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I Introduction to standardization and BS EN 15038

This book has been produced to help translation service providers (TSPs) obtain maximum benefit from the availability of their first Europe-wide industry service standard, BS EN 15038 *Translation services – service requirements*.

Many TSPs will be freelance individuals or very small companies. The standard refers to a number of ‘people’ involved in a translation service provision – the TSP, project manager and translator spring to mind. For an individual on their own this will mean wearing different hats for different requirements and, of course, mostly wearing them all at the same time. Meeting the standard, and establishing the system that does so, is not affected by the fact that the TSP is an individual. However, if you are the TSP and there is at least one other in your organization, references to ‘the TSP shall do this’ or ‘shall do that’ places the responsibility and authority on you as TSP to ensure it is done. It is up to you to decide who actually performs what is required.

This book will:

- explain what benefits any translation provider can expect from the process;
- explain how to achieve those benefits in the most appropriate way by
 - helping the TSP fit the standard to their business with minimum disruption,
 - helping the TSP gain optimum advantage from delivering services that conform to the standard;
- assume that you, the reader, are a TSP of some kind and that you have a copy of the standard to refer to. It should be possible to follow the standard and dip into the book or read the book and refer constantly to the standard.

This book is written on the assumption that you are on your own in having to decide whether it will be beneficial for you or your organization to implement and claim conformity to this standard. Once this decision is made, this book will assist you through the implementation and conformity assessment process on the further assumption that this is the first time you have had to do either of these things.

We begin by answering some of the questions that have been raised by people in that position during the development of the standard. We make no apology for being repetitive in places throughout the text believing that it does no harm and saves constant cross-referencing to the section where a complex, or new, concept is dealt with in depth.

Do TSPs have to implement the standard?

The short answer is no. This standard has to be adopted by the countries of the European Union as a national standard. In the UK it receives the document descriptor 'BS EN 15038'. Since there is not, and is never likely to be, any legislation passed requiring take up and use of the standard by people or organizations providing translation services, it is, and will remain, a purely voluntary activity.

It is very much a cost-benefit decision for you to make. Costs will clearly vary according to your individual circumstances operating as a TSP and it is the intention of this book to help you make that decision with reasonable confidence of the outcome being what you would like it to be and what this book has led you to expect.

Is certification a necessary part of implementing the standard?

Again the emphatic answer is no. It is purely voluntary and while there at least two reasons why you might not go down that track, nothing rules out the possibility that it will be a beneficial undertaking for you and is something you will need to address. We provide detailed information later in the book, so touch on it only briefly here.

The first reason might be that you may simply wish to be sure that you meet the standard but consider your service so far in advance of its provisions that you are not interested in publicizing the fact that your translation services conform to the standard.

The second is based on the understanding that certification is only one of the ways by which you can demonstrate publicly that your translation service is in conformity with BS EN 15038. One of the other forms may suit your purpose better, either as a permanent or an interim solution, with a view to ultimately achieving certification.

'*Certification*' is the term used to describe the conformity assessment service that is provided by an '*independent third party*' operating as a certification body which should preferably have obtained '*accreditation*' of its competence to do so from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), displaying the UKAS mark of accreditation on its website and documentation, and feature in the UKAS list of accredited conformity assessment bodies.

You have two other forms of conformity assessment activity available for your consideration and choice. You may make a '*self-declaration*' based upon your own or sub-contracted assessment, which is known as '*first-party*' conformity assessment or, if one of your larger customers carries out its own assessment of your conformity to the standard to take you on as a supplier, you can point to this as a '*second-party*' '*acceptance*' based on assessment. Further information can be found in Chapter 3.

What is involved in implementing the standard?

The simple answer is that you need to read and understand the provisions of the standard and check the requirements against what you are already doing, or intend to do if just setting up. If all requirements are met, formal assessment and its successful outcome complete the process. You are then in a position to advertise your successful implementation to the world!

Life is not generally as easy as that however, especially when dealing with something created by a committee, and a committee made up of people from many European countries to boot. Their view of what is required and yours should coincide in many or most ways, but not always. Reading and checking the requirements against what you do is straightforward – understanding what is actually required, what is not required and then what to do about making up the difference is a little more complex. That is where reading this book first will hopefully save you some grief and aggravation if you have no previous experience of implementing standards.

