ATL.

MARKETING TRANSLATION PLAYBOOK

Table of Contents

Marketing Translation Playbook

Welcome to ATL's Marketing Translation Playbook!

We created this resource as a guide for senior marketers heading up international expansion initiatives, based on our experience partnering with CMOs, VPs and marketing leaders across hundreds of fast-growing brands.

Preparing for global marketing growth and entry into new geo-linguistic markets poses challenges which go beyond the simple logistics of converting content from one language to another, requiring a detailed approach that brings together vision, strategy and the alignment of both internal and external resources.

From building brand in new overseas territories to creating an effective cross-channel customer acquisition funnel, executing a successful international communication strategy is a complex task that brings with it potentially game-changing rewards as new markets open up.

Looking to grow beyond borders?

Our Marketing Translation Playbook will take you through the key steps in developing a comprehensive roadmap to global marketing success.

1. Strategy & Goals

Effective marketing translation requires a unique guiding strategy and set of goals in order to succeed, approaching each target locale as a separate audience segment to be engaged.

While a word-for-word bulk translation of all existing marketing collateral may seem like the quickest option to reach foreign-language audiences, there are many important nuances in play which can undermine a one-size-fits-all approach and seriously damage both ROI and brand image.
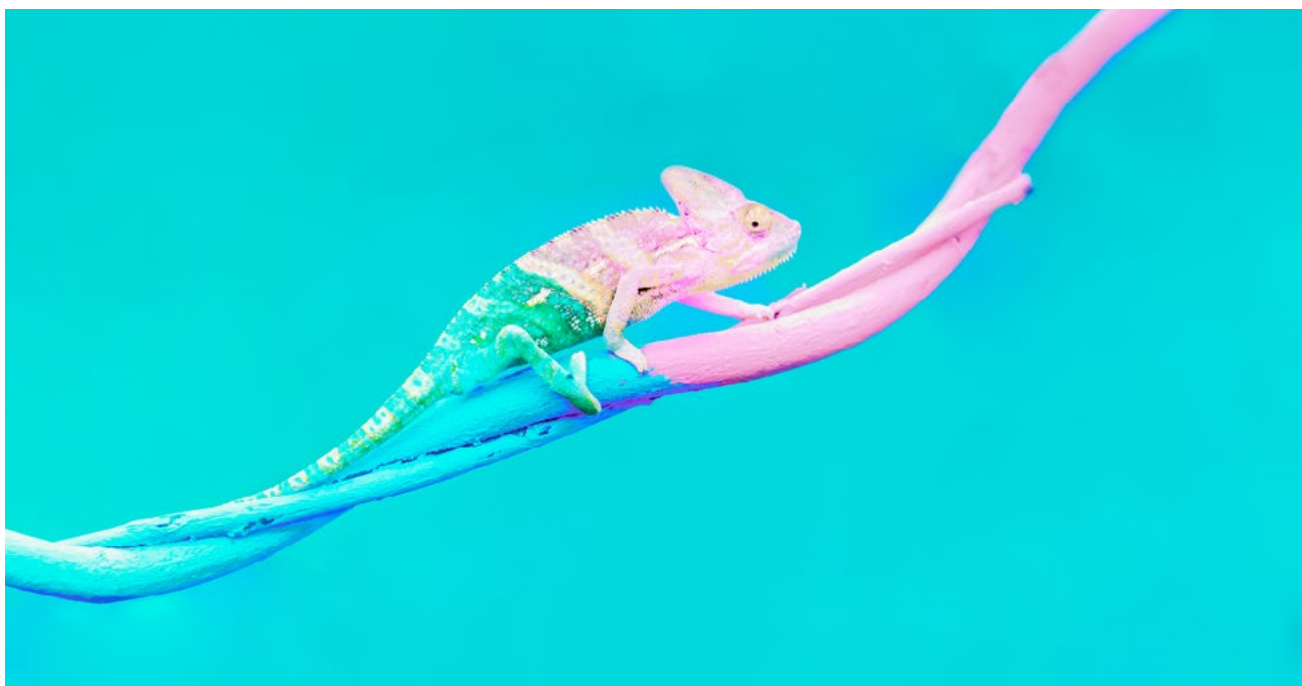
Translation vs Transcreation

Top of the list on any global marketer's to-do list should be developing a clear understanding of the differences between *translation* and *transcreation*.

The term *translation* refers to the adaptation of content from one language into another, using expert linguists to ensure source content is exactly reproduced in the target language, looking and feeling as though it has been natively written.

