

thetranslationpeople
love language.

Transcreation – A Guide

What is Transcreation, why it is important and when to use it.



What is Transcreation?

Transcreation falls somewhere between translation and copywriting in a foreign language. Rather than being completely faithful to a source text, like translation, or writing creative copy from scratch without a source text, like copywriting, transcreation is a highly creative discipline that uses an original source text as a starting point, but involves adapting the content to fit the target market. It can help marketers throughout the world to develop sales messages which are aligned both culturally and factually to their international audiences.

The word *transcreation* is derived from 'translation' and 'creation'. As this etymology suggests, transcreation is the translation of creative content with a view to ensuring the content, style, tone and intent of the original text is translated successfully into the target language, with the aim of delivering a message which resonates with readers in the same way that the source copy resonates with readers in its native market.

As opposed to a more direct translation, transcreation gives the translator the freedom to take the essence of the message they are translating and express it in a way which considers the linguistic and cultural nuances of the target language. Transcreation aims to convey the concept, ideas, and emotions behind a message so that it influences and motivates the reader, rather than necessarily translating the exact wording of the source text. As such, transcreation relies on a translator who is not only fluent in both languages, but also has the ability to write creative text in the language into which they are translating.



Transcreation is also a collaborative process, which works best with input from clients on the desired message and target market, so dialogue is recommended between transcreator and client before, during, and after the process to ensure a successful outcome.

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With transcreation, we look at the copy as a whole and try to understand the intended meaning and message, which we then translate into the target language. If there's a cultural reference in a text which wouldn't resonate with or be understood by the target audience, in a transcreation we would either find a similar cultural reference or explain it in the copy to ensure we don't lose any of the intended meaning.

A Transcreator at The Translation People

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Why is Transcreation important?

Effective transcreation ensures that your business gets the best response from customers and prospects in your international target markets. Simply because something is being translated does not mean it should not receive the same level of craft and consideration which would have been given to the original text.

As a result, transcreators will focus on your unique message, desired impact and target audience from a creative and business standpoint. Transcreation adapts the content and tone to fit the target culture and market perfectly. Typical instances are straplines, puns and wordplay, which very seldom work when translated directly from one language to another.

Transcreation in action

Most of us are likely to be familiar with the strapline used by the sweet brand Haribo: “Kids and grown ups love it so, the happy world of Haribo”. Not only is it a strapline, it is also a very catchy rhyme which is sung at the end of Haribo commercials.

When looking at foreign language versions, a direct translation would lose some of these musical qualities, so Haribo instead used transcreation to create the following:



French: **Haribo c'est beau la vie, pour les grands et les petits**
(Haribo life is beautiful, for big ones and little ones)



Spanish: **Vive un sabor mágico, ven al mundo Haribo**
(Experience a magical taste, come to the world of Haribo)

We can see in these examples that Haribo has used transcreation to create straplines which have the same meaning (albeit not identical) while still retaining the rhyming and musical qualities of the original.



When do I need Transcreation instead of Translation?

A good indicator that transcreation may be required instead of a simple translation is when a great deal of time, effort and resources have been spent on the original content to ensure the perfect message, style and tone have been achieved. A simple translation will still be understood, but it will run the risk of weakening or losing its impact and not having the same effect as the original. Typical examples of material requiring transcreation could include:

- Marketing literature
- Straplines / Slogans
- Headlines
- Press releases
- Adverts

When it comes to using idioms in marketing content, a direct translation will sometimes not work. A good example would be the English phrase 'to miss the boat', which in German is more often expressed idiomatically as 'the train has left'. Now imagine an entire marketing campaign which features boat imagery along with the strapline 'Don't Miss The Boat': the whole campaign would have to be reworked for the German market. Similarly, 'raining cats and dogs' in the UK would be 'raining strings' in France.



Slogans and straplines can also end up having unintended meanings and inferences when translated too literally. Intel's 'Sponsors of Tomorrow' slogan originally suggested a tendency to procrastinate and put things off when translated directly. Instead Intel adapted their message to be based on the equivalent of 'Passionate about the future'.

Interestingly some brands have chosen to leave their original strapline untranslated – think Nike's 'Just Do It' . However, it is worth noting that this choice is usually restricted to the very largest and most established brands with the global clout needed to pull off this kind of messaging.

