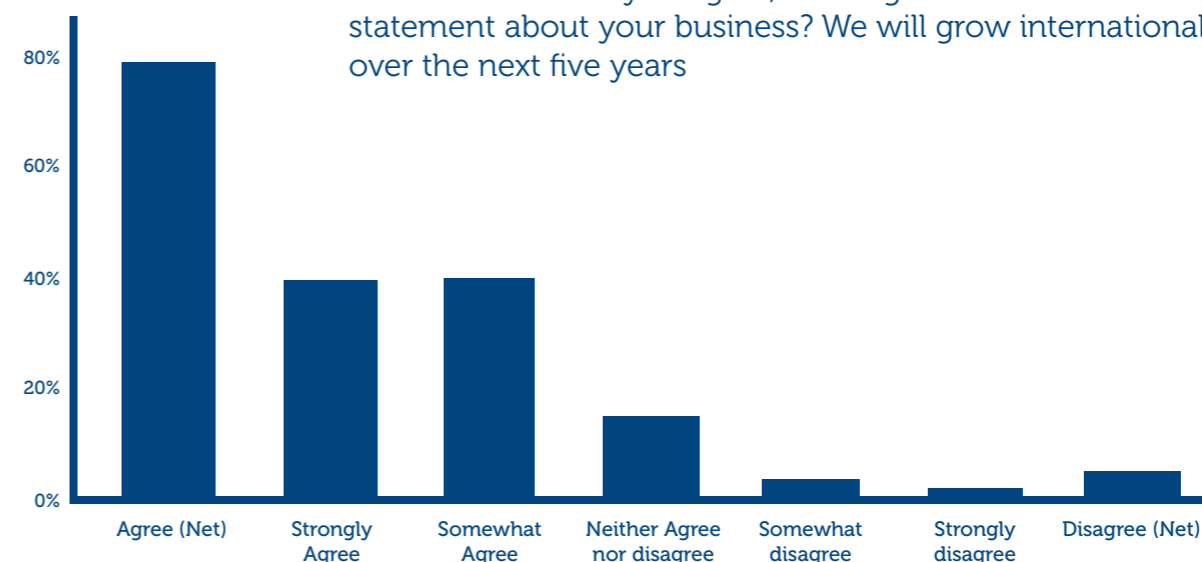


## The Translation People in Practice - Software Localisation

Software localisation involves the translation of software and apps into different languages, enabling them to be used effectively by people all over the world. Content is usually translated directly in software file formats in order to ensure different language variants of the software can be easily created. Software localisation is ideal for technology product managers wanting to export their software to an international audience.

The Translation People supplies regular software localisation services to a fintech company operating across the globe. Strings are prepared by our dedicated software engineering team before being passed to experienced software translators working in a specialist translation environment. Once the strings are complete, the software engineering team checks them for code integrity before being delivered back to the client for reintegration.

To what extent do you agree, or disagree with the following statement about your business? We will grow internationally over the next five years



# Sustainable futures

The UK has pledged to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2050, and a huge part of this will be how businesses opt to create sustainable supply chains and use means of travel which reduce carbon expenditure.

Analysis by the ONS indicates that the British spent **£6.3 billion** on corporate travel abroad in 2019, with **12%** of all air passengers being business travellers – contributing significantly to the country's carbon emissions.

Research from The Translation People shows that **65%** of businesses are actively reducing their international travel to contribute to lowering carbon emissions, with **73%** opting to attend remote conferences in the next 12 months to help achieve that goal. However, this means **35%** still aren't looking at how to lower their carbon footprint, and **73%** still want to attend face-to-face conferences. **For a third (32%)** of those businesses, face-to-face interpreting will be something they continue to utilise in the next 12 months.

