



## GeekSpeak

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### Using the Crowd

**Here is a little story** that encouraged me last week. It is no secret that I write a technical newsletter for translation professionals. Aside from describing ways to make computing for translators a little easier, I regularly write reviews on translation-related products and their specific features.

In my last newsletter, I wrote about the offline capabilities of a translation environment tool called XTM Cloud. As you can guess from its name, XTM Cloud is a cloud-based tool. This means that translation memories, termbases, and the actual translation projects are all hosted on remote servers rather than on users' computers, and the actual translation and project management all takes place in a web browser. Like any of its direct competitors, XTM Cloud developers also had to consider the possibility that at some point their translators might not have Internet access. So they developed an Excel-based process that delivers the translation project with all of the necessary resources to any translator forced to work offline. So far, so good.

I looked at that offline feature and really liked it, but I did mention three features in my review that I did not like as I performed my tests. Following the review's publication, the first of those less than satisfactory features was changed overnight. The other two, which required some more complex programming, were transformed within three days.

This is the power of constructive criticism, and I think it is something that we do not use nearly enough. You see, comparatively speaking, the world of translation is small. And the companies that supply the technology we use are not very large either. Even the biggest ones are infinitesimally small in comparison to truly large corporations. The benefit for us—the users of their products—is that they are typically very approachable and can act with great agility.

It is true that companies like SDL, Kilgray, Wordfast, and Atril have their own priorities that sometimes prevent them from responding immediately to every request, but I do think—in fact, I *know*—that reasonably argued and implementable requests about the design of their

tools have a very high likelihood of being introduced.

I mentioned this story on my Twitter feed, and someone responded that the quick fix turnaround must have been due to the influence of my large number of newsletter subscribers. Maybe, but you have an even more powerful force behind you. Ten thousand subscribers might sound like a lot, but there are far more translators engaged in social networks. That is your crowd of influential backers. Use them wisely to make your case for why you want certain changes and improvements, and our tools will be the better for it.

*ata*

Jost is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how translation affects every aspect of your life.

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