Transcreation, on the other hand, involves a more flexible, creative approach designed to mirror the impact and resonance of the original materials and brand in the new target locale.

In transcreation, target-language copywriters and marketing experts may re-work marketing collateral beyond the literal translation of the text – changing wording, taglines, imagery and cultural references to create a unique but equally effective replica of the original.

Why is transcreation necessary?

Much of marketing and advertising involves culturally and emotionally-connected components, from rhyming brand slogans to celebrity endorsements, each of which needs to be skillfully recreated for the new target audience.

This extends from customer-facing copy to support and training, from tech marketing publications through training presentations for engineers.

For instance, often companies will want to ensure that the core content of their training materials engages their specific target audience effectively, whether highly technical content for engineers, for example, or general training collateral for food industry corporations.

Often key elements cannot simply be 'translated' from one language to another to create this engagement, and some creative input is required to generate the desired outcome.

The result?

Some translation + some creative input = transcreation.

Technical Precision vs Marketing Flair

Marketing projects often involve technical content which needs to be translated with a high degree of precision while retaining an accessible promotional tone that engages target customers.

This might include:

- *Technical terminology*
- *Performance specifications*
- *Acronyms*
- *Abbreviations*
- *Security certifications*
- *User instructions*
- *Manuals and troubleshooting guides*

From life sciences, manufacturing and engineering to audio, high-tech and software, many industries produce consumer-facing content that must strike the right balance between technical accuracy and style.

This means creating marketing materials which read fluently in target languages and create engagement and excitement around products or services effectively, while remaining technically and factually correct.

Marketing strategy should take the need to balance these two elements into consideration, from development of translation kits and glossaries to selection of the right translation services partner.

What's the driving rationale?

Shaping your approach to marketing translations is your driving rationale for entering new linguistic markets.

It's important that these are not only clearly defined and understood, but that they also synch with broader business objectives outside the marketing function.

Drivers for translating marketing materials may include:

- **Growth** – Developing brand awareness and acquiring customers in new overseas markets
- **Retention & Loyalty** – Reducing the churn rate of international customers and marketing more effectively to foreign-language buyers to promote engagement and longevity
- **Conversion** – Boosting the ratio between website visits, brand interactions and new customer acquisition
- **Market Share** – Gaining share of existing customer base from competitors, either international or domestic within the target locale

Without a firm adherence to the main need motivating the translation of marketing materials, any undertaking is operating blindfold and with limited chances of success.

Linking translation strategy to business strategy ensures that energy and resources get focused on the right areas.

Goals & KPIs

As with any monolingual marketing initiative, it's vital that the goals for your marketing translations are built around measurable objectives for key data points.

Assuming that a default set of KPIs used for the domestic market will carry over seamlessly into other languages underestimates the complexity of international growth and will likely lead to a disconnect between expectations and results.

Goals and KPIs should be set with specific regard to each target market, keeping in mind that the supporting rationale for translation and the market demographics may differ.

Regions where your brand already has a sizeable customer base will require different goals from one where brand awareness is your main challenge, for example.

Additionally, target locales may have unique characteristics with regard to a wealth of factors, such as:

- Customer device preference
- Customer disposable income level
- Customer preferred online channel
- Existing customer gender split
- Local offline media penetration
- Local cost of advertising
- Number of domestic competitors

Finally, goal-setting should be supported by as much first and third-party data as possible – making sure that objectives set are based on real-world information, whether from your own CRM systems or from market reports, surveys and other sources.