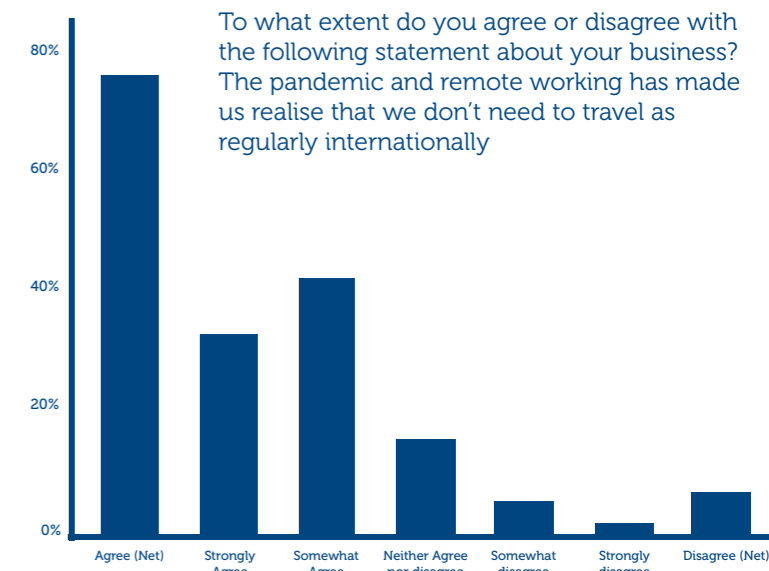
Of the respondents, **more than three quarters (77%)** said that the pandemic and remote working has made them realise that they don't need to travel as regularly internationally, but this has put greater reliance on platforms that provide online communication channels, and services which allow companies to easily liaise with overseas teams, and that include options for translation and interpreting.

For example, a fifth of businesses say that over the next 12 months they're going to explore tools and services like remote interpreting and live captioning for the first time, which allow speakers of different languages to instantly access meeting content in their own language. Around half of respondents already use these services today.



Even before the pandemic, sustainability was high on the agenda for many of our clients but over the last few years, we've seen growth in translation and interpreting requirements for virtual meetings and presentations, largely accelerated by Covid-19," said White. "As businesses proactively look at how to streamline their operations to help reduce travel, cut carbon emissions, and save time and costs, we expect this demand to continue to grow.

Remote working and an increased use of technology to replace face-to-face meetings and events puts more reliance on translation services, to bring together people based all around the world using tools like real-time subtitling and multi-language conferencing. As a business, we have advanced our technology offering to allow us to integrate with client workflows and continue to serve our clients in today's increasingly virtual world, no matter where they or their teams are based.

