

VOTED BEST BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

START YOUR BUSINESS

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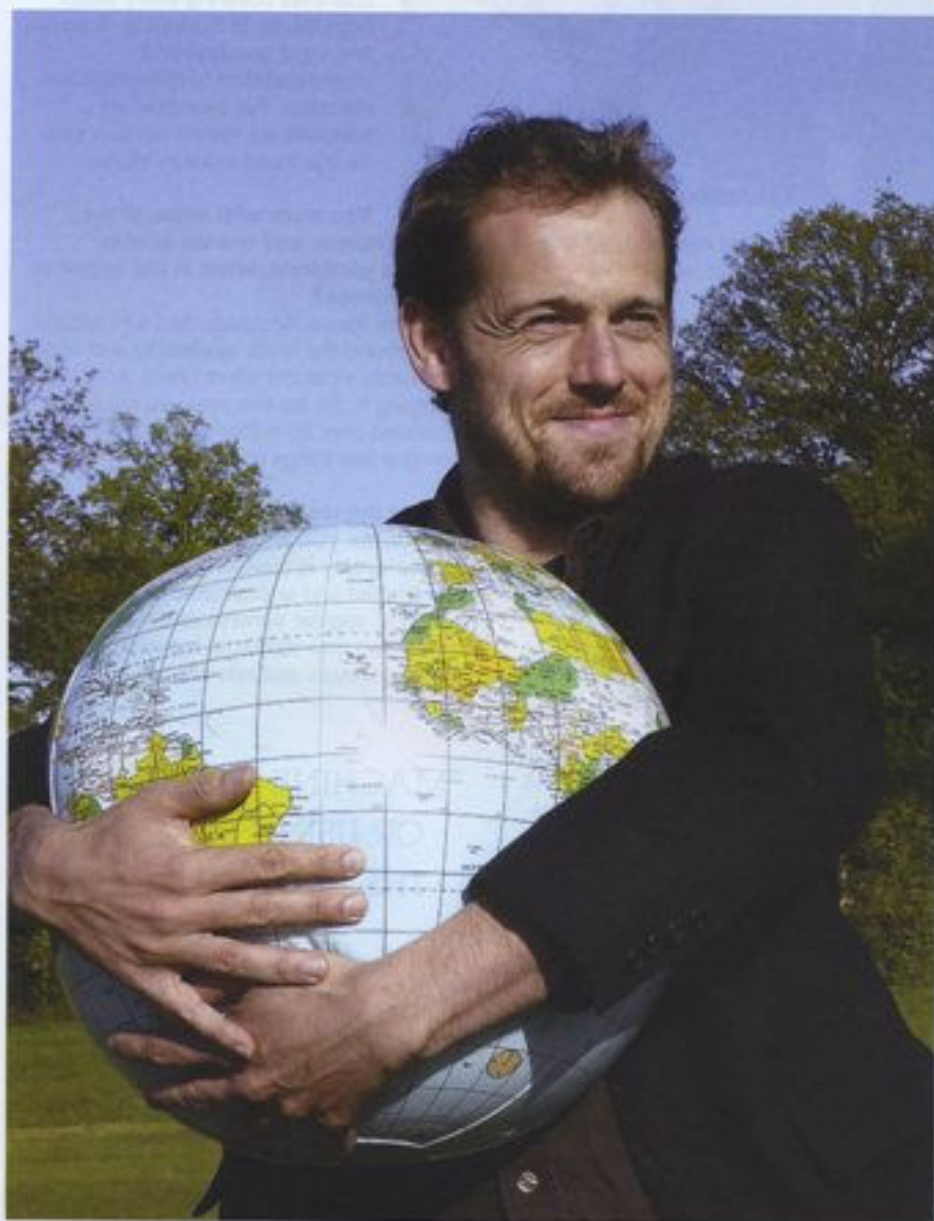
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LINGGO24 TRANSLATING BUSINESS

LINGO24 IS A TRANSLATION AGENCY FOUNDED BY CHRISTIAN ARNO THAT HAS HELPED SMEs DO BUSINESS ABROAD. THE COMPANY REAPS THE REWARDS OF INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION DESPITE THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE WITH A TURNOVER OF £5 MILLION.

What was the inspiration behind Lingo24?

The inspiration was all to do with making beer money when I was a student. I read Modern Languages at Oxford and in my year abroad at a college in Italy, I got together with the other language interns to provide translation services over the internet.

Just a few good clients was enough for me to realise that here was the potential for a serious business so as soon as I graduated I took over a spare room in my parents'

house in Aberdeen and started Lingo24.

How long did it take to launch and when did it go international?

