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Portugal, Poland, and Plenty of PowerPoint

Posted by [Donald A. DePalma](#) on April 8, 2011 in the following blogs: [Technology](#), [Translation and Localization](#)



Portugal and Poland hosted language industry conferences over the last two weeks. The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) held its third annual conference in Cascais, Portugal last week. This week, XTRF and Lido-Lang organized the second TMS Inspiration Days event in Krakow, Poland. The two conferences demonstrated the broad range of concerns that language service providers and technology developers have – plus the diversity in event size and focus. GALA was attended by over 260 delegates, while TMS Inspiration Days brought in a more intimate crowd largely made up of technology specialists and language service providers from Europe.

The GALA conference kicked off with a keynote by Jochen Hummel, who founded Trados in 1984 and recently became CEO of ESTeam. Hummel spoke as an industry insider who became an outsider (in virtual world development) who then became an insider again. He talked about translation memory (TM) as not only an asset but as “the” asset for companies, countering a belief in some sectors that TM will disappear. He did acknowledge the need for the technology to morph, recognized that sometimes TM and workflows can add unnecessary cost and complexity, and felt that the translators need to evolve as well to work in more AGILE kinds of teams. He argued for a new business model for the industry, but didn’t lay out the specifics – expect to see the details surface at ESTeam.

The second-day keynote was delivered by Common Sense Advisory, with a review and analysis of six years of data from our quarterly business confidence survey of buyers and suppliers of language services and technology. Besides analyzing what the data says about the language market, the presentation also compared the business confidence index with macroeconomic data including real GDP from North America and Europe, employment data, stock market, and world trade statistics. The trend lines for the language sector and the general economy largely followed the same curves, thus demonstrating the interaction of language and the “real world.” For an overview of the most recent survey data, see “[Buyer and Supplier Confidence Draws Closer in Q4](#),” Jan11). Next month we will publish a full report with this data – and additional findings – for our members.

Between and after these plenaries, the many sessions of the conference focused on professional education and development for language service providers and technology developers. Industry standards were on everyone’s mind following the [demise of LISA](#) in February. GALA announced a new initiative to push standards and committed itself to the effort by hiring Arle Lommel, former director of standards at LISA. Elsewhere, sessions on agnostic tool evaluation, selling, mergers and acquisitions, search engine optimization, and post-editing pushed the professional development mantra. The demand side was heard from as well, with presentations from Dell, Google, Hilton, HP, and PayPal.

A “state of the industry” panel brought together representatives from other industry associations (ALC, ATA, FIT, GALA, and tekomp), pro bono organizations (The Rosetta Foundation and Translators without Borders), and the European Union’s Directorate for Translation. This session largely focused on volunteerism and the enormous need for translation around the world.

On the fun side of the ledger, the first GALA Film Fest presented 25 short videos, while Common Sense Advisory turned a talking-heads panel into a tongue-in-cheek Localization Dating Game with three Desirable Buyers who offered choice tidbits about how they deal with suppliers.

This week in Krakow, the TMS Inspiration event kicked off with another keynote from Common Sense Advisory, this time on machine translation (MT) technologies. The presentation discussed the current trends that characterize the state of MT today and will continue to be important as the industry moves forward. The event had many other topics on the agenda that were unrelated to technology, and in spite of the name of the conference, there did not appear to be many presentations that focused specifically on translation management system (TMS) technologies.

However, the room was abuzz after our presentation, mostly with folks who had more questions about machine translation for our team. To address them, we’ve published a [new brief](#) that’s available for free (requires registration). LSPs that attend the presentation we’re delivering today on success factors will also receive a copy.

All in all, the events in Portugal and Poland have helped the industry to regroup, of great importance after the somewhat expected but still marginally disappointing fizzling out of LISA. With the coming of spring to the northern hemisphere, the vernal conference season starts anew, with events organized by multinational associations such as the EUATC in Rome and with the semi-annual Localization World in Barcelona.

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