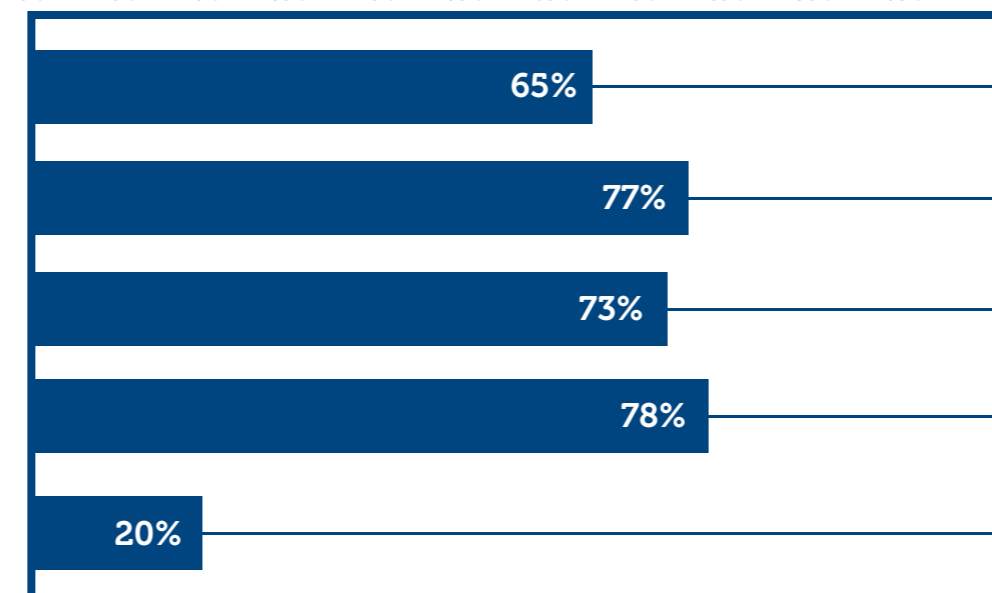


## The Translation People in Practice - Live Captioning

Live Captioning involves the real-time transcription and translation of the spoken word as subtitles during digital events, meetings or presentations. It is ideal for live meetings, presentations or online events with a multilingual audience.

The Translation People applied live captioning for a global NGO holding an international conference, allowing attendees to follow the spoken word through real-time subtitles on a remote conferencing platform.

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



65% of UK-based businesses that trade internationally say they're actively reducing international travel to lower carbon emissions

77% say the pandemic and remote working has made them realise they don't need to travel internationally as regular

73% see internal remote conferences as important for their business

78% believe internal remote training is important for their business

Remote interpreting and live caption translation services will be purchased for the first time by a fifth of businesses in the next 12 months

## The Translation People in Practice - Multilingual Remote Interpreting

Multilingual remote interpreting allows human interpreters to facilitate communication between multilingual audiences in business meetings or conferences. Ideal for companies wanting to reduce travel costs and their environmental impact.

The Translation People provided remote interpreting for a global engineering company training employees in South America for one of their customers. Undertaken during COVID, this enabled the client to continue the roll-out of its product, even during the pandemic.

# People Power

In August 2022, the UK appeared to be on a hiring spree; job adverts hit **1.85 million**, a record high for 2022, despite various economic challenges which were predicted to cause a slowdown in recruitment activity.

Various industries like hospitality and social care found themselves hundreds of thousands of employees short because of the impact Brexit and the pandemic had on the jobs market. Despite this, research from The Translation People found that **71%** of businesses have seen remote working as an opportunity, as it has encouraged them to expand on the regions from which they recruit.

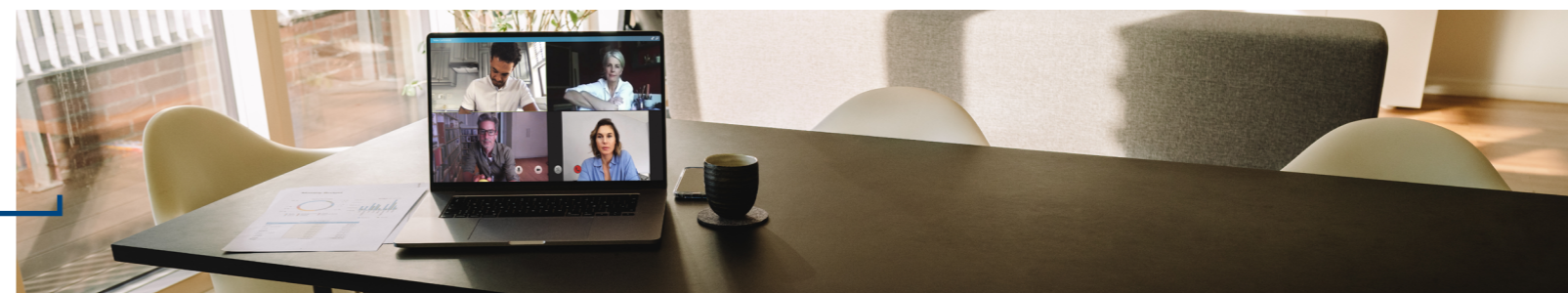
This, however, brings its own set of obstacles. For example, **66%** said training and development is a challenge with teams overseas due to language and communication barriers. This is particularly prevalent as **78%** said it is important to produce e-learning modules in employees' native languages to achieve staff morale and engagement – and with **80%** of respondents viewing e-learning as important for their business in the next 12 months, the translation of e-learning courses is sure to be high on the agenda for many international businesses.

