

Howdy Partnertrans

Can you imagine having to play a game in a language you don't understand? Thanks to localisation specialists such as Partnertrans, millions around the world don't have to...

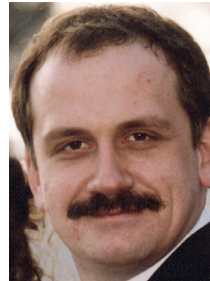
For Markus Ludolf (*right*), CEO of Partnertrans, quality is paramount. "You wouldn't expect the gourmet chef of your favourite restaurant to use canned goods either, right?" he asks rhetorically, after likening lesser localisation companies to fast food merchants. "I strongly believe that by providing games with good localisation, you can enhance the experience for players outside of the US and UK – or Japan for that matter – to the level where they enjoy the game in exactly the same way as their counterparts in the countries where the game originated."

A poor localisation, Ludolf argues, has a significant and irreversible detrimental effect on the game's atmosphere: "With that in mind, you can see why good localisation makes both sides win, and as such is a worthy investment. The developer has a game that is more attractive outside of the native territories, and the gamers get more value for their money."

Partnertrans opened its doors in 1998, in Germany, driven by Ludolf's love of gaming. The company established a UK office 18 months ago, and has since been busy cementing its position within the localisation market by offering tailor-made solutions to a steadily growing number of major industry players – everything from translation, voice production, project management, quality assurance, proof reading and editing, to in-game text implementation and creative services for print materials and websites.

"The ultimate goal is to create the feeling for our clients that we are an extension of their internal departments, without having the administrative overhead involved of running

those services in-house," Ludolf says. "We see ourselves as partners of our clients, and we constantly try to create a service level where localisation is a (mostly late) stage of development, handled with the same understanding of the title as any internal team would have."



WORD UP

Ensuring as painless as possible a process for what is often considered by developers to be a necessary evil is, argues Ludolf, just one of his company's strengths.

"We respond quickly to clients' needs, and can be on call with small queries, quick changes or advice," Ludolf says. "We pride ourselves on our tightly selected team of localisation experts who are dedicated to the art of

localisation – we always make sure that their specialist area is matched to specific titles that benefit from their knowledge."

But according to Ludolf, not all companies in this field follow such an approach. "While there are some good games localisation teams out there, there are also some generic translation service providers emerging in the market that think games are no different from your average OS manual," he warns.

"In the long run I sincerely hope that more developers and publishers understand good localisation is a way to increase the potential of their work in the global market and as such look towards the quality providers."

If recent signings with Sega, Codemasters and Ubisoft are any indication (as well as an expansion into the mobile market, which the Partnertrans CEO regards as a massive area of growth for his company), Partnertrans needn't be too worried.

■ www.partnertrans.com

As we go to press, Partnertrans is relocating to new offices in the market town of St Neots in Cambridgeshire. The aim is to move closer to the technology community in Cambridge, as well as to benefit from larger offices.



| | |
|---|---|
| PARTNERTRANS | Address S7 Moulton Business Park Redhouse Road Northampton NN3 6AQ |
|  partnertrans. <small>localisation solutions for the entertainment industry</small> | Telephone 01604 497515 Fax 01604 497501 |

A TYPICAL DAY AT PARTNERTRANS

With **Elena Martos de las Heras**, localisation project manager...



"I deal with three main groups – clients, internal teams and freelancers – who by default each bring their own eccentricities

into the mix. That's what this job is all about, skillful communication and coordination.

Oh, did I forget to mention the in-depth knowledge that goes with it, too? You need to understand how games are made, how studios' development strategies can be so diverse and, of course, it's imperative to understand how the hardware manufacturers want games to be made (I dream of TRCs most nights). Combine that with a past and present assessment of each territory's gaming history, and we're getting close to an average day.

Clients will be in daily contact with me, submitting new projects for appraisal and pricing, answering queries on current live projects, checking delivery schedules and supplying us with new files. I'll be responding with completed milestone deliverables, checking timeframes and co-ordinating the overall satisfaction of our clients.

Internal teams need their daily priorities, too: these take various forms. The internal languages teams will be in a constant daily email ping pong – chasing answers from the clients for particular questions, forwarding me deliverables and chasing scheduling. I'll feed back clients' requests, changes in the project and monitoring scheduling.

Our dedicated freelancers are the other group to receive my attention each day; we operate a matrix system that enables me to match the skills and expertise of each particular freelancer with any incoming project.

You can see communication is the central axis of my role – as well as managing budgets, resources and dealing with 300 emails a day, of course.

It's a breeze!"