

## THE LATER MISTAKES ARE DISCOVERED, THE MORE EXPENSIVE IT IS TO CORRECT THEM

*Excerpt from an interview with Hamburg-based entrepreneur Georg Kapsokalyvas, director of an internationally renowned language service provider group, China expert and inventor of myproof® (published on several press portals)*

The Interview was written by  
Frank Jankowski

[...]

PRESS PORTAL: But that surely wasn't the reason why you developed "myproof"?

KAPSOKALYVAS: No, I don't have a problem with that. I had long since been mulling over the idea to find a procedure to check and evaluate translations – as I am sure many people who are faced with the problems of technical translations have.

PRESS PORTAL: What exactly is myproof®?

KAPSOKALYVAS: myproof® is an automated, objective and confidential procedure to register, check and evaluate multilingual texts. And I have the vision, or rather the intention, to make myproof® a kind of translation inspection system that, sooner or later, nobody who works with technical translations will be able to ignore.

PRESS PORTAL: Larger companies often employ their own ISO and DIN-certified translators. These are professional translators and proofreaders.

KAPSOKALYVAS: That is correct. The large language departments often employ more than a hundred in-house experts.

PRESS PORTAL: Shouldn't they be capable of checking their translations themselves?

KAPSOKALYVAS: That has been tried and is still being done - but it doesn't work. To begin with, the proofreaders sometimes have to criticize their own work or the work of competent colleagues. Not only does this not make sense, but they often just don't have the time to do it. Moreover, only a small number of languages can be processed, while most major global suppliers have to provide their documents in more than 45 languages. This is why such tasks are delegated to far away branch offices abroad. But local employees are also overloaded with work or unable to fulfill this task and therefore lack motivation. The results are expensive and less than ideal, not to say unusable. We put a lot of time and research into these aspects so I can give you an inside example: After receiving customer complaints and multiple requests, a Korean manufacturing site had texts with a volume of 1.7 million words that needed to be checked and revised. In cooperation with the Korean

distribution company, the language department would need at least 5,000 working hours to complete this task, amounting to an initial total of 200,000 euros for personnel costs. Approximately the same amount can be added for handling data and communication between translators, project managers and other personnel at home and abroad.

PRESS PORTAL: Really that much??

KAPSOKALYVAS: It's a realistic, if not low, estimate, that every experienced language department manager would confirm. Moreover, it is important to count passive expenses, ungenerated revenues these people would normally create, not to mention low morale as a consequence. By rule of thumb, the costs amount to approximately 400,000 euros – and that is, just to remind you, to check a translation that already cost 250,000 euros to begin with. And for a result that is not ideal, as I've mentioned. These costs do not include possible costs – and those can be immense – for personal injuries, claims for compensation, contract penalties, delayed and/or repeated approval procedure, loss of image, etc., all typical consequences of incorrect translations. "myproof®" lowers the total cost to about 125,000 Euros, not even a third! The long-term effects cannot be over-emphasized: People, who know that their results will be checked by experts, for example, put a lot more effort into their work.

PRESS PORTAL: Is this also a clever marketing trick? [...]

KAPSOKALYVAS: The answer is a clear no. [...] I've actually thought about separating the two fields and maybe even turning *myproof*® into a non-profit system or at least an organization that pursues ideological aims.

PRESS PORTAL: Aside from the experience we all made – that it is cheaper to hire an expert instead of trying to solve problems ourselves: What does *myproof*® cost and where can the customer save money? Do you already have hard numbers – and a basis to compare them to?

KAPSOKALYVAS: Of course. As far as comparisons are concerned, we can use scientific data. Keywords such as "ROI on QA", "Quality Profitability Index", "Cost-Benefit Analysis", "Effectiveness of Quality Assurance", etc. provide a good deal of information. But we also discuss these things with experts from different industries and evaluate our own empirical data. The bottom line is: quality assurance always pays off and measures, as are possible with *myproof*®, save at least 2, if not 3 or more euros per invested euro. [...] Another issue aside from the mentioned costs for poor translations is image. Loss of image is not easy to express in terms of numbers. These are "soft" numbers, a concept that Sigrun Fritz describes really well in a study on the economic value of soft numbers ("Ökonomischer Nutzen weicher Kennzahlen"). The study shows that measures to secure image quality can increase investment by two to four times. Nothing can pollute the image of a company as lastingly as a poor (or poorly translated) operating manual. .

PRESS PORTAL: Customers understand the quality of the operating manual as a reflection of the quality of the product itself...

KAPSOKALYVAS: That is correct. [...]

PRESS PORTAL: You were talking about a vision earlier...?! What do you hope, or dream, to achieve? [...]

KAPSOKALYVAS: The introduction of the Internet and computerbased translation technology in the early 1990s led to an increasing globalization. Suddenly everyone who could translate (or thought they could translate) was able to offer their services worldwide. This resulted in lower prices, that went hand in hand with a lower quality. Customers are seldom able to separate the wheat from the chaffe or to find sources of errors. The later an error is detected during the value creation chain of a product, the more expensive it is to fix the error. The deficits of the markets must be eliminated, that's a kind of natural law.[...]

PRESS PORTAL: Aren't you afraid someone might steal your idea?

KAPSOKALYVAS: Not really. We already put an enormous amount of time and know-how into the development and perfection of this concept. The time we put into the selection and training of proofreaders and project managers alone will be hard to make up for. Moreover, we already received awards for it, a fact that we are proud of. So, in any case, we are the first. And I don't mind if, someday, we're not the only ones anymore. As we all know, competition is good for business. [...]

Author: Frank Jankowski

*short version* translation by Michael Baker

Original (German) Version was published – amongst others – on

<http://www.gzpdu.de>