2. Planning
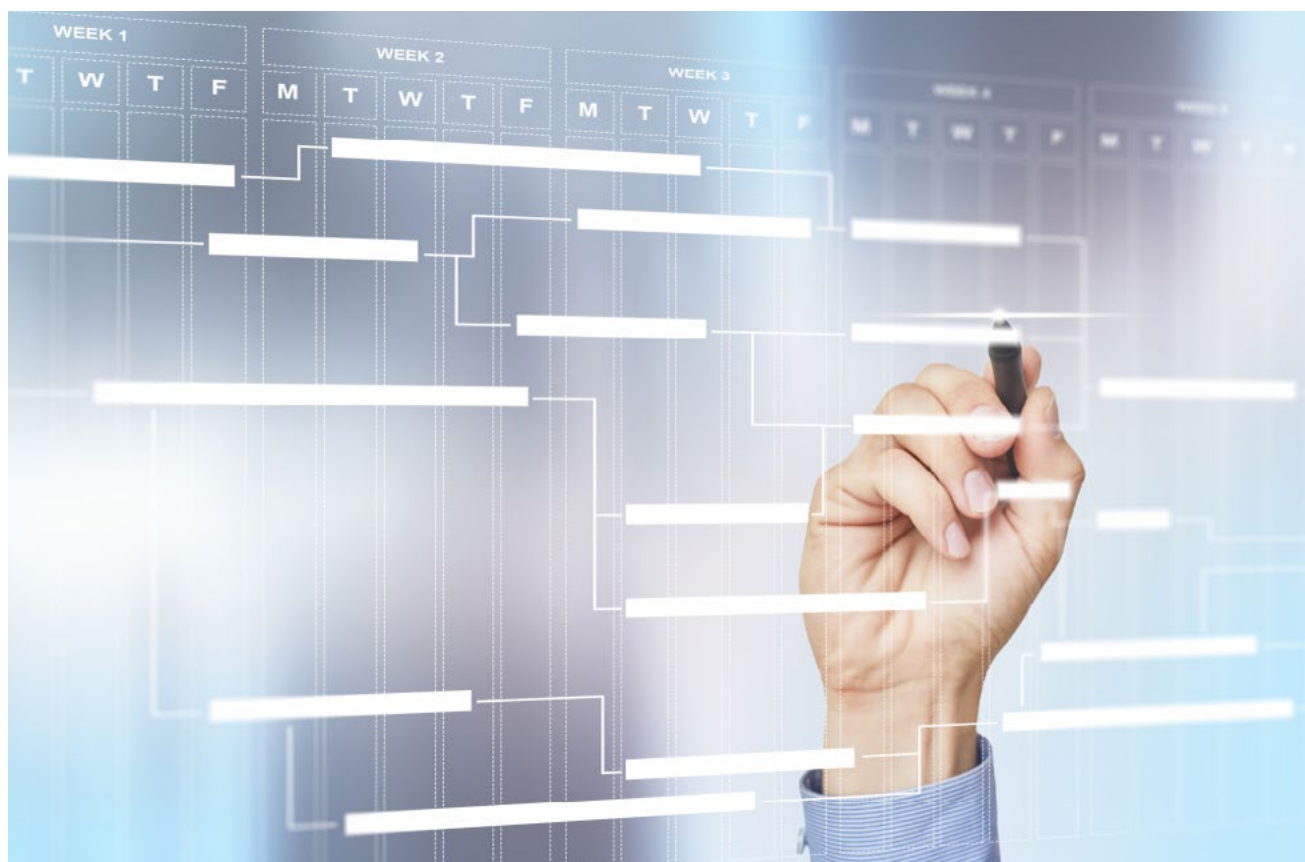
The blueprint underpinning your marketing translation is where your strategy gets nailed down into a sequenced action plan, comprised of deliverables, role definitions and documented workflows.

Taking the time to create a plan for marketing translations is crucial – most marketing executives already know the struggle of getting key employees to dedicate time to routine domestic marketing activities, but marshalling resources for converting collateral and campaigns into a non-native language can be even more challenging.

A clear plan helps solve this and makes sure that responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined together with binding deadlines.

Some essential factors to consider when structuring a marketing translations plan include:
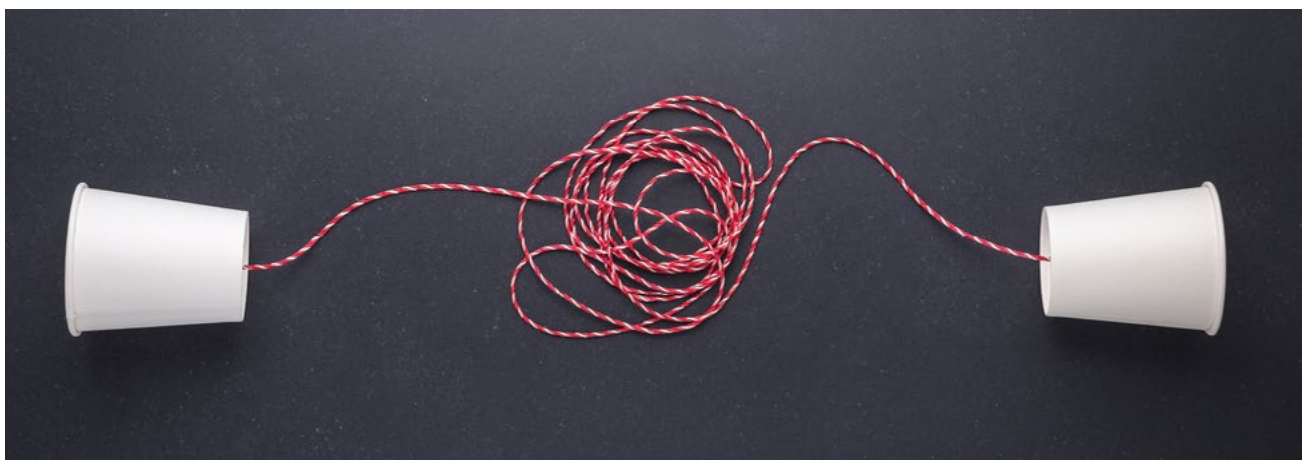
Channels & Collateral

