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**CITY LEGAL**  
TRANSLATIONS  
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# Your Guide to Legal Translation and What Every Good Law Firm Should Know



# Welcome to **City Legal Translations**, a **specialist** legal and financial translations company with more than **30 years' experience**.

As an approachable and friendly agency, we have more than 2,000 legal translation experts, including many former lawyers and solicitors.

Our professional translators are assigned by matching mother tongue language skills, qualifications and subject expertise as closely as possible to clients' requirements.

City Legal was certified as the UK's Fastest Growing Language Service Provider in 2016 by the Association of Translation Companies, and recorded a 100 per cent client satisfaction score in its latest client survey.

With a reputation for exceptional customer service and a real commitment to accuracy of terminology, style, formatting and technical competence, we continue to forge exceptionally strong client partnerships.

## **Legal Translation and What Every Good Law Firm Should know**

At City Legal, we've worked for 19 of the UK's top 20 law firms and seven of the top 10 global firms. Of our top 10 clients, nine have a history of working with us for at least five years.

With these impressive credentials under our belt, we have created our very own City Legal Translation Guide to demystify the process and provide advice to members of the legal community seeking translation services.

Find out about the different types of language services, how to ensure a document is a true and accurate translation of the original as well as translation project timescales and costs.

We are delighted to include expert advice from Geoffrey Bowden, General Secretary of the Association of Translation Companies, and check out our interview with City Legal's Commercial Director, Dan Peachey.

Our Translation Guide is also available for download at [www.citylegal.co.uk](http://www.citylegal.co.uk)

## **For further information**

Visit [www.citylegal.co.uk](http://www.citylegal.co.uk), email [info@citylegal.co.uk](mailto:info@citylegal.co.uk) or call **0800 0966 825** or **+44 (0)1329 828438** (outside UK).

# Written or spoken? Knowing your requirements

When it comes to commissioning language services, it pays to know a little about the different types available.

## Language services

Translations for the legal sector need to be precise, accurate and exact with confidentiality at the heart of the process.

Expertise varies according to the format – whether it's the written word or the spoken word. If you want to interact with people in a foreign language on the spot you need an interpreter and if you are working with text, you need a translator. Both services can be provided by a language service provider.

Protect and preserve your reputation as well as act in your client's best interests by using a highly skilled, qualified legal translator who translates into their mother tongue.

## Legal translation

Translation refers to the translation of the written word, and the scale, depth and range of documentation required is immense.

Not surprisingly, choosing a translator who has specific experience of your sector will not only ensure accuracy and precision but will also speed up the process. They will be familiar with terminology and styles of writing and will also have a wider knowledge of specific legal systems and areas of expertise.

For example, in complex contract law scenarios it is important to pay attention to the small print while slight nuances in the language could be the crucial difference between a patent being accepted or rejected. For documents that are very personal to an individual, such as a marriage certificate, precision is key, especially if the document is required by law to verify identity.

## Types of documentation

- Court documents such as judgments, witness statements, evidence
- Patent documents
- Certificates such as marriage, birth, death, police checks, degree
- Contracts



- Financial documents: annual reports, balance sheets, fund prospectuses
- Company formation documents such as articles of association, memoranda
- Wills
- Insurance documents

## Legal interpreters

Legal interpreting is orally translating the spoken word. This has to be carried out in a completely accurate and non-biased manner. The way in which a person's spoken words are interpreted can affect, change and sometimes even alter the course of a court case. A court room interpreter will help legal proceedings run smoothly by ensuring that the participant can be easily understood.

Interpreters can be used in court, for business meetings, for immigration matters or for medical appointments. There are different types of interpreting including simultaneous or conference, consecutive and telephone interpreting. Find out which type you need. Interpreters registered with the National Register of Public Service

Interpreters (NRPSI) may be required in certain cases to ensure standards of professional conduct and practice.

## Legal transcription

Transcription is the art of ensuring the spoken word is accurately converted into the written word. There are many different forms of legal transcription, whether it be court transcription or the transcription of oral evidence. Transcription may be in English or a foreign language, which later may require translation.

### Did you know?

**On-time** translations were cited as the **number one priority** for law firms according to City Legal's Client Satisfaction Survey.





### Did you know?

It is important to check with the **country** requiring the **certified translation** whether it needs to be **legalised** by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



# Certifications and notarisations - what you need to know

Guaranteeing that a document is a true and accurate translation of the original is important for items such as birth or marriage certificates or where documents are intended for official use.

A professional language service provider with membership of the Association of Translation Companies will be able to support clients with these requirements.

### Certified translation

Also known as a Statement of Truth and a Certificate of Accuracy, a certified translation is signed and stamped as official confirmation that the document has been translated by a competent translator. It certifies that the document is a true and honest translation.

