

AGENCY INSIGHTS Quarterly Report



Navigating international markets: balancing human judgement and AI in cross-cultural strategy.

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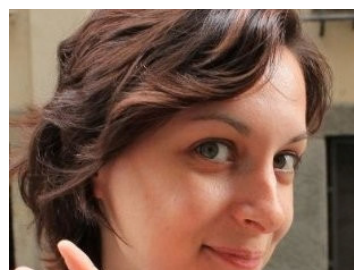
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FOUR CONVERSATIONS. ONE CHANGING INDUSTRY

Over the past quarter, Agency Insights has spoken with agency professionals working across branding, marketing, translation and localisation. Across very different markets and roles, one theme kept emerging: AI is changing how agencies work -but it is also changing what clients will expect from them. The opportunity isn't simply to work faster. It is to understand where technology can take over production, and where human judgement, cultural understanding and trust become more valuable.

Key points

01 “THE BRAND MUST WORK FOR HUMANS -AND MACHINES” André Konrad · SUAN Branding - Switzerland

As AI increasingly becomes part of how people discover and interact with brands, agencies need to think beyond traditional brand guidelines. Brand identity needs to be clear enough to be understood by emerging AI systems without losing the creative thinking and strategic intent behind it.

The challenge: making brand DNA accessible to machines while keeping it meaningful to people.

02 “BEYOND LOCALISATION: MAKE THE IDEA TRAVEL” Magali Bramon · The Transcreation Lab -Ibiza

International communication cannot always be solved by translating words. For campaigns to work across cultures, the underlying idea, emotion and intent need to survive the journey into another market. That means understanding the audience, the culture and the purpose behind the communication -and adapting accordingly.

The shift: from translating content to making creative ideas work locally.

03 “TRUST BECOMES MORE VALUABLE AS TECHNOLOGY SCALES” Paula Hilligoss · Comunica -Denmark

Technology is making many agency processes faster and more scalable. But as more work becomes automated and remote, trust and human relationships become increasingly important. Clients still need people they can rely on to understand their business, make good decisions and take responsibility for the outcome.

The human advantage: judgement, relationships and accountability.

04 “THE AGENCY ROLE IS CHANGING” Chiara Bizzotto & Alice Vigo · Technolab Communication -Italy

Clients' expectations are changing as technology develops. Agencies are increasingly expected to provide more than production. They need to understand changing markets, new technologies and the wider challenges their clients face. For language and

localisation professionals, this creates an opportunity to move further upstream - becoming strategic partners rather than simply suppliers.

The opportunity: greater value through expertise, consultation and problem-solving.

WHAT THE MARKET IS TELLING US

LANGUAGE STILL MATTERS

- 40% of consumers said they would not buy from websites in other languages.
- 76% of consumers prefer product information in their own language.
- 75% of consumers are more likely to buy again when customer care is available in their language.

Source: CSA Research

AI IS CHANGING THE LANGUAGE INDUSTRY

- 71% of business leaders say AI transformation of translation and localisation workflows is a priority for 2026.
- 68% still rely on manual or traditional translation processes.
- 66% of language companies are increasing their sales efforts.
- 55% are of such companies increasing automation.

Source: DeepL - Language AI 2026 & European Language Industry Survey 2026

THE BIGGER PICTURE

DON'T COMPETE WITH AI ON WORDS.
COMPETE ON WHAT YOU DO WITH THEM.

AI is changing the economics of translation, content production and localisation. For agencies, the opportunity is not to compete with machines on speed or volume. It is to become better at the decisions that determine whether international communication actually works.

The organisations that adapt fastest can use AI to increase capacity while strengthening the human expertise around **quality, context, creativity and client confidence**.

01 - JUDGEMENT

MAKE BETTER DECISIONS, FASTER.

DEFINE WHERE AI ADDS VALUE

Decide which content can be produced or processed with AI, which requires expert review and which deserves a fully human approach. Treat the decision itself as part of your service.

TURN QUALITY INTO A PROCESS

Build clear internal standards for terminology, tone, brand voice and review. The goal isn't simply to find mistakes after production - it's to create a repeatable way of producing better work.

02 - CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

MAKE INTERNATIONAL CONTENT FEEL LOCAL.

BUILD LOCAL KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRIEF

Before adapting a campaign, identify what the target audience expects, responds to and may interpret differently. Give cultural context the same importance as language.

ADAPT THE EXPERIENCE, NOT JUST THE TEXT

Look beyond words. Consider imagery, tone, terminology, search behaviour, calls to action and the overall customer experience. A successful international brand should feel consistent without feeling foreign.

03 - CREATIVE ADAPTATION

PROTECT THE IDEA. ADAPT THE EXECUTION.

IDENTIFY WHAT MUST STAY THE SAME

Separate the core proposition, personality and creative idea from the specific words used to express them. This gives local teams room to adapt without losing the brand.

BRING LOCAL EXPERTISE IN EARLIER

Don't wait until the final copy is ready for translation. Give people with genuine knowledge of the target market an opportunity to influence the creative before it is locked.

04 - TRUST

MAKE HUMAN EXPERTISE VISIBLE.

SHOW CLIENTS WHAT EXPERT REVIEW ACTUALLY DOES

Don't simply tell clients that content has been "human checked". Explain what your experts are evaluating - context, tone, cultural fit, brand consistency, terminology and potential ambiguity.

MOVE CLOSER TO THE CLIENT'S DECISION-MAKING

The greatest opportunity is to become involved before the translation request arrives. Help clients decide how a message should work in another market, not simply how it should be translated.

THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY

MOVE UP THE VALUE CHAIN

AI is making multilingual content faster and more scalable. The opportunity for agencies is to move beyond producing words and focus on the **strategy, cultural insight, creativity and judgement** that make international content work.

Turn localisation into a strategic service.

Help clients plan how their brand, messaging and customer experience should adapt to new markets -not just translate the finished content.

Build AI + human workflows.

Use AI where it creates efficiency, while defining where expert review, cultural adaptation and creative input are essential.

Measure the impact.

Move the conversation from words and deliverables towards outcomes: stronger international campaigns, better customer experiences and measurable market performance.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR AGENCY

01 What could we offer that a client could not achieve simply by putting their content into an AI translation tool?

02 Are we involved early enough in international campaigns to influence the strategy -or do we only see the content once the creative is finalised?

03 If a client wanted to enter three new markets tomorrow, could we advise them on how to approach those markets -or would we simply wait for the translation brief?

THE BOTTOM LINE

The question isn't whether AI will change your service.

It's whether you will use that change to make your service more valuable.