

Spanish Translation Translates To Higher Profits

According to TNS Media Intelligence, marketers invested 10.5% more in America's largest minority in 2005 than they did in 2004. In the U.S. market overall, marketers invested a mere 3.4 percent more from 2004 to 2005. Does this mean that this sector has been overworked? Not at all. On the contrary Synovate (a global market intelligence and research company) reported in 2004 that over 43.5 million U.S. Hispanics make up almost 15 percent of the U.S. population - a percentage growing 5 times faster than the general population, which is more than a 70% increase in the last 10 years. By the year 2020, which is only 14 short years away, 1 out of 5 Americans will be of Hispanic origin. This source also tells us that the net natural growth of the Hispanic population (births minus deaths) surpassed immigration as the main source of population growth in 2004. Over 1 million children will be born to Hispanic mothers this year and for the foreseeable future. Have you ever wondered how companies will market to them?

Hispanics are becoming increasingly affluent: 64% percent are now firmly within the nation's middle class and more than half are buying their first homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Hispanics are entering cyberspace at high speed with over 14 million U.S. Hispanics online. Yet the companies successfully targeting Hispanics online in the direct response arena are few and far between.

A marketplace of this size and yet marketers are failing to capitalize. One of the biggest errors is that many are taking a one-size-fits-all approach to the Spanish language. There are many different variations of the Spanish language and you must first consider to whom you are marketing.

Delia Huffman, president and CEO of Bull Market, an Indianapolis consulting firm, said efforts to tap into the Hispanic market shouldn't end with translating marketing materials. "The cultural piece of marketing is always what people miss," she added. "To capture that market, you're not just translating. You need to put some effort into learning the culture."

This is true, but which marketers have the resources to learn so much about another culture that they can learn localized expressions, cultural hot buttons and humor? The answer is almost none. The best partner for marketers are Spanish translation services companies who have human resources from all major Spanish-speaking markets that can act as cultural translators and not just linguistic ones.

Does a Mexican American consumer laugh and cry at the same expressions as does a Cuban American? Are they offended by different language or ideas? Consult a market-specific Spanish translation specialist to make sure. You should be one click away from a sale not one click away from the door.

Marketing to Spanish speakers is not just a front-end project. Fulfillment practices are also an important issue that companies just aren't getting right. Consider this example. Company XYZ has just launched their Spanish-language site complete with a catalogue of their fine widgets, a shopping cart and third party processor to handle all of their transactions. There is even an autoresponder to do all upselling automatically. XYZ tests the backend and it works seamlessly. Then somewhere in their finely-tuned system something goes wrong - a widget breaks and their customer needs to contact them. Having a FAQ page doesn't cut it and their client needs real customer support. Does XYZ have the bilingual staff in place to handle these day-to-day crises? No, they don't. You would be surprised how many companies fail because of this. There are cost-effective, bi- systems out there to respond to bilingual customer service chat, email and telephone issues.

There is no doubt that translation is a cost. Perhaps, however, companies would be better served to think of creating a Spanish-language website, for example, as an investment for the future rather than an expense. For 20-plus years, the Hispanic market has shown growth in both market size and purchasing power. Companies can no longer ignore the cost of not doing business with 44 million Hispanics.

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