



Recommended skills for terminology professionals

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About

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Version: September 2016

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Introduction

A terminology professional in a large organization can have various roles such as terminology project manager, terminologist, computational linguist, translator or localization expert.

The purpose of this document is to outline the qualifications and duties that are typically required of terminology professionals in large organizations. The audience includes people who are currently working in terminology management, those who aspire to a terminology career, and corporate managers who are considering hiring a terminologist.

These individual attributes may be combined into job descriptions, or added to existing job descriptions for terminology project managers, terminologists, computational linguists, technical writers, or localization experts who do terminology work.

Primary skills for terminology professionals

- In-depth understanding of terminology management theory, principles, and methods
- Knowledge of linguistic principles
- Proficiency in at least one language in addition to your native language
- Ability to plan and manage processes and projects
- Affinity for process work, change management, and for managing terminology in agile environments
- Capacity to make and implement strategic decisions in coordination with other units within the organization
- Tools expertise, including the ability to evaluate relevant software, such as:
 - terminology management systems (TMS)
 - computer assisted translation (CAT)
 - TMS interfaces to other applications
 - Term extraction tools, and related tools such as concordancing software
- Knowledge-transfer and teaching skills
- Knowledge of special subject fields for terminology work
- Ability to detect and resolve terms and usage that are culture-bound or culturally biased
- Ability to perform information research and identify essential information

Common tasks for terminology professionals

The duties for terminology professionals can vary greatly depending on the needs of the organization. For example, terminology work can fall within the roles of computer linguists, writers, editors, and even product developers, as well as those holding titles such as Terminologist and Terminology Manager.

Following are some of the common tasks that terminology professionals do. Checkmarks indicate the primary skill areas required for each task:

Task description	Linguistics and foreign language skills	Communication skills (spoken and written)	IT knowledge	Project management skills
Be a champion for terminology management in the company	✓	✓		✓
Create a corporate terminology assessment and strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organize and lead a corporate terminology team	✓			✓
Devise and/or participate in terminology compliance initiatives	✓			✓
Set up a termbase and data structure that is compliant with industry standards	✓		✓	
Administer and maintain the termbase	✓		✓	✓
Develop a process for harvesting and documenting source and target terminology	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create terminology training materials	✓	✓		
Lead terminology projects, large and small	✓	✓		✓
Manage terminology management costs				✓
Determine and document the criteria for termbase "terms"	✓	✓		

Task description	Linguistics and foreign language skills	Communication skills (spoken and written)	IT knowledge	Project management skills
Coordinate term translation in various contexts	✓			✓
Manage translation vendor contacts	✓	✓		✓
Add, edit and maintain entries in the termbase	✓	✓	✓	
Write clear, concise definitions for terms	✓	✓		
Perform quality control reviews of terminology and usage in texts	✓	✓		
Coordinate and research trademark and copyright information for terminology		✓		✓
Participate in product and feature naming processes	✓	✓		✓
Extract term candidates from texts	✓		✓	✓
Investigate term usage in the source language and in target languages	✓			
Analyze suggested terms from other termbase users	✓	✓		
Perform termbase imports and exports			✓	
Coordinate target terminology queries	✓	✓		✓
Devise end-user terminology feedback projects	✓	✓		

Summary

Because terminology work requires skills and daily tasks in the four broad competency areas (linguistics, IT, communication, management) the person chosen to be a terminology professional would ideally have strengths and skills in as many of these areas as possible. Perhaps the one attribute that is indispensable for a terminologist is a solid understanding of the vocabulary, grammar and structure of at least one other language besides ones' native language. Aside from that, you might select a translation graduate with a penchant for programming, a project manager with localization experience, a bilingual technical writer with a background in education, or a subject matter expert with a love of language and a passion for standards.

If the necessary skill set for your needs cannot be found in one person, then consider building a team of people who possess all the skills between them.

Resources

See the [TerminOrgs Terminology Starter Guide](#) for an introduction to terminology management as a profession.

See the [Degrees, courses, and certifications for terminology professionals](#) document for a list of educational resources.