- **Content Audit** – A content audit aims to create an inventory of all your content requiring translation, along with important related information (e.g. format, storage location or platform, owner / editor etc.).

  When your content is mapped in a structured format which can be shared with project teams, the pace and accuracy of translation work can move much faster than when fragmented files, authors and permission chains need to be untangled on the fly.

- **Channel Prioritization** – You will need to determine whether different locales have differing channel needs, based on the rationale for marketing translation.

  (For example, has SEO research indicated high search volume and easy-win potential for Market A, while Market B calls for more focus on offline media? The mix across core channels such as search, social, display, PR, print and broadcast may not be consistent across target markets).

- **Budget Allocation** – As well as being able to deliver translated materials, your plan should include the necessary budget to activate channels effectively and enable the distribution of translated content.

  This may involve research into prices for on and offline content promotion and sponsorship, potentially including new platforms not present or popular in the domestic market.

Project Team & Stakeholders

- Specifying the role and responsibilities of your key internal and external project leaders helps align expectations from the outset, leading to reduced friction during heavy workloads or tight deadlines.

- While your core team may include authors, copywriters, designers, translators, editors, software engineers and other people working within the content cycle, it's also necessary to define and engage a wider range of domestic and international stakeholders.

  This process involves bringing project objectives, time-frames and workflows to the attention of those who will be impacted by the translation process but not directly involved, such as regional managers, sales teams, customer support groups and external in-country partners.

Workflows & Communication

- **Project Management Platform** – Choosing the right central collaboration platform is the anchor for defining your workflows and also impacts communication strategies throughout translation programs.

  For the majority of businesses, the key decision is whether or not to use a dedicated Translation Management System (TMS), such as XTRF or Plunet. These are purpose-built tools with functionality specifically designed to centralize translation project management and incorporate content and language assets such as glossaries, style guides, translation memories and more.

  If not using a TMS, companies usually configure workflows within their day-to-day platform, from Trello to Asana to Microsoft Project.

  Your translation workflow should be designed not only to facilitate internal communication, but also to allow access and visibility to key external suppliers and project partners.

- **Communication & Feedback Channels** – Clearly defining how different project members and stakeholders will communicate before project kick-off keeps important information visible, and avoids time lost to teams hunting across channels to piece together fragmented correspondence.

  Whether it's via dedicated Slack channels, weekly email reports or online worksheets, establishing the framework for collaboration focuses attention on project progress without getting lost in the weeds.

- **Meetings & Cadence Calls** – As well as documenting how your marketing translation team will communicate, a meeting schedule also keeps correspondence focused and efficient.

  Not all stakeholders will need the same frequency of communication and planning out a calendar of check-in and round-table meetings for key groups can deliver the right information to the right people smoothly.

It also helps avoid delays by nailing down availability in advance with regard to important project milestones.

- **Status Updates & Corporate Communication** – Outside the main stakeholder group, sharing progress updates with the broader business provides visibility into the progress of globalizing marketing reach and materials.

  Decisions should be taken early concerning what requires sharing at an organizational level with regard to new market entries, new-language website translations and product/ service launches, and whether these will be communicated by the marketing and translations team or via other business groups – product, sales, regional management or corporate leadership.

3. Choosing Your Marketing Translation Vendor

Translation agencies come in all shapes and sizes – from publicly-listed multinationals to boutique vendors highly focused on a specific market niche.

As well as teams of native translators with subject-matter specialisms, translation agencies also have access to experts across all stages of the translation cycle – project managers, translation technology specialists, QA leads, editors, proofreaders and graphic designers.

Choosing the right vendor means more than just sourcing the lowest price – it's about finding a genuine partner who will match well with your needs, industry and workflow.

Sector Specialism

- *Does your agency have proven experience working in your market, localizing comparable products or services?*
- *Have they managed the same file types and translated into the same languages?*
- *Have they worked on similar projects with similar goals?*

Partnering with a translation vendor who has a demonstrated track record delivering similar marketing projects helps minimize risk during the translation process.

The right agency will add significant value before and during the collaboration, helping to identify and address potential challenges, ensuring translation delivery aligns with marketing and business goals, and taking on a shared objective to hit overall project KPIs - not merely deliver translated content.

Digital-first

- *Is your agency an expert in website localization and digital marketing?*

  Effective marketing translation requires a deep understanding of online marketing channels, tools and tactics.

  Simply translating the text content of your website without incorporating this into a wider international marketing strategy can lead to diminished ROI.

  From multilingual SEO, e-commerce and social media strategies to email marketing, mobile optimization and app localization, having a partner who lives and breathes digital marketing is vital for brands with a substantial online presence.

  Allocating as little as 2 to 4% of marketing budget on translation can increase website leads by 25-50% per language, so investment in an effective multilingual digital presence can really be the difference between success and failure when it comes to global growth.

Technology

- *Does your translation partner have experience with the right tools for your project?*

  A range of tools exist to make commercial translations more efficient and effective.

  Translation Memory software builds a repository of previously-translated words and phrases from your content, creating more coherent target language translations and lowering the cost of projects by avoiding duplicating translation work.

  Style Guides, Termbases and Terminology Management tools help teams of translators follow clear rules on how to translate your content, ensuring consistent branding across languages.

  A **Translation Management System** manages the entire translation workflow and keeps collaborators on the same page.

  It's important to feel confident that your agency not only has the translation tech needed to do the job, but that they are comfortable and familiar with your core marketing technology platforms and can operate between the two systems.

Harmony

- *Is your agency willing to harmonize their internal processes and corporate culture to get in line with your company requirements?*

  Whether it's a question of terminology, company culture or an approach to project management in general, when your language partner is ready to align with your company requirements, you are in good hands.

  During complex translation projects, brands and agencies spend many hours working together and exchange large volumes of data and communication.

  Finding a translation partner who shows a willingness and ability to adapt their way of working to become a seamless extension of your team facilitates the process greatly.
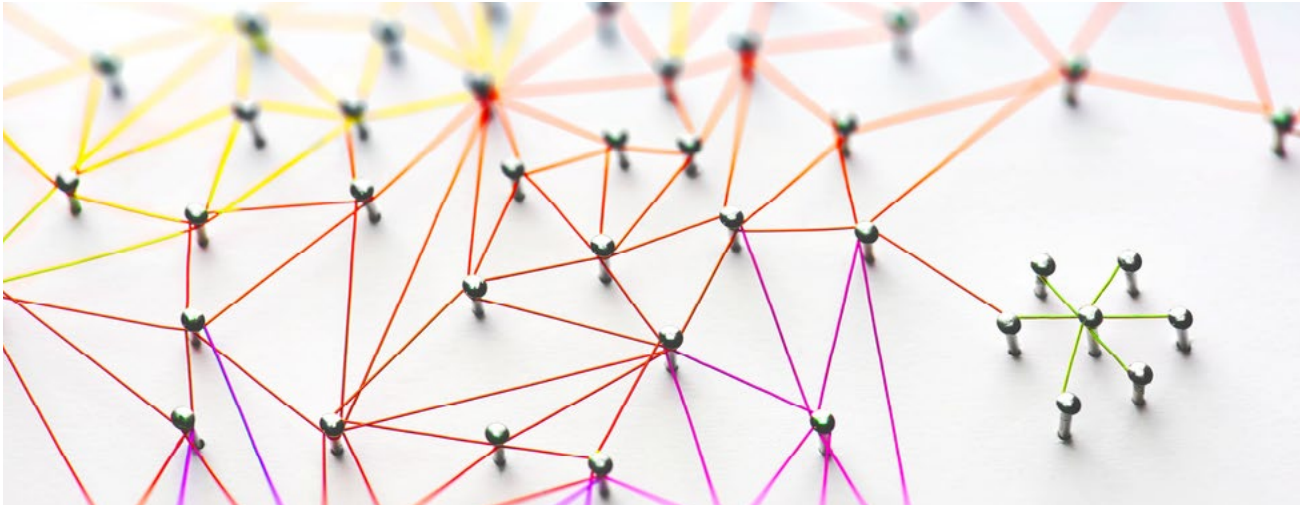
Additional Partners

- *Do you have the right support resources in place?*

  As well as your principal translation vendor, your team may also need to build a network of non-linguistic partners to deliver fully on your global marketing plan.

  Choosing and engaging these in advance as part of a coherent strategy means project phases can be connected efficiently in a primary workstream.

  Non-language partners may include:

  - Resellers
  - Customer support
  - Distributors
  - Referral partners & affiliates
  - Publishers & content platforms
  - Regional marketing agencies (performance, social, creative, PR)
  - Advertisers & adtech providers
  - App agencies & developers

4. Execution

Putting your marketing translation plan into action is where the rubber meets the road – even the most detailed workflows can fall apart without the right approach to execution.

As well as sticking to the agenda, delivering successful marketing translations often means acting as an evangelist for the translation process by keeping teams engaged, sharing and celebrating progress, and generating enthusiasm for the successful execution of the plan.

It also involves not just a determination to keep on schedule, but a pro-active approach to delays and disruptions – allowing flexibility for change and making sure deviation from the original plan doesn't derail the overall program.

To bullet-proof your execution, focus on:

Keeping Communication Open

Frequent dialogue with your cross-functional stakeholder team in accordance with your communications plan is essential to keep everyone on the same page.

Despite your best efforts, there will be bumps in the road – delays caused by your team, other teams, technology or outside factors.

When these occur, it's important that updates are shared, and plans are redrawn accordingly.

If communication is intermittent or ineffective, this can lead to rushed product or website launches, hurried translations, critical QA processes being skipped and other cracks appearing as the pressure mounts.

Budgeting For Tech Gaps

While your existing marketing tech stack may be sufficient to localize your brand into other languages, it's prudent to set budget aside to allow for any gaps that emerge.

A fully international marketing program may throw up some unexpected 'missing links' – these can be tools that lack features or functionality in certain languages, additional licenses needed last-minute to grant teams access to certain platforms or new tools needed to connect key workflow steps.

Unexpected tech needs and chasing new budget sign-off mid-program can be hugely disruptive, so it's worth being ahead of the game with some overflow spend available.

Measuring In Real Time

If your resources allow for it, actively measuring and sharing key metrics in real time can be an important part of driving team engagement and shaping decision-making as you move through your marketing translations program.

Whether it's website traffic and usage data from Google Analytics for new locales, or customer behavior patterns interacting with new foreign-language marketing campaigns, sharing data as it happens creates a sense of urgency and excitement that links the real-world impact of translations with your global audience.

Limiting discussion of critical data to milestone meetings and analyzing in a 'post mortem' setting misses the opportunity to leverage the immediacy of the effect translation projects have on international customers, and can also mean overlooking problems in the process until they're flagged weeks or months later in the next scheduled formal review.

Sharing Local Successes

Ultimately, the most effective way to generate buy-in and support for your marketing translations program is to actively share and circulate local 'success stories' with both the team and the wider business.

Broadcasting wins achieved through increased global exposure, brand penetration and localized content once again builds a visible link between translation and business growth.

Success at every level can be shared with different groups, from baby steps to headline news:

- Flagship customer acquisitions
- New affiliate and distributor partnerships
- 'First' new territory customers
- Spiking overseas revenues and market share
- Rising CTRs, time-on-page or unique site visitors
- Shifting customer demographics

As well as celebrating the business outcome, including recognition of key translation team members, groups and partners also consolidates the role of translation in securing these successes – building momentum for ongoing international expansion and the next phase of global growth.

ATL secures the success of leading global businesses on local markets globally through providing top language services. We strive to become no. 1 partner for any technology company that wants to sell more on local markets internationally. It's a mixture of talent and hard work that make our team succeed. To achieve this, we believe in diligence, teamwork, maturity, professionalism, responsibility and integrity.

Client is at the core of our focus to secure their global growth.

Communication ensures our clients' best experience and results.

Team of responsible language industry professionals helps clients achieve their go-to-market goals on time, on spec, on budget.

Adding the **Value** of innovative approach and keeping up with client's fast-changing competitive environment, ATL is here to stay, driving the changes in many verticals.

VISIT OUR BLOG

CCTV
Got It!

Client
Communication
Team
Added Value