### Notarised translations

Notarised translations are often required for official documents and they are more formal than the certified translations. A translation is certified and then the translator will declare on oath and in writing before a Public Notary that the translated document is a true and accurate translation of the original document.

The Notary will then sign and stamp the certifying letter and an Apostille (embossed seal and signature of official and date) will be attached to the document to acknowledge that it is a genuine document.

### Sworn translation or affidavit

A sworn translation may be necessary for official documents intended to be used abroad or required for use in a court of law such as a divorce. An affidavit is a sworn statement in which the translator testifies that the attached translation is a true and accurate translation of the original document.

### The legalisation of a translation by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The FCO can legalise a Sworn, Notarised or Apostille Translation. This may be required if your document is to be used abroad. Once the document has been legalised by the FCO the document can then be used abroad without further need to question its authenticity.

# Why use a professional translator?

When clients ask why it's crucial to have legal documents translated professionally, our response is that an incorrect translation can have extremely serious consequences.

Translation and the law are very different entities but the word of the law must be correct in any language, whether it's a statute, a contract, a patent, a will, a lease, a confidentiality agreement or a witness statement.

## So, why is it not straightforward?

Ensuring that legal terms are correct in the language they are being translated into is vital. You don't need to be in the legal profession to know that words, which are ostensibly the same, can have multiple meanings.

For example:

**PATENT:** the legal right to manufacture, use or sell an invention **OR** a shiny type of leather.

**BINDING:** something that is bound by law, **OR** an attachment that anchors a ski boot to a ski.

**AWARD:** amount of damages assessed by a court **OR** a type of prize for a good performance.

If the English language is so complex, think how this might work in other languages.

Like any other written documents, legal documents can contain nuance, intentionally included in order to persuade or influence. Maintaining that nuance isn't always easy and demands close attention by experts in both the law and linguistics.

Similarly, the law is open to interpretation. By 'interpretation' in this case, we mean how it is understood legally, not linguistically. Clarity is vital, in order to avoid confusion and misinterpretation.

## What are the consequences for not using a professional legal translator?

Inaccurate evidence leading to wrongful convictions and jeopardising reputations, finances and even lives. Businesses made or lost. Properties being sold at the wrong price, or to the wrong person.

These are not sensational examples, they are very possible if legal documents are not translated correctly and professionally.



## Did you know?

City Legal works with **more than 2000** legal translation experts and supports **over 600** language combinations.



# A step-by-step guide to the translation process

Whether you've worked with translators in the past or you're considering using a translation company for the first time, being 'au fait' with the process will help you get the most from it.

Here's the translation process in a nutshell. Knowing what to expect and when will ensure you get the best possible outcome.



## Step 1

Determine the language and audience for your translation project and identify the documents that require translation.



## Step 2

Send the documents to your translation company including all of the relevant reference material such as tables or graphs. Be clear about deadlines and expectations.



## Step 5

A good translation company will handpick a translator who's the perfect match for your project and specific area of the law.



## Step 6

Once the process has begun, the translator will raise any queries with the document that arise.



## Step 3

The translation company will review the project requirements, provide costs, timescales and key project milestones.



## Step 4

Once you are happy with the agreed schedule of works, sign off costs and begin.



## Step 7

Once the words have been translated, there are still more hoops to jump through. Accuracy is everything, so the translation company will then carry out a thorough review covering consistency, punctuation, terminology, spelling and formatting.



## Step 8

When the translation company is happy that your project meets all of their quality standards, they will supply it in the format requested - on time and ready for you to use with confidence.

### Did you know?

Asking a translation company to work on a **draft in progress** helps **save time** but avoid large amendments to the original text as the **costs can add up**.

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# Focus with Geoffrey Bowden



Buying language services can be both daunting and confusing. Geoffrey Bowden, General Secretary of the Association of Translation Companies offers some useful advice about how to get the best results.

## Written or spoken – identify your required service

There is a significant difference between translation and interpreting - which one do you require? If you want to interact with people in a foreign language on the spot you need an interpreter. If you are working with text you need a translator. Both can be supplied by a Language Service Provider (LSP).

## Choose the correct translation partner

There are no hard and fast rules on the type of translation partner to use: a bilingual member of staff, a freelance translation provider, or a translation company.

However, it is a common misconception that someone who speaks a language will also be a good translator. Serious mistakes can occur when specialist knowledge of a subject is required, particularly for sectors such as the law.

Ask potential translation companies for samples of their work; it's also a good idea to run samples past a trusted, language-sensitive native speaker for a second opinion.

## Don't compromise on quality

Working with an accredited translation company gives reassurance about the quality of translations you will receive. Members of the ATC are carefully vetted before being admitted as members, adhere to a strict code of professional conduct, are subject to the rulings of a professional ethics committee and carry full professional indemnity insurance cover to safeguard the interests of the translation buyer.

## Be budget savvy

The cost of the translation will depend on the length of the document, the content and the foreign language required. A legal contract or technical document will require a specialist translation company and may be more time-consuming.

## Be realistic on timings

Often the first question is 'How long will it take?'. This is not a question that can be answered simply, since it will depend on the content of the translation and how you wish to receive the finished product.

## Form a long-term partnership with your translation company

You'll get best results from developing an on-going relationship with a translation company. The longer you work with them, the better they will understand your requirements.

## Did you know?

The UK's language service providers market is one of the largest in the world worth in excess of **£1 billion** according to a report by the Association of Translation Companies in 2016.



## Geoffrey Bowden General Secretary of the Association of Translation Companies



Geoffrey has served the Association of Translation Companies (ATC) for over 30 years. It was founded in 1976 and represents the

interests of translation companies and also serves the needs of translation purchasers.

Geoffrey said: "Anyone in the legal profession commissioning language services, be it translation or interpreting, needs to be certain that they are entrusting the work to an LSP that takes its responsibilities for accuracy seriously.

"There is no such thing as a rough translation when it comes to legal documents or an approximate interpretation of what's being said in a court or any other justice setting.

"The consequences of inaccuracies can be expensive and, in certain circumstances, could cost individuals their freedom. City Legal Translations, a division of Intonation Ltd, is a leading member of the Association of Translation Companies and has rightly earned a reputation for being a trusted language partner for the legal profession."

**For more information about the ATC visit their website [www.atc.org.uk](http://www.atc.org.uk) or call the ATC's telephone helpline on: + 44 (0)1273 676777.**

# Insight from the expert: Dan Peachey



Dan has been working in the translation sector for the last 16 years. Here he shares his insights and advice.

## What's big in translations at the moment?

Machine translations are getting more and more popular. Computers aren't quite able to match a human translator yet, but the process of using machine translation and a human editor can be really useful for translating large documents such as manuals where there is a lot of repetition. It's very effective at speeding up the process and improving consistency.

## Can technology-based translations work for legal documents?

In the legal sector there are common phrases and legalese but on the whole, legal documents don't naturally fit the profile for technology-based translations.

Where there are large volumes of work, we pull in a team of translators to speed up the process and use mother tongue translators with specialist legal expertise for accuracy and precision.

## What are among the biggest challenges when it comes to translations for the legal sector?

Managing clients' expectations in terms of timescales. To meet the fast-paced demands of the legal world, we often stagger delivery points by prioritising work but it's not unusual to be working to very tight deadlines. Planning ahead so we don't have to translate 1 million words overnight would be great!

## In a sentence, sum up what's important when it comes to getting legal translations spot on?

Accuracy, precision, confidentiality and being on time.

### Did you know?

Dan Peachey is **Commercial Director** at City Legal Translations and a **board member of Eulogia**, the European Alliance of Translation Agencies.

EULOGIA

# Frequently asked questions

### Did you know?

In the translation world, the fastest growing language pairs are **English to German, English to French, English to Arabic** and **English to Chinese** according to a report by the Association of Translation Companies in 2016.

Hello



Bonjour



## How do translation companies price their services?

Some companies charge by time, some by line, page or number of words. At City Legal Translations, the pricing structure is per thousand words.

## Does the cost of translations vary from language to language?

Yes because of the availability of good quality translators. Countries where there are low levels of population such as Iceland are usually expensive while countries where the cost of living is high such as Scandinavia generally cost more. Japanese translations are also pretty expensive too.

## Can you offer Legal Aid rates for translations?

Yes, in the relevant circumstances.

## I have a mass of documentation in Arabic – how can I identify what it is?

It is not unusual for translators to visit lawyers' offices to advise on the different types of documentation and explain exactly what they are.

## Can translation companies provide non-disclosure agreements?

A good quality language service provider will be able to provide a non-disclosure agreement. They will also have professional membership of one of the trade bodies such as the Association of Translation Companies or the Institute of Translation & Interpreting.

## When is a notarised translation required?

Notarised translations are often required for official documents and are more formal than certified translations. The translator will declare on oath and in writing before a Public Notary that the translated document is an accurate translation of the original document.

## Can machine translations be used for legal work?

Machine translations are really useful for translating large documents where there is a lot of repetition. Legal documents don't naturally fit the profile for technology-based translations. Often 'legalese' may not have precise equivalents in another language while a simple rephrasing of sentences may cause confusion and transmit liability or ownership to another party.





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