For some texts, a combination of transcreation and translation will be the best choice. For example a campaign promoting a competition will use transcreation to generate compelling messaging and straplines to stimulate interest in the competition, whereas for the terms and conditions for the competition, a simple direct translation could work well.

What's the worst that can happen without Transcreation?

Without transcreation you run the risk of your translated text being confusing and lacking impact. At the very least this could lead to your messages falling flat or not being correctly understood. Even more of a concern is that poorly translated material could lead to the detriment of your brand.



Take the example of Pepsi whose slogan “Pepsi Brings You Back to Life” was translated into Chinese as “Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave.” Or how about KFC, who unknowingly translated their famous ‘Finger Lickin’ Good’ slogan to ‘Eat your fingers off’ when it opened its doors in Beijing, China, in the late 1980s.

Globally established brands with equally established bank accounts will use their stature to find a way of recovering from mishaps caused by very literal translations. But for smaller, newer brands who are keen to launch their products to overseas markets, a badly worded campaign or advert is the difference between make and break. When advertising your brand abroad, it is important to create culturally appropriate material that appeals to your international consumer base. That’s where transcreation comes into play.

The role of the Transcreator

A transcreator requires a very unique set of skills, which is why linguists working in this field typically specialise exclusively in transcreation work. Given the many requirements that a good transcreator has to fill, they are not that easy to find!

It goes without saying that a transcreation specialist must be a native speaker who knows the individual nuances of their language intimately and they need to have an excellent writing style. Additionally, a transcreator must:

- **Have a very creative mind (in addition to their language skills) and an excellent and compelling writing style**
- **Have in-depth knowledge about the local customs and culture of the destination country (it is usually preferable that they live in the target country so that they are always up to date with local developments in language and culture)**
- **Be able to detach themselves from the content and concentrate on the emotional impact the content generates in the reader**
- **Be familiar with the content and terminology of the respective industry that they are writing for: a creative text and the associated terminology for a company in the medical sector is very different from a text from the financial sector**

The Transcreation process

At The Translation People we have developed a thorough transcreation process over our 40 years in operation which we believe delivers the best results.

The basics:	As always we start by getting a detailed specification of the project from our client, including information such as the source text, target markets/languages and any previous translation examples.
Fact finding:	<p>We dig deeper to understand our client and the markets they are targeting, asking questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is their customer?• What is their tone of voice?• What are their objectives?
Style guides and sample pieces:	Using this information we develop style guides and sample pieces which we review with our client to confirm we are totally aligned in our understanding. We will often invite multiple transcreators to submit sample pieces to ensure we find one who best suits the tone of voice and brand personality the client is looking for.
Final transcreation:	With all this background material in the bag we can proceed with the full project, confident that we have a comprehensive understanding of our client and the unique way they want to portray themselves within each target market.



The Transcreation process in action

We recently completed the translation of a website from English into 27 languages. The client informed us from the outset that their French office had been unhappy with translation they had received in the past from previous agencies. We were keen to understand why this was the case and arranged a call with their French colleagues to understand what they had been unhappy with and what they were looking for from the translation.

It came to light that the source text, which had come from their American head office, was too confident in its tone for their specific target market, portraying the business as a large multi-national. However, in the French market, the business wanted to portray themselves as a smaller, boutique and local organisation.

With these objectives established, we submitted a number of samples from different transcreators to see which best fit the tone of voice the French office was looking for, along with a style-guide to make sure we were proceeding in the right direction from the very beginning. The result was a happy client who felt the translated material accurately reflected the unique tone of voice and brand positioning they wanted to achieve in their market.



Top 5 reasons to choose Transcreation

1. Retain the impact and integrity of your key messages
2. Avoid confusion – make sure your translated messages have the desired meaning, and that cleverly crafted text and word play is not literally ‘lost in translation’
3. Avoid offense – ensure all cultural considerations have been taken into account which could otherwise lead to unfortunate misunderstandings
4. Build trust with your international customers and strengthen your brand perception
5. Make sure you always strike the right tone of voice taking into consideration your business messages, what you want to say and your target market