Additionally, **84%** said employee wellbeing, which is increased when staff have access to content in their own language, will be a priority for them over the next year. It's little surprise then to also discover that almost six out of ten businesses (**57%**) are already using multilingual voiceovers and subtitling for staff-facing content and meetings, and a further **16%** will use it for the first time in the next 12 months.

## The Translation People in Practice - E-Learning Translation

E-learning translation involves translating e-learning modules that are used to train global workforces. These include training material, quizzes, animations and video (often incorporating subtitles and voiceover). This allows global companies to train their workforces effectively as all content is available in the user's own language, and the training can be completed remotely and at the user's convenience.

E-Learning translation was used for a logistics company training its global workforce. There was close liaison with local linguists to ensure preferred terminology was applied, while specialist translation software was used to translate both video and written content. The final versions ensured that the company's global workforce received key training material in their own language and preferred terminology.



“Many of our clients have global workforces but the pandemic and move to home working has made international recruitment a reality for many other clients, enabling them to attract the best talent wherever it is located,” said White.

However, remote working requires excellent communication in order to ensure staff remain motivated, and with overseas teams the importance of producing content in their own language cannot be overstated.

Many of our regular translation projects involve translating for global workforces with diverse linguistic needs: e-learning projects, recruitment campaigns, internal software, wellbeing initiatives, communications and presentations all form part of a regular day's translation projects. We've seen that companies that invest in translation for these scenarios are able to train and motivate their teams more effectively.

**66%**

of respondents said training and development is a challenge with teams overseas due to language and communications barriers

**78%**

said it is important to produce e-learning modules in employees' native language to achieve staff morale and engagement

**80%**

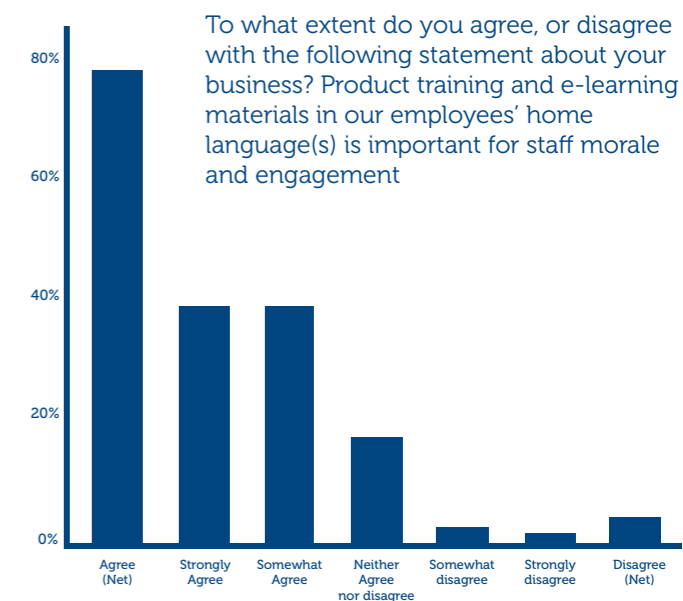
said e-learning will be important for their business in the next year

## The Translation People in Practice - Video Translation

Video translation involves translating video scripts and using them as a basis for subtitles and/or a foreign language voiceover, as well as translating on-screen content that may appear in videos. It is ideal for companies that produce external or internal videos for a multilingual audience.

The Translation People used video translation for a medical device manufacturer producing a training video for global distribution. After choosing voice samples from our roster of professional voiceover artists, the voiceovers were recorded and integrated into the video so it could be watched by a global audience in their own language.