The authors of this book, GeoLang Ltd, are a start-up SME whose main product is the creation of an International Standards Organization (ISO) database that needs to conform to three standards. We are choosing to include two others because we think it is a good idea: BS EN ISO 9001:2000 for our quality management system and BS 8900 to give us confidence that we are operating in a sustainable way. So we are fortunate to already know a thing or two about standards and their implementation!

What are the benefits to be gained by implementing the standard?

There are short- and long-term benefits to be gained.

The short-term benefits are:

- Merely by implementing the standard you will have made a focused examination of what you are currently doing and will have carried out a gap analysis of that against the benchmark set by the standard – this is always refreshing for you and the business. For larger organizations it has a rejuvenating effect on all staff involved and a real sense of a team achievement from the final success.
- Quite apart from the provisions of the standard that have not been addressed before, new ideas for improvement that go beyond the requirements of the standard can often come about as a result of the process and go towards stamping your own individuality on your standardized service.
- By implementing the standard you, your customers and other stakeholders can have confidence that you are meeting service requirements that translation experts across Europe believe to be necessary process ingredients for the provision of a translation service that will be fit for purpose.

The long-term benefits are:

- Once fully implemented, the standard delivers a 'fitness for purpose' platform that will be understood by knowledgeable customers across Europe and from which you can progress to provide your own distinctive service that goes beyond mere 'fitness for purpose'. The financial and personal pain in implementing a process or system of this nature is soon over, and maintaining that

successful position and having the ability to effect demonstrable continual improvement from that platform is eased considerably.

- You can, and should, advertise your success to the world – customers and potential customers – giving confidence in the service you provide, especially where you are dealing at arms length, for example over the internet.
- You can use the requirements of the standard as the basis for all contracted work that falls within the translation services you have defined to be in conformity with the standard.
- Most translators will come across situations where a service is requested by a customer to which the full requirements of the standard are impossible or do not make sense to apply. Either in advertising or for each individual case it is absolutely necessary in most legal systems to make it very clear that the particular service is not in conformity with the standard. However, this does not mean that implementation of the standard is not at all applicable in these situations. If most, but not all, requirements apply it is still possible for you to refer to the standard for most of your contract promises whilst clearly indicating those that do not apply and of course, for that contract, not claiming conformity to the standard.
- As with any standard, if you have implemented its provisions in full this will provide you with what is called the ‘due diligence’ defence in any court action. If liability is strict and no excuse is acceptable, your fine or damages will be reduced, if negligence or recklessness is required for you to be liable, your compliance and your service conformity to a national or international standard is a complete defence.
- The ability to add further standards and other national and international specifications that enhance the business and confidence of others in the business becomes considerably easier once the first has been achieved. Examples include the ISO 9001 quality management systems standard, the ISO 14001 environmental management systems standard, and the new BS 8900 sustainability standard. This last standard is not intended for certification but, by following its recommendations, you gain and can give confidence that you are operating in a sustainable way.
- Finally, by becoming a user of standards as a supplier to your customers, you must not forget that you are also a customer to other suppliers. You will begin to notice their claims of compliance (people and organizations comply) or conformity (things such

as products, processes, or systems conform, including a process based product such as your service). You will know what to look for, and expect, from such claims. It is also very important to bear in mind that in a business-to-business deal, it is reasonable for your supplier to exclude liability for many things but if they have claimed compliance or conformity to a standard, they cannot exempt liability for not delivering in accordance with that standard. We recommend you make maximum use of standards in all your trading operations.

Maximizing benefit from implementing national or international standards

No rocket science is required to gain maximum benefit from the implementation of a national or international standard, only an understanding of your own business, common sense, an understanding of the potential benefits to be attained as outlined above and methodical implementation.

This book presents a common-sense approach to the process of implementing BS EN 15038 on a clause-by-clause basis. It provides a detailed account of the various methods available for giving confidence that the defined services meet all the requirements of the standard, from cheapest to most expensive, their pros and cons, and a very rough profile of what might suit you related to the size and maturity of your translation service business.