



10 Years of Translation Excellence

The Alkemist Translation Company is one of the most reliable translation service providers in Europe. It has a wide network of first rate linguists and is committed to a single purpose – translation excellence. With offices in three capitals (Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade), Alkemist is now going through a particularly exciting period in its development – this year marks the tenth anniversary of its establishment and everyone at Alkemist is amazed at how quickly the years flew by. How was the idea of Alkemist created? Has the profession of a translator changed over the years? Will translation tools replace us at some point? These are just some of the topics we discussed with Ms Saša Gorše, Director of the Alkemist Translation Company.

Q *At first glance, considering how much work you do and the number of languages that you cover, Alkemist appears to be a huge international corporation. Can you indicate how many translation jobs you undertake and describe your history?*

A Alkemist was an idea that was for long time in the making: The beginnings of the Alkemist Translation Company stretch back to 2003 when the concept of a reliable translation service provider, that could face various language-related challenges on a daily basis, was put into practice. From the beginning, we have tried to build the relationship with our clients and to perceive them as equal partners in approaching the process of global integration. Very early on in our development we expanded our network to include the territory of the former Yugoslavia where we could offer clients support and facilitate their market entry. Thanks to our responsiveness and social responsibility, Alkemist has grown, over the years, into a major partner to many companies at home and around the globe. We now translate over 70,000 pages per year and have offices in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade.

Q *It is unusual for a translator to be also a businessperson - you obviously have to be just that. How did you initially achieve this and how do you do it now?*

A I've never stopped following my dreams. Of course, I never imagined that I would one day be managing a successful translation company but foreign countries have always had a particular appeal for me in terms of culture and language. I visited other countries during my studies where I gained my first work experience. I find it invaluable that I was able to gain insight into the culture and values of the individual nations that I had the opportunity to get to know better. Italians taught me to be myself, though I had to learn Italian first (laughs). In Sweden, great emphasis is placed on lifelong education, general knowledge and the ethics and culture of business. Working for a Swiss company took my knowledge of organisational structure and work ethics to an entirely different level. My rich experience in the service sector is helping me to raise the level of satisfaction of Alkemist's clients every day. We strive to provide a five-star service that allows our clients to obtain quick and clear information on translations along with maximum flexibility. The trust and satisfaction of a client whom we helped solve the unsolvable is our greatest reward.

Q *Everyone wants to be a translator these days and there are many poor translations; modern technology often gives the (false) impression that the need for translators is decreasing. What do you think is the future of*



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the translation business? Will the number of those who think they can do a translation themselves rise or will the notion be that a quality translation is a reflection of the company prevail?

A Understanding each other is a must for successful communication. We enter into each relationship first and foremost through language which identifies who we are and reflects us personally. In the future, I expect that the need for translation services will increase. There are new markets opening every day, bringing with them new languages, while the world is turning into a sort of a global village where everyone wants to communicate with one another. Online translation tools are a great help in this regard, making communication not only simpler but also faster. However, it needs to be noted that online translation tools fall short when it comes to important communication or more formal situations, they cannot preserve the various semantic features or even grammar rules of a given language. The gist of the problem is in the fact that computers cannot be taught language, and this is a problem that will not be solved in our lifetime. It is necessary to understand that translating is not just about finding the corresponding terms in a different language. It includes discerning the distinct meanings and subtexts of the words and understanding their cultural context. Thus, the only reliable way to handle and contextualise content is and will be to give the text to a person.

Q *Can you provide a general assessment of the translation market? What has changed over the last, say, 10 years? Is it undergoing the same crisis as the economy? How did you adapt?*

A We are noticing a growing trend of various translation service providers who are trying to survive. Unfortunately, the profession of translator is rather underappreciated considering that this is a time of major communication shifts. Prices are becoming the most important deciding factor rather than quality. Native speakers of foreign languages, experience in managing various projects with complex time and technology constraints, tried and tested procedures from order to delivery, technical equipment for simultaneous interpretation and finally something that often gets forgotten, re-

sponsibility for the work; these are the things we offer.

We are a comprehensive provider of translation services and can deliver all types of translations into various languages as well as interpretation services, including the rental of interpretation equipment. Naturally, we do not intend to stop there and have already made plans to expand our offer this year.

Q *Apparently you are the only agency that has the technical equipment for simultaneous interpretation. Why did you decide to make that investment which was undoubtedly not small? Did you identify a market niche?*

A That's right; we offer comprehensive services under one roof. Before we made that investment into interpretation equipment, we often had to reject such projects because the necessary equipment was not available or required creative logistics. With this investment, we took control over the implementation of interpretation and we can now provide a reliable and comprehensive service to the client. At events our technical staff makes sure that our interpreters and equipment blend in perfectly – you don't even know they are there. This is only possible when you have the best equipment and the best people.

Q *What separates you from others; in what ways are you the best choice?*

A Thanks to our project managers and our team of experienced translators and interpreters from around the world, we are able to stand by our clients' side even in unpredictable situations. Our service grew alongside our clients in response to their needs, and now our native speakers of foreign languages make it possible for us to offer all translation services in one place – where you need them.

Q *How did the expansion into Croatia and Serbia come about and what is your position in those markets? What did you offer (and in Slovenia previously) that was not available before your arrival?*

A We expanded in the only appropriate way – professionally and responsibly. As an experienced translation company, we were able to offer superior translation services for new and existing clients from the beginning. Our Zagreb and Belgrade based com-

panies have been operating successfully as independent units within the Alkemist family since 2006 and are the market leaders in translation services in their respective regions. Our goal is clear: to become number one in translation in Europe. The meeting place of everything we have done over these past five years is – and remains – the Alkemist Foundation.

Q *How do you choose who to support under the auspices of the Alkemist Foundation? What major projects have you backed so far?*

A At Alkemist, we believe that we should always give more than we receive. For this reason, we decided to establish a foundation that will not only change the culture of a number of companies but also the face of the global economic order. We began with 5% of our profits. We want to prove that helping people is possible, even with our limited resources and time. The foundation is our way of trying to help people in need and to support exceptional individuals whose life stories move us. Last year, we released the excellent debut album of the Slovenian band, Relight; we helped adoptee Katarina Tomšič publish a memorial book for adopted children called "Naših prvih 1095 korakov" (Our First 1095 Steps); we helped engineer Svat'a Božak who decided to enter the most difficult bike endurance competition there is – RAAM – and who won sixth place after ten days of tireless pedalling. And, most importantly, we became friends with all of them. <<