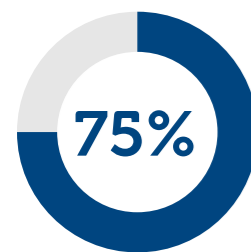
Video translation was also successful for a British retailer looking to break into the French market. Promotional videos of the company's different products were a key element in their marketing strategy, and these required translation and subtitling in French to ensure maximum impact of the local marketing campaigns.



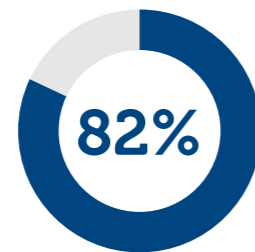
# Effective overseas marketing

As businesses look to grow internationally, appeal to new customers, consider their carbon footprint and extend recruitment nets to overseas territories, effective marketing – and the use of translation – will play a vital role. Not only will brands rely on the effective use of language to help attract customers in new markets, but they will use translation to engage the right people with their brands.

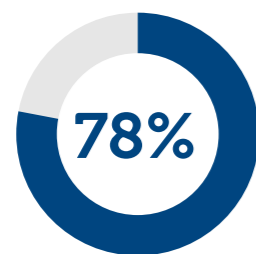
And the importance of effective international marketing is reflected in the results. When asked which different marketing tactics would be important for their business over the next 12 months, **78%** said social media; **76%** stated paid digital ads; **76%** cited video marketing; **64%** want to attend exhibitions, and **61%** will use influencer marketing.



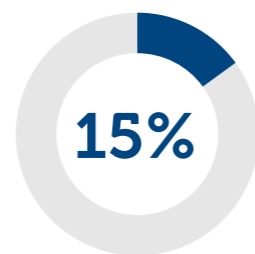
**75%** of businesses see an increase in international sales and conversions if their marketing materials are translated into the language of the target audience



**82%** of respondents said producing content in the language of their target audiences is important to market effectively



Social media (**78%**), paid digital ads (**76%**) and video marketing (**76%**) will be the top most important marketing tactics for the next 12 months



**15%** of businesses will use marketing translation services for the first time in the next 12 months; **65%** of businesses already do

The Translation People's research shows that **82%** of businesses said producing content in the language of their target audiences is important to market effectively to them, and **65%** already actively do this. The reason for this is clear: **75%** said they see an increase in international sales and conversions if marketing materials like their website, social media, packaging and apps are localised into the language of the target audience. According to the research, **65%** of international businesses already invest in marketing and design translation services, and a further **15%** will for the first time in the next 12 months.

On top of that, nearly **60%** of businesses currently use multilingual voiceover and subtitling translations, which can be used for content such as marketing videos, with a further 17.6% planning to use these services for the first time in the next 12 months.



The most successful international brands know that translating content for their target markets is crucial in order to gain a competitive advantage in those markets," said White. "Consumers and businesspeople all over the world want content in their own language and companies that don't take this into account are undoubtedly missing out on market share.

A significant part of our business centres on creating content to support customers with their marketing, whether in the form of social media, websites, video content or more traditional methods. And these figures show clearly the value that investing in translation can bring to businesses who rely on overseas trade.



## The Translation People in Practice - Marketing Translation

Marketing Translation involves the translation of marketing content (e.g. brochures, websites, social media) into different languages so it can be read and understood by speakers of different languages. It is ideal for companies wanting to increase business share overseas by targeting customers in their own language with marketing content.