Transcreation compared to other translation methods

	Machine Translation with Human Post-Editing	Standard Human Translation	Transcreation
	Intelligent machine translation, text subsequently edited by specialist post-editors for readability and suitability.	Faithful adaptation of the source content into the target language by a professional translator.	Adaptation of original content in the target language by a creative translator, faithful to the message and objectives of the source text, but often with changes to the content, imagery or messaging to suit the market.
Readability and Accuracy	Will be a coherent and accurate reflection of source text. Language may, in some cases, be structured differently to human translation and may not always read as well.	Will read as if written from the outset by a native speaker and will be an accurate reflection of the source text. Highly creative concepts may, in some cases, sound less compelling than with transcreation.	Will be very articulate with highly creative concepts reading effortlessly. Some transcreations may differ from the content of the original in order to create equivalent impact.
Cultural Relevance	No adaptation of the content to suit the target market	Basic adaptation of content to the general characteristics of the target market	Fully tailored to fit every cultural nuance of the target market
Lead Time	~30% shorter than standard	Standard (2000 words per day)	~60% longer than standard
Cost	~30% lower than standard	Standard (very competitive with possible TM technology savings)	~60% higher than standard
Suitability	High-volume, non-creative content such as technical manuals, and texts where the comprehension of the text is more important than style.	Websites & general marketing content, blogs, technical documents, datasheets, contracts, HR documents & systems, software. Texts where accuracy and readability are important but there is little room for adapting the content to create an emotional response.	Highly creative website and marketing content, blogs. Texts designed to stimulate an emotional response.

Working with The Translation People

All projects will start with our experienced Account Management team taking a detailed brief from you prior to allocating the project to a carefully selected creative linguist who will be the right fit for your brand and the markets you are targeting. In many cases, we will submit a number of transcreator profiles and samples to you so you can choose your preferred linguist. Our team will work with you to establish a clear brief detailing the main messaging and target market, as well as gathering any glossaries, images and other reference documents that will help the transcreator achieve a successful outcome. It is not uncommon for transcreators to suggest multiple alternatives for straplines (along with an explanation), so you may wish to conduct some A/B testing with the options or simply choose the option that best fits your needs.

Whatever the sector, project or nature of your creative translation requirement you can rest assured that your creative translations are in safe hands with us.



For a business like ours, it is absolutely imperative that content is not only translated well but is tailored to the tone and languages of the specific local markets. The importance of this cannot be overstated if you are thinking of translating your website.

A Customer of The Translation People



[Click to watch the video to find out more about transcreation services at The Translation People](#)



How do we do it?

Industry Focus

With many years' experience writing compelling and effective content for a variety of target audiences, our professional transcreators are here to ensure your multilingual campaigns have the best chance of success.

Sectors

Our transcreation team consists of linguists from all different sectors, each with the specialist knowledge needed to produce content of the highest quality to help your messages stand out from the crowd.

Account Manager

Our vastly experienced Account Management team will work with you closely throughout every step of the transcreation process to ensure on-time delivery and smooth communication throughout.

Translation Brief

To ensure the maximum impact in your target languages we will work with you to identify your target audiences and adapt your content accordingly.

Copywriting

If you don't already have an original document to translate, we can also provide foreign language copywriters able to create bespoke content for your clients across the world.

Transcreation can be challenging and, if not done correctly, can fall flat. Good planning, client input and, above all, the right creative minds all contribute towards successful transcreation.

To find out more about how transcreation can help you create impactful messages in different languages, get in touch today:

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What our Customers Say

"I was impressed by the quality of the transcriptions... and I know our marketing teams across the world were too. I would recommend this option for a multi-lingual project of this nature. It may cost more in the first instance, but the value in saving time for translation review is priceless."

"Excellent value for money and high quality translations."

"We have used The Translation People for a number of projects and find the service to be consistently excellent in terms of the customer relationship, quality of translations and timeliness of completion. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend them."

"Responsive, high quality and professional service. A real pleasure to work with."

"I have been using The Translation People for a few years now and I always receive great service. Quotations are provided quickly, as are the translated documents I require. Excellent value for money and very friendly and helpful staff. I would highly recommend."

"Quick turnaround, accurate, lovely people, reliable and always deliver on time"

"The team at The Translation People are always quick to respond and provide updates on our projects. Their friendly, approachable nature makes working with them a pleasure and, of course, it helps that the translations we receive are high-quality and always returned on time."

"Always had great service, that's why we have used your service for around 10 years!"

"Extremely happy with the service. Always to deadline and flexible with urgent last minute requirements. Very friendly and helpful. A pleasure to work with."

"Exceeding expectations and creating customer value."

"Excellent service. I feel part of the team."

"Great service, very friendly staff and amazing quality"