The company was incorporated in September 2001 and the website launched the following spring. In order to provide a genuinely integrated 24-hour service, I spent six months setting up operations, first in New Zealand in 2002, then China.

Until 2005, Lingo24 was a virtual international business, with all home-based employees. That year, we opened our first

'physical' office in Timisoara, Romania with five staff – we now employ over 70 there, with another 20 in our offices in Panama – our hub for the North American market and 20 more in Edinburgh.

How was it marketed and how successful was it?

Lingo24 was one of the first translation companies to market itself exclusively on the internet. With a combination of SEO and paid search, we rose pretty fast in search engine rankings. We're now in a £5 million turnover business and search

marketing is still our primary source of business.

What services do you provide for your customers and how different is Lingo24 from other translation services?

We have a bank of 4,000 professional translators, four distinct service levels and customizable options within each level: First draft translation, Fully Managed translation with editing, Fully managed translation with style, and finally, Transcreation – which is creative copywriting in a foreign language.

Lingo24 is the first company in the UK to use the latest translation memory software which allows many translators and reviewers to work simultaneously on the same file. Our other exclusive technologies enable us to customize services for each particular client.

Being a genuinely 24 hour operation is unique in our industry. The level of our customer service and the speed with which we deliver projects differentiates us from our competitors.

How many translators do you have and do they need other skills apart from speaking the languages?

Over 4,000 translators with hundreds of different language combinations work for us on a freelance basis.

They are all professional and must be fluent in the language they are translating out of, using their mother tongue for the language they are translating into. We are very strict about employing only in-country translators. Because languages are constantly shifting along with the cultural changes in any given country, translators must be living in the country of the target language. All our translators have specialities – like IT, for example – but many of them are qualified in other fields as well, such as law or engineering. Legal documents, court work, manuals etc all require subject-specific proficiency.

How important is language and translation for business and how does Lingo24 help businesses?

Any company that is seeking to export its goods or services – and in an increasingly



globalised economy, that means more and more companies – should realize that translation is vital for their success. Research has shown that consumers are four times more likely to buy from internet sites in their own language.

Machine translation or using someone in the back office who says, "Hang on, I know a bit of Spanish" is not the answer. For potential clients and customers to have any confidence in your company, your foreign language output must be 100% natural. This can only be achieved using native human translation.

Lingo24 has helped hundreds of companies make very significant upturns in their business by, for example, localizing their websites for their target markets. This means not merely translating the website, but often writing the pages from scratch with original material and culture-specific references designed for that particular country.

Lingo24 hasn't been affected by the economic downturn. Why do you think this is?

Lingo24 has grown through the recession. Our turnover has increased by 30% since October 2008.

There are two main reasons for this: first, many UK SMEs are having to look for new markets abroad and need translation services, particularly for their websites. Second, we ourselves decided to target specific countries by localizing our own websites. Consequently sales in Germany grew by 300% and in Scandinavia by 500%.

We invested heavily in sales and marketing and we're now reaping the rewards of that.

If a business is in search of help from a company such as Lingo24, what is the process like in terms of joining and providing them with the service they want?

Every Lingo24 client is assigned both an account manager who helps clarify their precise needs and a project manager who

ensures the project is delivered on time, on budget and to the requisite standards.

Describe your client spread.

We have clients in over 60 countries covering every sector from media to marketing, financial and legal, medical and pharmaceutical, engineering and electrical. For example, we translate six million words a year for the travel industry alone.

You work with some of the biggest names and brands across different platforms. What is the secret to your success?

Customer focus. Accuracy, fast turn-around times, round-the clock availability and finding out exactly what the client needs and supplying it. So far this year, we have translated over 25 million words: we must be getting a few things right!

What is the feedback like from clients and businesses you work with?

Service quality is measured through analysis of prompted and unprompted requests for feedback, regular surveys on client satisfaction and statistical research on returning clients and referrals.

"MACHINE TRANSLATION OR USING SOMEONE IN THE BACK OFFICE WHO SAYS, 'HANG ON, I KNOW A BIT OF SPANISH' IS NOT THE ANSWER."

The Customer Service Charter, service quality measurement, regular client need and satisfaction surveys, comparison with competitors underpin our development. Research shows Lingo24 has a clear lead over competitors, satisfaction is very high and negative reports are very rare. Analysis for the last year shows 88% of our business is from returning clients.

What are the future plans for Lingo24?

Our focus now is on customized solutions that help us manage the translation process more effectively. We want to build the top international sales academy in Europe in Timisoara. Generally, we want to raise standards in the translation industry, promote internationalism and help UK businesses export more.