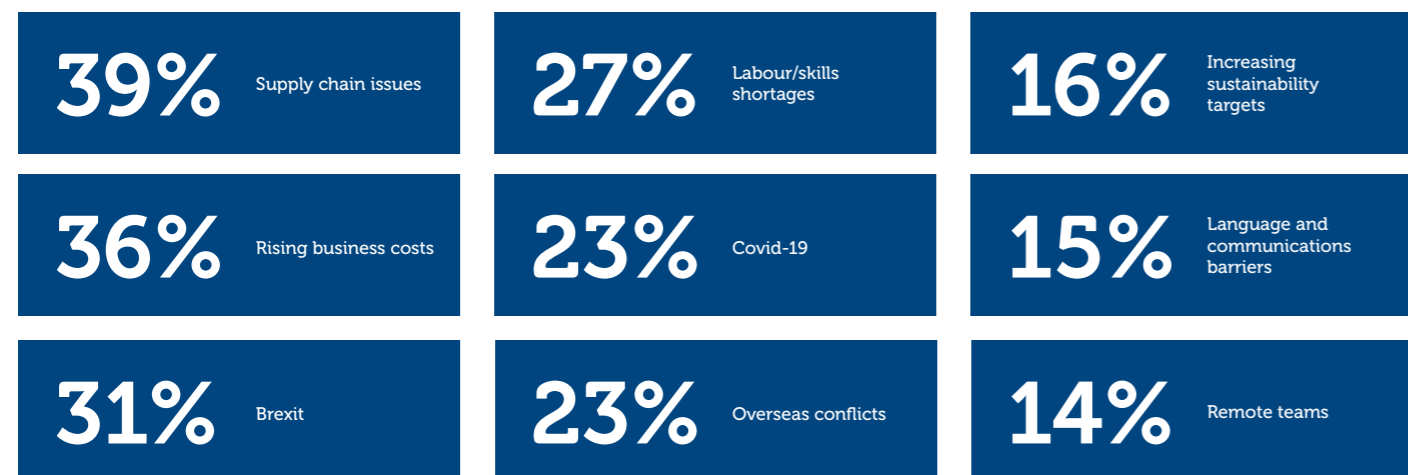
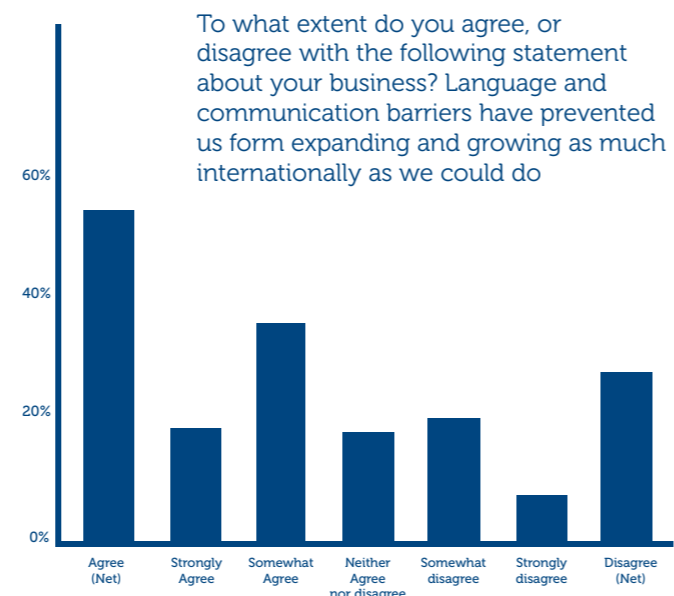
The Translation People used marketing translation for a technology company targeting customers in different countries, including blogs, whitepapers and LinkedIn adverts. Detailed briefs were collected on the target audience and preferred tone, with specialist creative translators performing the work.

Website translation was also successful for a supply chain company working in over 30 countries. The Translation People created a customised website plugin to extract content and reintegrate it once translated. Detailed style guides and terminology databases were drawn up in conjunction with local marketing teams in order to ensure maximum satisfaction with the finished translations.



# Preparing for the future

According to the research from The Translation People, the biggest challenges to businesses looking to expand their international operations in the next 12 months are:



## The Translation People in Practice - Machine Translation

Machine Translation involves the use of specialist and secure AI technology to produce automated translations, which can be used directly to understand the meaning of a document, or edited by a specialist translator to create a publication standard translation. It is ideal for companies who need to quickly and cost-effectively translate material from one language to another. The Translation People use this process on a regular basis for a global engineering firm producing its marketing material in several languages in order to ensure cost-effective and high-quality translations are made available to local markets as quickly as possible.



