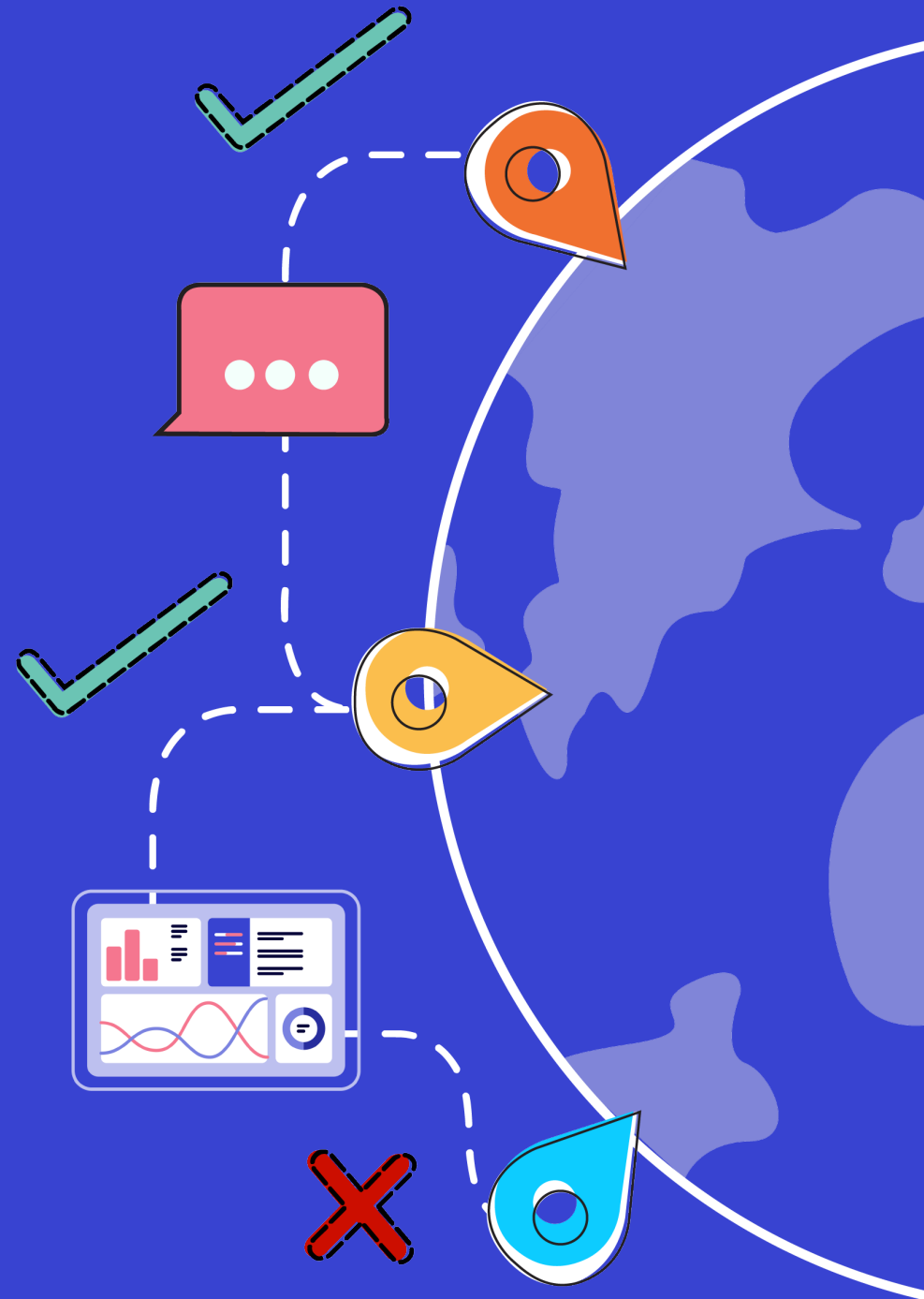




# AI + Globalization: The State of Translations in Business

How AI can bring a scalable,  
structured approach to translations



# Introduction: AI Translation to Drive Globalization

ChatGPT brought the power of AI to the forefront of consumers' minds, and its quick rise in popularity often led to professionals using the tool to draft copy, translate content and automate everyday tasks before businesses could catch up and create standardized processes for its use.

At the same time, AI further impacted the way businesses tackle globalization through the expansion of digital platforms and accelerated access to translation technology. Now [42% of multinational companies consider their best growth opportunities to be outside of their domestic market.](#)

To better understand these challenges, [Unbabel surveyed](#) 1,230 professionals across five countries to get a full perspective on the state of AI in business and its expanding use cases for translations. The results revealed:

- 30% of respondents who use AI reported a faster work speed, and 20% reported a lighter workload.
- Translation processes across departments often overlap, leading to organizational inefficiencies.
- 25% of all respondents who reported being very confident in their translations don't have a system in place to assess quality.

The use of AI in business has definitively moved beyond the hype to providing tangible, daily benefits, **as nearly half of respondents use AI for translation.** However, organizations lack a reliable, scalable way to ensure the success of AI for translations and a standardized way to quality-check translated content. Compounding this are businesses' complex organizational structures and the belief that generative AI threatens to increase the volume of content created, leaving little time for teams to plan ahead for proper translation.

Read on to discover how professionals from different teams use AI today to meet immediate objectives and learn about organizational challenges businesses should avoid.



# Key Findings

## FINDING 1

### **AI adoption is widespread and accelerating.**

Over the past 18 months or longer, 76.3% of respondents adopted AI tools or software, with top use cases including research (17%), data input (21%), and translation (18%).

## FINDING 2

### **Workers have confidence in AI translation tools.**

57% of respondents who use AI for translation needs reported feeling somewhat to very confident in the tools. In contrast, only 18% of respondents with in-house translation teams share this level of confidence.

## FINDING 3

### **Translation is key for domestic and global expansion.**

80% of respondents confirmed their organizations engage in translating some volume of content while only 59% reported their organization has locations in more than one country. This indicates there are translation needs within organizations even before they expand into new countries.

## FINDING 4

### **AI has boosted productivity significantly.**

Respondents actively endorse AI's benefits on their speed of work (30%), workload (20%), and overall job ease (19%). They also agree that incorporating AI within legal documentation, market expansion, localization efforts and HR processes will lead to organizational improvements.

## FINDING 5

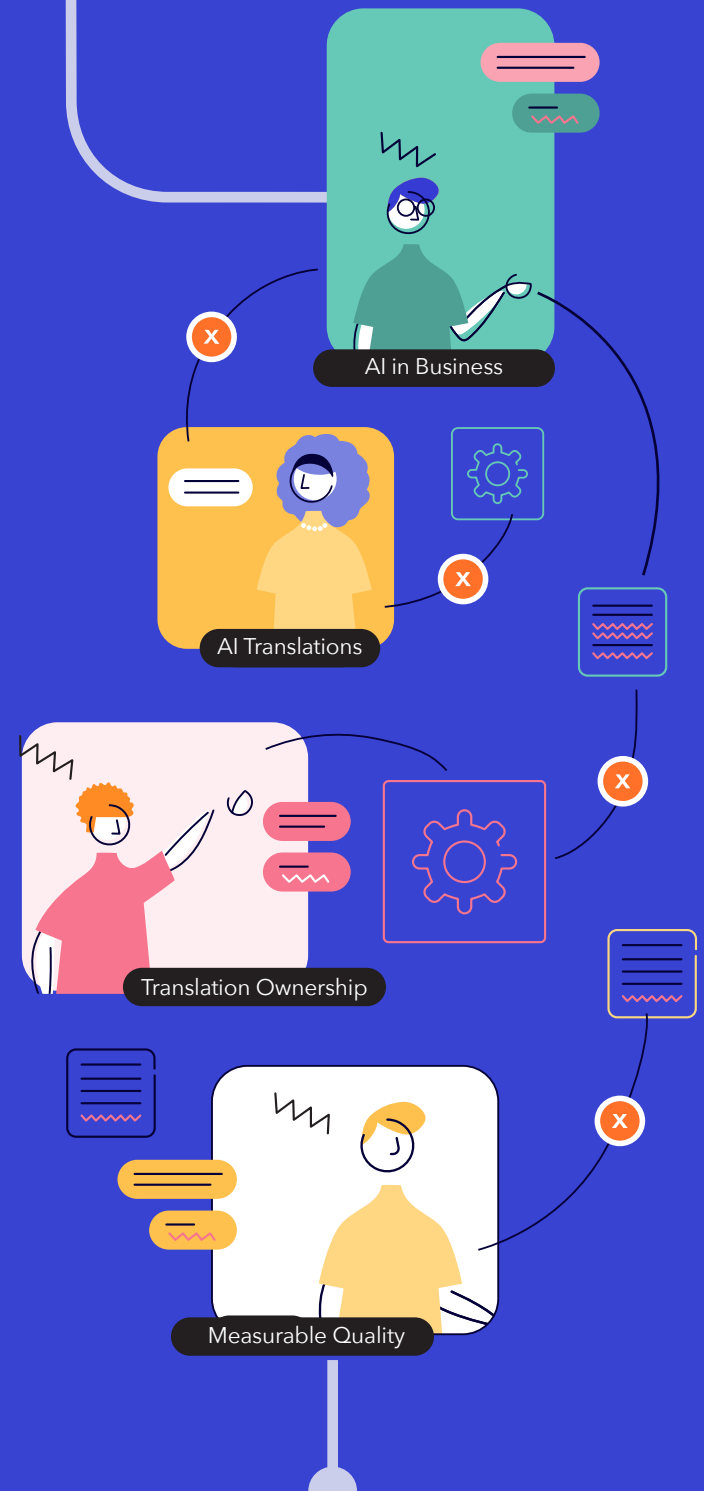
### **Translation needs are both internal & customer-facing.**

Content such as product descriptions (45%) and marketing materials (43%) are most likely to require translations, followed by internal content such as communications (33%), legal and finance documents (26%), and HR materials (20%).



# Table of Contents

Current Use Cases of AI in Business	5
Translation Ownership is Splintered Across the Enterprise	9
Unwarranted Trust Without Measurable Quality	13
Conclusion	18
About Unbabel	20



A decorative white line with circular dots at the corners and midpoints, forming a large 'U' shape that frames the chapter title.

## CHAPTER ONE

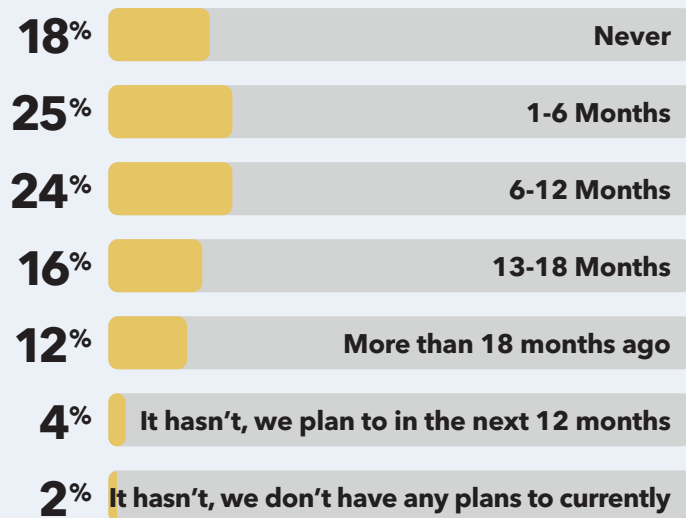
# Current Use Cases of AI in Business

# Current Use Cases of AI in Business

Unbabel survey data reveals that the adoption of AI is widespread across countries, industries, and departments and it's being embraced for a diverse range of applications.

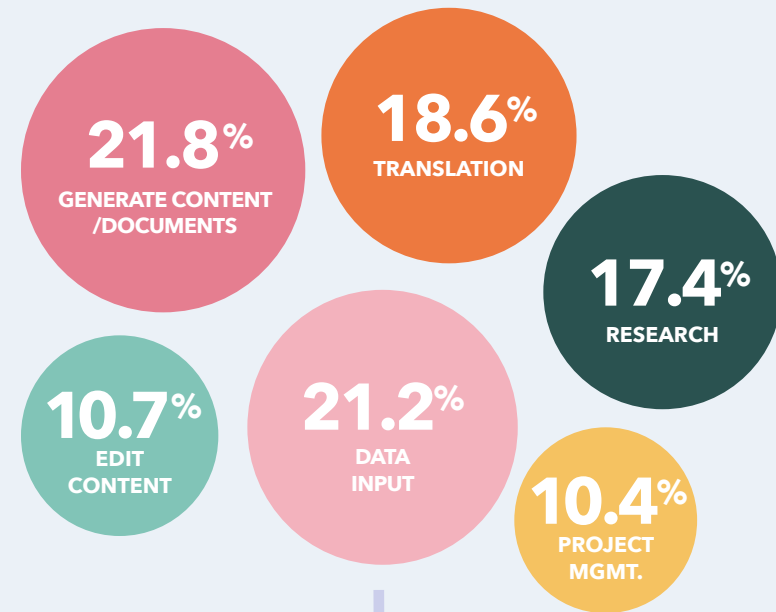
When asked about the recent adoption of AI solutions and software, **76.3% of respondents revealed that their department has integrated AI within the past 18 months or longer.**

How recently has your department adopted AI solutions/software (not limited to translation use cases)?



A more comprehensive analysis of this adoption revealed that of the **830 respondents who reported using AI, the use cases were evenly split among translation, research, data input, and generating content.**

If your company has adopted AI, what is your main use case within your department?

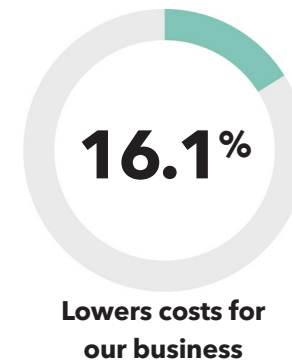
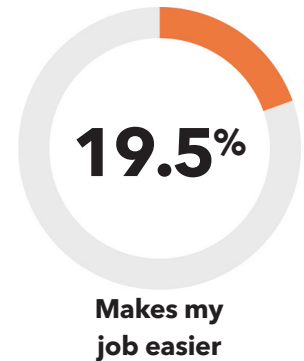
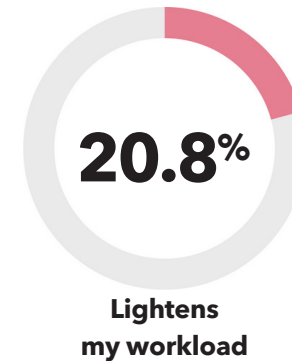
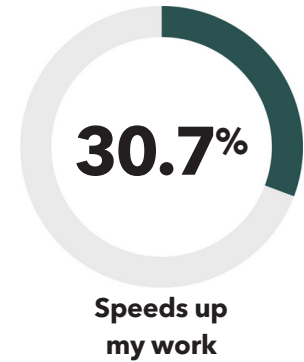
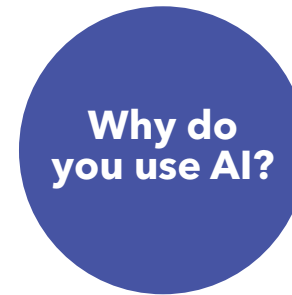


# Efficiency Favors The Bold: Those Who Use AI Reap The Benefits

Survey results indicate businesses are seeing a positive impact by leveraging AI, specifically improvements in efficiency and productivity. Among the 830 respondents who use AI, 30% reported being able to speed up their work and 20% experienced a reduction in workload.

These benefits show that not only does AI help automate the tedious parts of their workload, but it also then allows them to complete the rest of their work more efficiently.

As organizations globalize, professionals often experience diversified workloads which may include the translation of content for new target global audiences. This is where the benefits of AI can help professionals streamline the translation process.



# Generative AI Remains an Opportunity for Many

Despite its hype throughout 2023, our survey revealed that a significant (40%) portion of respondents have not yet embraced generative AI for content creation.

Are you creating content with generative AI?



**59.6%**  
YES



**40.4%**  
NO

Compared to the 76.3% of respondents who have adopted AI, generative AI is seeing a slower adoption rate. This is a golden opportunity for localization teams to formalize translation processes and ownership, and to set expectations to make sure that every department

understands the technology and its role in the process. Businesses should act before generative AI adoption is in full swing and the amount of content for translation becomes unmanageable, causing teams to take short cuts which lead to translation inconsistencies and mixed quality.



**"Companies are investing time and money into developing their own approach and tools for translations. Right now, many people are still in the discovery phase of AI and particularly generative AI."**

**- João Graca, CTO at Unbabel**



A decorative white line starts at the top left, goes down, then right, then down again, with three circular dots at the corners and one on the horizontal segment.

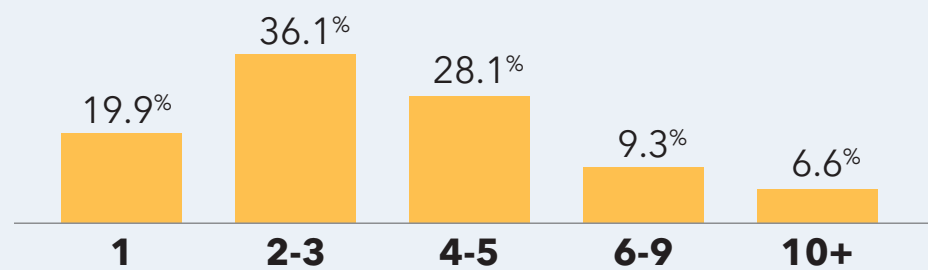
## CHAPTER TWO

# **Translation Ownership is Splintered Across the Enterprise**

# Translation Ownership is Splintered Across the Enterprise

Translating content has become increasingly prevalent, even for organizations that have not yet expanded globally. Data shows that 80% of respondents are already delivering content in two or more languages, but only 59% work for organizations with a presence in more than one country.

On average, how many languages does your content get delivered in? (external/customer facing content)



The survey found that, on average, companies translate into **two to three** languages, suggesting that most companies focus their content in a few critical markets. Managing and maintaining content in multiple languages is a complex process. It can be costly to hire translators for specific markets and time-consuming for businesses to quality-check a high volume of translations - all of which can hold organizations back from translating into more languages even if it would positively impact the business.

## A Closer Look at Translation Patterns Across Markets

- In Brazil, 65% of translations focus on one to three languages, reflecting a regional emphasis, likely Spanish, English, and a third language.
- German and French companies predominantly translate content for one to three languages, constituting 60% and 70% of their translations, respectively.
- 61% of respondents from Japan deliver content in only one language, indicating a focus on a single critical market for most businesses.



# A Closer Look at Translation Across Departments

Within organizations, respondents reported the need for translation across departments that both produce internal and customer-facing content. But not all departments translate content to the same extent:

- Marketing teams show the most diversity in content, with **60% translating between one and three languages and 34% translating between four and nine languages.**
- Customer Service displays a top-heavy distribution, with **43% of teams translating to just one language and 30% translating between two and three languages,** indicating a concentration on key customer segments.
- HR translates **65% of its content between one and three languages.**
- Finance, Legal, and Product teams exhibit similar distributions, with **20-30% of content translated between one and five languages.**



Over 50% of respondents have offices in more than one country and with content being translated across multiple departments, these organizations have a greater need to scale their translation process.

# Translation is in High Demand but Lacks Clear Ownership

Despite the high demand, Unbabel's survey revealed that translation processes across departments often overlap.

According to the survey, marketing departments have a significant volume of content translation needs, but only about half of the marketers (49%) noted they translate marketing materials; 40% of marketers report that they also translate product information and 30% translate internal communications.

At the same time, nearly half of finance professionals reported translating content that is marketing in nature, including emails, brochures, social media and more. And most (86%) of respondents who work primarily in legal departments report the majority of what they translate relates to marketing, product descriptions, and internal communications.

The mixed results indicate a clear lack of cross-department translation processes that can lead to inconsistencies in translated content that is both time-consuming to fix and can lower confidence in translation quality.





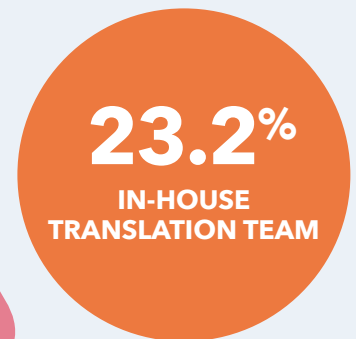
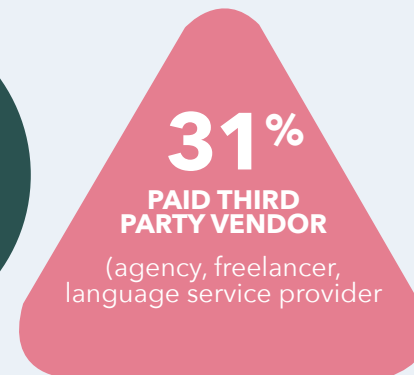
**CHAPTER THREE**

# **Unwarranted Trust Without Measurable Quality**

## Unwarranted Trust Without Measurable Quality

Unbabel's research reveals that despite the growth in AI use, traditional approaches persist. When those who translate content were asked which solutions they use, AI (including free online tools) was the overwhelming winner at 46% of respondents.

If you are translating content, what kind of translation solutions, if any, does your company use?



Are Businesses Confident In AI Translations?

### The Answers Are Split

Respondents who use AI for translation report the highest confidence in their translation quality, with **57% expressing feeling somewhat or very confident**. In contrast, only 18% of respondents relying on an in-house translation team share this same level of confidence. Interestingly, there is a much higher confidence in machines than in humans.

# Using Quality Checks Increases Confidence

Regardless of the solution implemented, it is crucial for teams to implement quality checks to maintain accurate and quality translations. Over 40% of survey respondents reported that they rely on a bilingual team member or colleague to quality check their translations. This process takes additional time and not all organizations have the resources needed to dedicate to the process. This is where AI can provide benefits.

If you use AI to translate content, how do you judge the quality of your translations?

**18.3%** We currently don't have a system in place to assess the quality of our translations

**41.3%** We share with a bilingual team member or colleague

**19.1%** We work with an external agency or service provider

**9.1%** We use other metrics and infer quality

**11.6%** We use AI to estimate the quality



The data also underscores the subjective nature of ranking confidence in translations, showcasing what many translation processes are missing: objective quality checks.

Of respondents who use AI to translate content, 32% who work with a bilingual colleague, 28% who utilize AI, and 23% who work with a translation agency or provider to check the quality of their translations reported feeling very confident.

But remarkably, **25% of all respondents who don't have a system in place to assess translation quality also reported feeling very confident in their translations.**



**“Quality in our industry is something that’s very painful and can be subjective. Traditionally you ask humans to judge quality, but that is a time consuming process which can be a hindrance to companies who need to get accurate translations quickly.”**

**- Vasco Pedro, CEO at Unbabel**

With similar levels of confidence in processes that use human input and don't, it is clear that quality measurement needs to be a standard part of the translation process in order for businesses to benefit from AI translation while avoiding potential downstream problems.

### **Providing Automatic Quality Prediction, At Scale**

To provide actionable translation quality data, Unbabel developed its own, award-winning AI Quality Estimation model that predicts the MQM score (a leading translation quality metric) of a translation. In parallel, Unbabel reports on the score of every translation that goes through its platform, giving businesses a view of performance at the individual level. To allow free access for businesses, Unbabel created a visual interface to measure translation quality, called Quality Intelligence.

**Test Unbabel's Quality Intelligence**



# Your checklist for holistic, Enterprise-level AI translation

Global enterprises have long grappled with how to scale their market presence and make translation a simple workflow within an expansion process. However, this survey demonstrates that organization-wide, cross-departmental translation processes continue to lack process and suffer from an absence of ownership.

Given the depth of the challenge and that the use of AI translation will only grow, multiplying the amount of content as well as the opportunities for translations to “go wrong”, organizations need to find a way to build a solid process foundation, centralize the function, make it easy to use, and put technology at the core.



## What organizations need to look for in translation solutions:

- ☐ **Full-Stack Translations:** providers should offer more than standalone machine translation. The solution must include other AI technology to solve problems across the workflow such as recognizing terms, automating localization steps or flagging quality issues. A strong provider will have a menu of pre-built workflows to enhance MT and match use cases against speed, quality and cost requirements.
- ☐ **Adaptive Machine Translation:** in most cases, technology and data are available that can produce MT engines that solve challenges for specific verticals or areas, or business-specific challenges around tone, language and use case. This helps save precious time downstream and drives accuracy and consistency when most needed.
- ☐ **AI Quality Evaluation:** the ability to measure the quality of translations, as well as the underlying MT models, helps to flag problematic translations, communicate effectively to customers, and give professionals the confidence that translations meet their goals. This comes as a direct relief to the survey data which shows a lack of process, inference on tangential metrics or a dependency on human review.
- ☐ **Workflow Configurability:** translation providers need to offer a level of configurability to allow departments or individual users to adapt their workflows, especially as AI gets better and the opportunity for greater automation increases.
- ☐ **Domain Expertise:** there's no reason for all professionals to be experts in linguistics, machine translation or to possess technical localization skills. Translation solutions should staff domain experts to clients who can provide machine translation knowledge, linguistic expertise, and localization abilities to launch, drive and iterate a cross-functional, sophisticated translation program.

# Conclusion

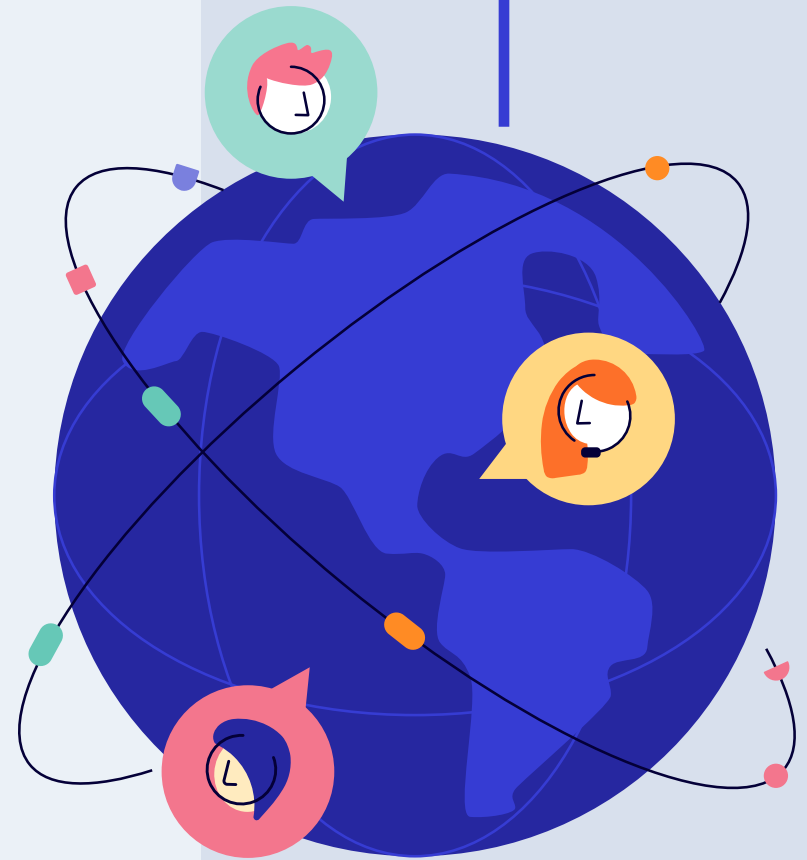
# Conclusion

For years professionals at global organizations have been under immense pressure from the demands to adapt and localize content to key markets as a way to grow, differentiate and engage customers. The debate about whether AI is good enough for translation will continue, but so will the trend of professionals flocking to the technology to work faster, lighten their workload and meet the obligations of global markets and customers.

This is why it's more important than ever for organizations to embrace AI, but with some guardrails.

For businesses to make themselves understood, AI translation technology must provide translations that meet required communication standards - but this survey found that many professionals don't have a way to determine when a translation is 'good enough' and when it isn't. AI Quality Estimation technology is the industry-leading, scalable solution to accurately predict translation quality and help businesses meet their goals.

While this technology is critical, it can't solve all problems on its own. A strong language AI program must be supported by a cross-department, scalable translation process that eliminates redundancy, provides cross-functional visibility, and gives one voice to customer communications.



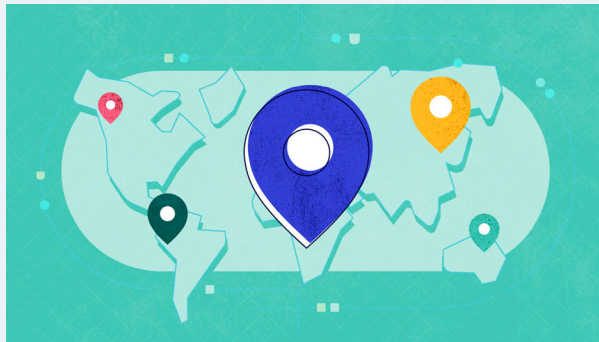
# About Unbabel

# About Unbabel

Unbabel eliminates language barriers so that businesses can thrive across cultures and geographies.

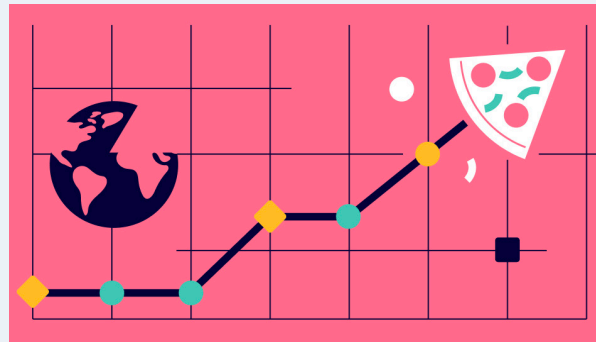
The company's Language Operations Platform is fueled by an always-on AI that only brings in human review when needed - so businesses can save as they go and easily uplevel quality to meet their goals.

**Check out how Unbabel has helped global organizations.**



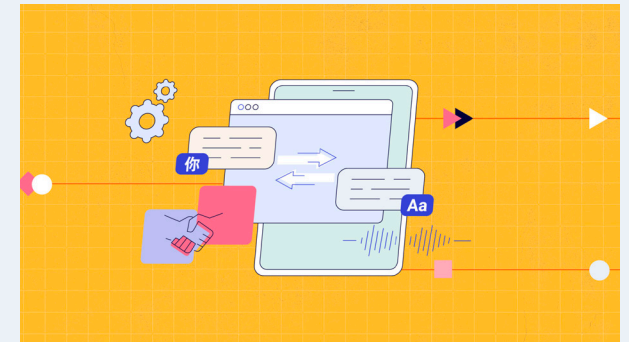
**GROUPON**

Groupon relied on Unbabel to consolidate 100% global customer service support in India



**ooni**

How Ooni increased revenue growth by 88% in new markets



**Global Electronic Components Distributor**

How a Global Electronic Components Distributor Reduced Time to Market from 4 Weeks To 1

**Ready to Start Translating?**

**Learn more about Unbabel's LangOps Platform**



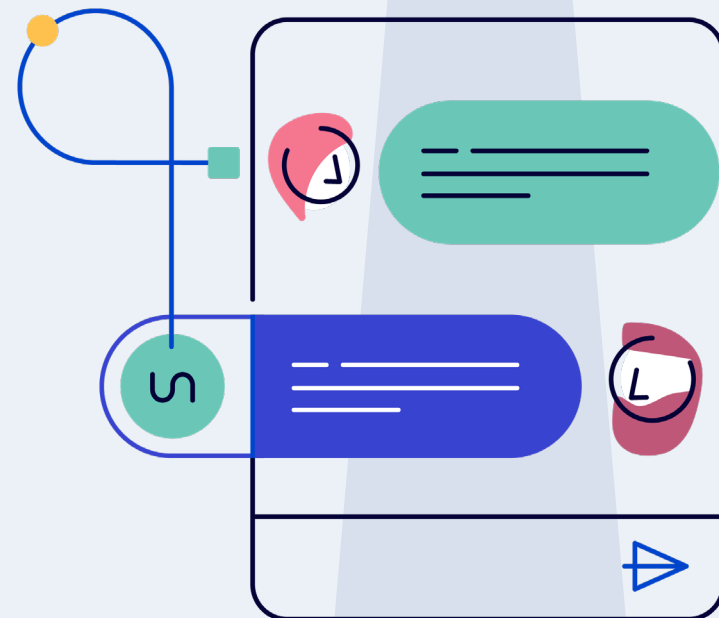
# Terminology Cheat Sheet

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** computer systems capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence.

**Machine Learning (ML)** is a field of AI that enables computers to learn and make decisions from data without explicit programming. Algorithms identify patterns in data and improve automatically through experience.

**Generative AI** is a branch of ML that creates new content by learning from existing data. It applies complex algorithms to generate text, images, and other media.

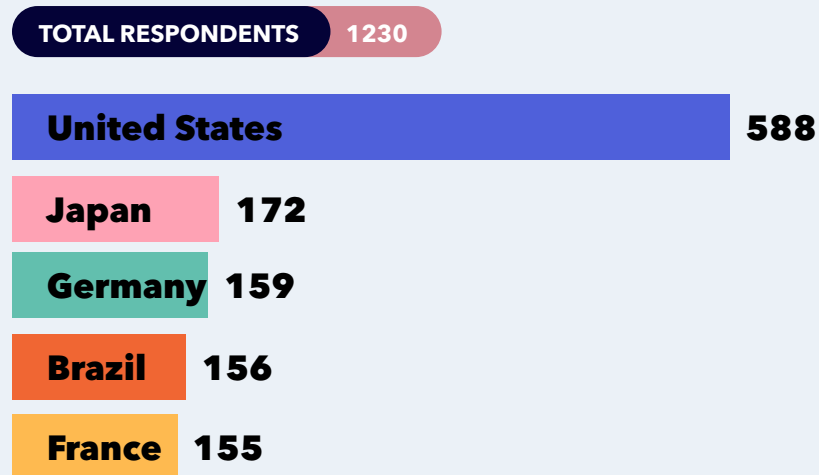
**Large Language Models (LLMs)** are a form of Generative AI that understand, interpret, and generate human language. LLMs are trained on vast datasets of text, enabling them to generate coherent and contextually relevant text, perform language translation, answer questions, and even create content like stories or code.



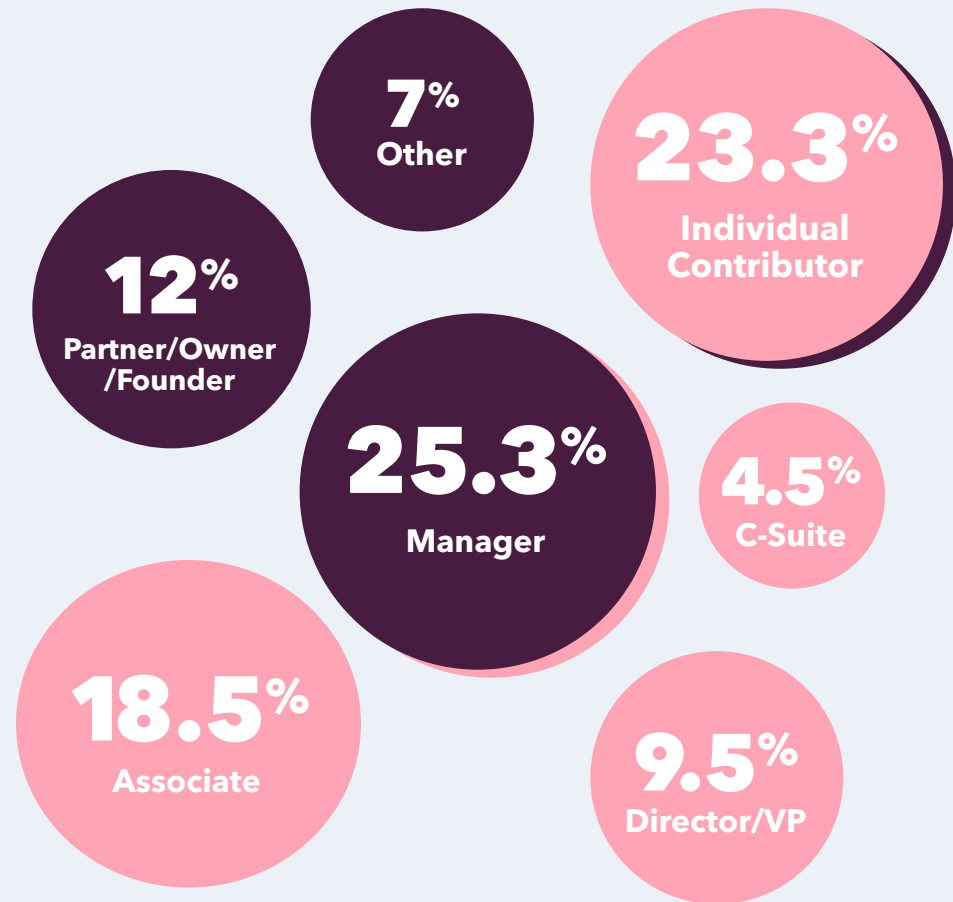
# Survey Methodology

Unbabel utilized SurveyMonkey to survey 1,230 professionals across five prominent business markets. The survey was fielded in November 2023 and collected responses from professionals in the United States, France, Japan, Brazil, and Germany.

## