

THE INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

A TRANSLATOR'S THOUGHTS
ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED
TRANSLATION SOFTWARE

THE INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE: A TRANSLATOR'S THOUGHTS ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED TRANSLATION SOFTWARE

Today, the demand for localization is greater than ever, as a growing number of businesses look to tackle the linguistic challenges associated with international trade.

As a localization professional, knowing how to optimize your company's translation process, and keep up with demand is a challenge, even for the most seasoned professional. The Insider's Perspective: A translator's thoughts on computer-assisted translation software, offers a concise insight into one expert translator's hands-on localization career and in particular, why technology became an almost immediate and constant part of their localization process.

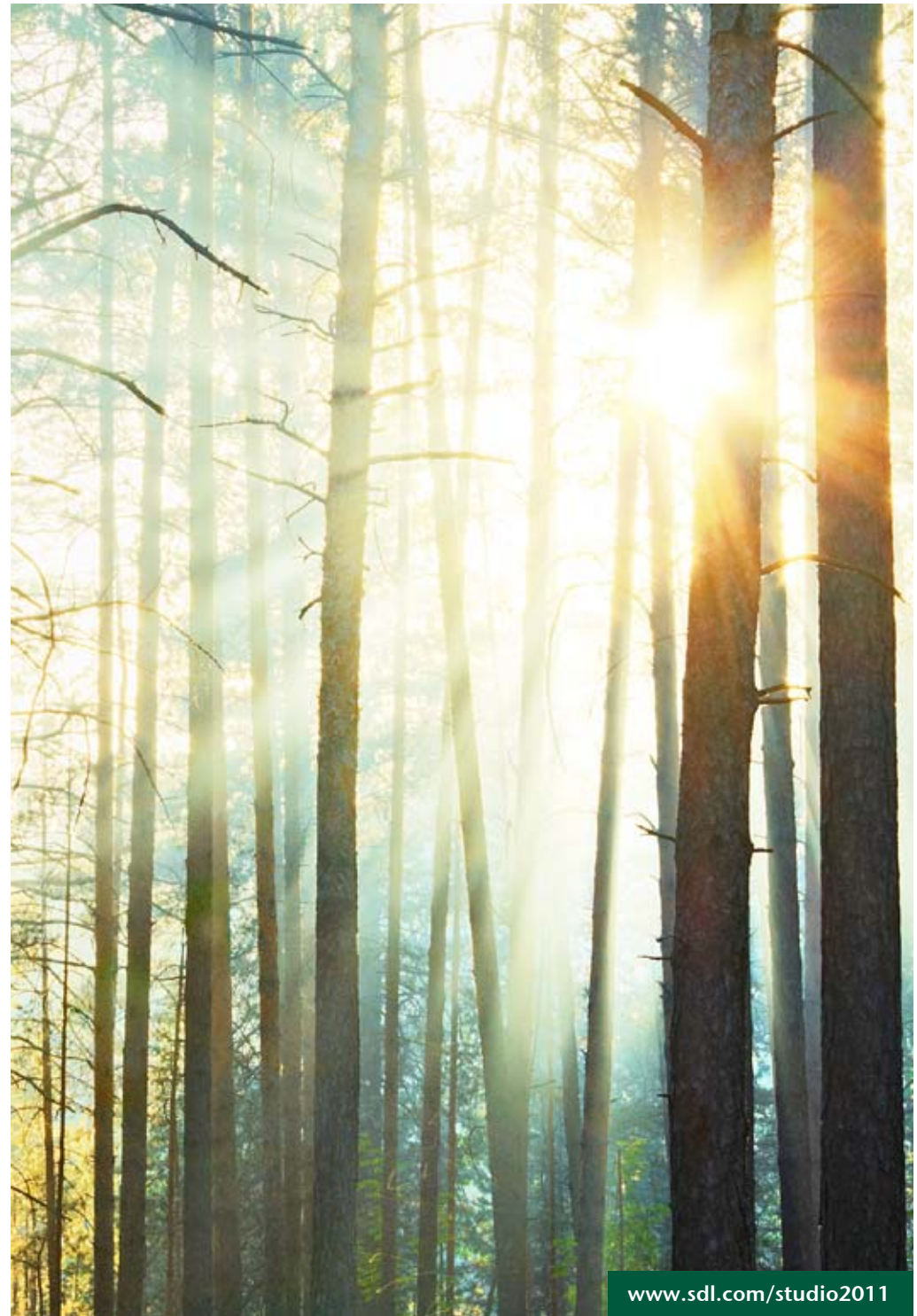
If you want to add to this story and share your views on technology and its place in today's localization industry, then join our twitter discussion using [#translatorsview](#).

Regards

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TRANSLATION - AN EYE OPENING EXPERIENCE

I did my first translation job in the mid-90s. It was a user manual for a telecom switch. While I was translating the manual I swore to myself that this would be the last translation job that I would ever do. One reason was that I had to stay up until three o'clock in the morning if I wanted to have any chance of meeting the deadline. Progress was slow, as I fought my way from one paragraph to the next. It was not actually the translation from English into German that felt so tedious and time-consuming. It was rather the fact that I had to look up a lot of terms in a dictionary that was slowing me down a lot. More often than not I stumbled on a sentence that I felt I had already seen before. So, I kept searching for this other (similar) segment, and then copied and pasted it into the current paragraph. Last but not least, I spent a tremendous amount of time checking my translation for number mistakes, converting inches into centimetres, etc.

IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WAY

The telco switch manual did not turn out to be the last translation job that I ever did. In fact, many more followed. After having burnt the candle at both ends for two weeks in a row, I needed to find a way of streamlining and avoiding all the things that had turned my first translation job into a nightmare. I remembered reading about a so-called translation memory system, i.e. a database that remembers everything that I translated and that could automatically retrieve translations for identical or similar sentences. This technology promised to make information available at the click of a button, rather than having to leaf through paper glossaries and dictionaries. I was actually one of the first translators to leverage professional CAT tools, and it gave me a real edge. My translation memory became my secret super-weapon, which allowed me to complete translation jobs much faster than before. Today, CAT tools are no longer considered to be the translator's secret weapon, but an essential part and parcel of any organization that deals with translation and localization, just like a taxi driver needs a good and reliable car to do and to stay in business.

INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

In every industry, technology has been used to streamline processes, increase productivity and cut costs for centuries. Today, no one would ever think of assembling cars manually. Humans design the cars - with the aid of computers. But the cars are then mass-produced by robots at assembly lines. It stands to reason that the same can and needs to be done when translating the marketing collateral, the manuals, etc. that accompany the cars. Organizations want to streamline the production of translated documentation by not having to re-invent the wheel, i.e. by not having to re-translate repeated sentences from scratch.

In the 90s it was still acceptable for me to go to a travel agency, stand in line, then talk to a travel agent and have him or her make the booking for me. At that time, booking a flight and a hotel took me no less than two hours. A few years later I was able to book flights and hotel rooms from my PC, thus from the comfort of my own home, which slashed the time it took to get a flight from two hours to five minutes. And even that is no longer good enough today! Today I expect to book a flight from my iPhone in less than 30 seconds - and use the phone to select my seat and check in - again within less than 30 seconds, thus avoiding long queues in front of check in desks. This is a case in point of how technology is used to slash the time needed for a certain (repetitive and tedious) process, thus freeing up considerable productivity potential for other, more creative, value-added tasks.

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS ARE ON THE RISE

When George Lucas released Star Wars Episode I in 1999, there was a time lag of three months between the release in the US, and the release of the dubbed version in Germany. At that time, the audience willingly accepted the time lag. However, in 2002, a staggered release between continents was already deemed unacceptable. Episode II made it to all movie screens around the globe at the same time. One world, one release!

CAT TOOLS AND QUALITY GAINS

Productivity gains and cost reduction are the most prominent, but not the only reason why organizations rely on CAT tools. Equally important are the quality gains. Low quality can, in turn, lead to reduced productivity and significantly higher costs. Just imagine a product that is accompanied by a poorly translated user manual. This can give rise to numerous customer complaints, which then have to be addressed by support and product management. In some cases, poor translations can even entail lawsuits, e.g. when an incorrect translation leads to faulty operation of a machine.

Apart from lawsuits, it is also the reputation of a company that can be severely damaged when customers perceive translations to be poor. A friend of mine, who runs a translation agency, is serving a number of prime customers that put quality above everything else. Those customers insist that all translation work is done using state-of-the-art CAT tools. These customers are not even the least bit interested in the time and cost savings that CAT tools offer, as long as the translation agency guarantees quality and consistency of all target texts. This is only possible due to the automatic quality assurance functions of the CAT tool, which can check e.g. for inconsistent translations, number errors, etc.



PROTECTING AGAINST TRADEMARK VIOLATIONS

Due to a large number of costly lawsuits initiated by competitors, litigation avoidance had turned into a major topic for one Munich-based hardware manufacturer. This resulted in a dozen product specialists being employed to review all translated documents for potential trademark violations. The introduction of a CAT solution, meant translated material could automatically be scanned for potential trademark violations, thus freeing up several members of staff.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

One distinct feature of our times is the fact that large volumes of data have to be stored somewhere. The same applies to translated documents, paragraphs, sentences, etc. Translations constitute corporate knowledge; just like, for example, the design specifications of a new smartphone. CAT tools make certain that this knowledge is being kept in a central repository and can be retrieved when needed.

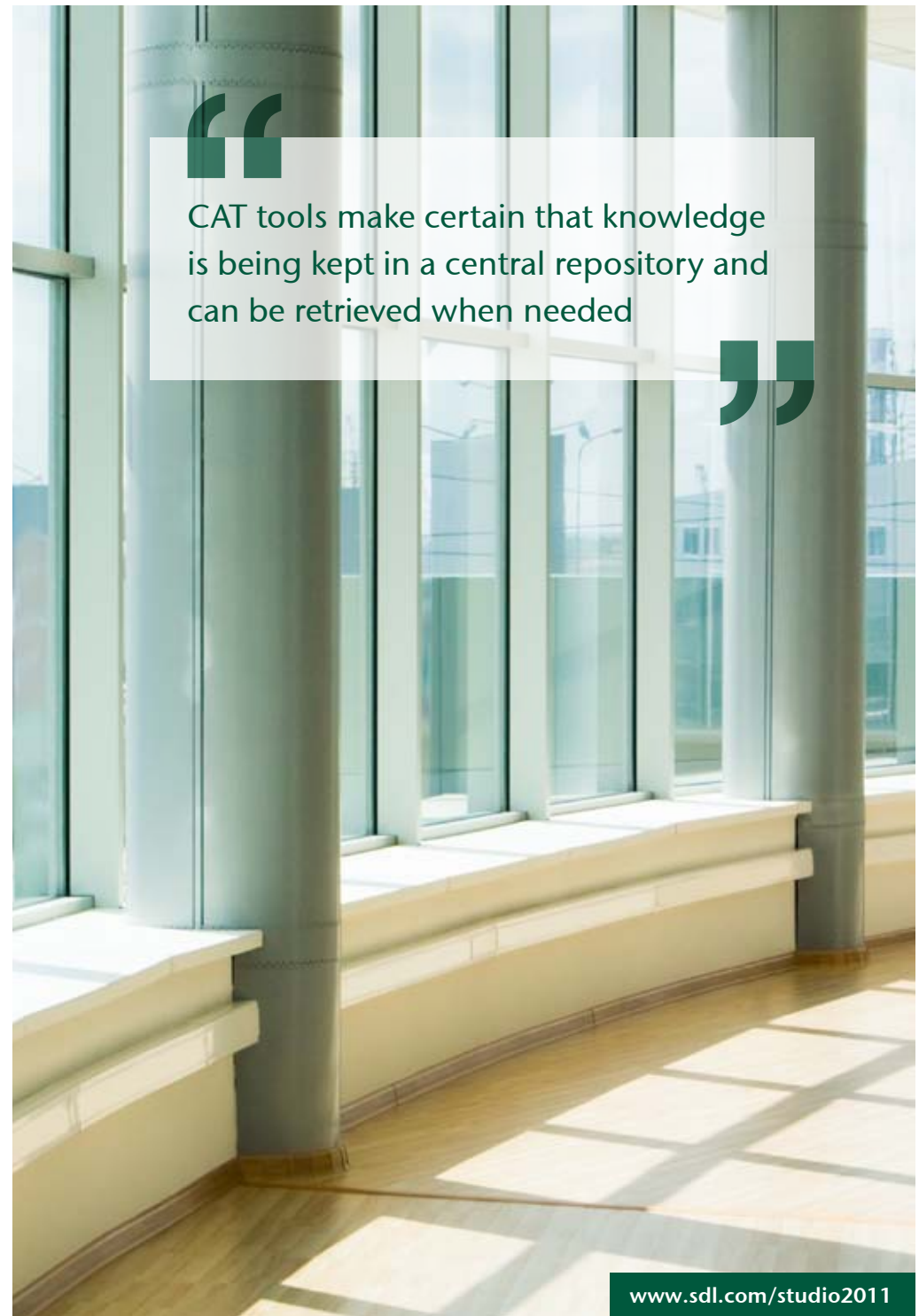
About ten years ago a friend of mine was working as a translator for a patent lawyer office. All in all, the lawyers' office employed two translators. Despite being introduced to CAT tools, the company's management failed to understand the importance of supporting their translation processes with technology. The shareholders argued that, after all, they had two highly qualified translators who had been producing good results for years. So, why should there be any need to purchase a CAT solution?

Just a few months later, the first translator decided to quit her job and relocate. Another few months after that, the second translator was offered a more attractive job at the local patent office. Needless to say that with those two resignations the company lost its entire translation knowledge. The company took at least a year to get two new translators trained to deliver the expected results. Knowledge that had already been built up had to be built up again from scratch, as not a single translation had ever been stored in a central repository for easy access by the new translators.

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STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Being able to win customers across continents has made the localization capabilities of a company a business-critical factor. All the more reason to use the most-up-to-date technology to support an organization's globalization processes. Staying technologically ahead of the curve always pays off.

In my career I have seen a number of companies use out dated or even no CAT tools at all. Those companies spend an incredible amount of time doing things like:

- Manually highlighting paragraphs to be translated or edited with a red pen
- Making out-dated document formats translatable by running macros, converting them to other formats
- Copying and pasting sentences one-by-one from a Word document into a DTP file

Globalization-savvy companies have learned that every click they can save with an intelligent CAT solution translates into concrete cost reduction and competitive advantages. Leveraging modern translation technologies makes tedious processes such as re-translating already translated content, copying/pasting text box content from one document to another, etc. a thing of the past. Just like having to queue up in order to book a flight from A to B.

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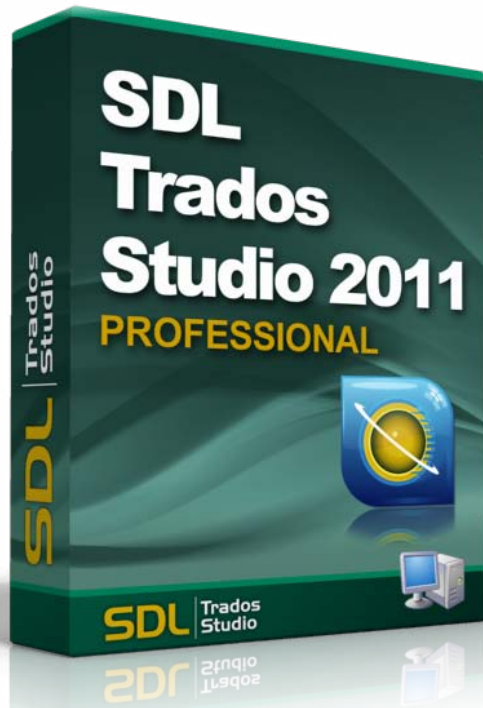
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SDL TRADOS STUDIO 2011

The #1 desktop translation software

SDL Trados Studio 2011 Professional provides all the tools necessary to create, edit and review high quality translations in the quickest possible time. Supported by world class translation memory technology, SDL software is used by over 80% of the translation supply chain and can enable businesses to complete translation projects up to 40% faster!



KEY BENEFITS

Translate Faster

- The use of translation memory technology means there is no need to keep translating the same content over and over again
- New innovative features offer all users substantial productivity gains, enabling you to deliver projects faster while still ensuring the highest quality translation

Translate More Easily

- The integrated environment puts all your tools in one place: translation, review, project management, automated translation and terminology
- The clean, clutter-free editing environment allows the translator to focus on translation rather than complex formatting and tags

Translate More Efficiently

- Make the most of your translation assets with a host of new features that give you maximum leverage from your translation memory
- Many repetitive tasks have been eliminated or automated to save you time

To learn more about SDL Trados Studio 2011 visit www.sdl.com/studio2011

ABOUT SDL

SDL enables global businesses to enrich their customers' experience through the entire customer journey. SDL's technology and services help brands to predict what their customers want and engage with them across multiple languages, cultures, channels and devices. SDL has over 1,500 enterprise customers, 400 partners and a global infrastructure of 70 offices in 38 countries. 42 out of the top 50 brands work with SDL. For more information, visit www.sdl.com/lt