There is no doubt that the global economy has faced – and continues to face – many challenges, from health crises and political changes, through to international conflicts and supply chain issues,” said White. “All of this might make it appear that international growth is unobtainable, or will be made more difficult than businesses are typically used to.

It remains to be seen whether these are long-term issues that could affect businesses for the next 10 years, or if new government policy minimises their impact altogether. Regardless, our clients continue to focus on what they can do to capitalise on the opportunities international business brings so we anticipate services like legal and technical translation continuing to be important for the 65% of businesses who said they already regularly utilise these services.

To support this, we’ve adapted our processes and increased the breadth of services we offer in order to ensure that we can enable our clients to reach their objectives, even against the most turbulent of backdrops.



## The Translation People in Practice: Document Translation

Document translation involves translating written technical, internal or legal documents so they can be understood by global audiences, such as customers, partners or internal staff. Examples include operational instructions, tenders, newsletters.

The Translation People provided document translation for a global chemicals company to produce regular content for their internal teams around the world, allowing them to maintain staff morale, keep teams updated on company news and ensure that corporate messaging was understood by all.

Technical translation was also successful for a global healthcare company, covering translations of patient trials, clinical trials apps, marketing material and internal staff content. Translations were produced in over 20 languages to ensure their global operations run smoothly and effectively.

Legal translations were provided to a global travel company in order to ensure that their website terms and conditions and privacy notices were available in over 50 local languages.

How important, if at all, will the following be to your business over the next 12 months?

	Important	Not Important	NA/Don't Know
SEO	64.2%	25.8%	10%
Paid digital ads	75.6%	20.2%	4.2%
Paid print ads	66.0%	28.8%	5.2%
Social media	78.4%	17.8%	3.8%
Influencer marketing	61.4%	31.2%	7.4%
Exhibitions	64.2%	30.6%	5.2%
Video marketing	76%	21.4%	2.6%
E-learning/training	80.2%	16.8%	3%
Face-to-face training	76.4%	21%	2.6%
Remote training	77.8%	19%	3.2%
Employee wellbeing	83.8%	14.4%	1.8%
Internal face-to-face conferences	73%	24%	3%
Internal remote conferences	72.8%	23.4%	3.8%



# About The Translation People

The Translation People is an established supplier of business-to-business translation and interpreting services to companies across the globe. Headquartered in Manchester, UK, with offices in the USA and mainland Europe, the company's network of more than 4000 professional translators and interpreters work on technical, legal, creative and financial content in over 250 language combinations. The company uses specialist translation and interpreting technology extensively in order to improve productivity, reduce costs for clients and improve quality. Key services include document and technical translation, website, software and e-learning localisation, video translation through voiceover and subtitles and interpreting, both in remote and face-to-face settings.

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## Translation Trends

Given the integral role of translation in international growth ambitions, and the different forms in which this service can be used by companies, The Translation People looked at which translation services are currently being used by businesses and which ones they will start to use in the next 12 months.

	Currently use	Will start to use in next 12 months
Multilingual voiceover/subtitling (customer facing content)	58.2%	17.6%
Multilingual voiceover/subtitling (staff facing content)	57.4%	16.4%
Machine translation (free online services)	54.6%	16.6%
Machine translation (subscription models)	51.4%	17.6%
Machine translation (bespoke engines)	54.8%	17.6%
Face to face interpreting	58%	16.2%
Remote interpreting	54.4%	19.6%
Live caption translation for meetings/events	58.4%	16.6%
Website and SEO translations	66.6%	15.6%
Marketing and design translations	65.4%	15.4%
Legal translations	66%	16%
Technical translations	63.6%	15%
Other translation services	56%	15.4%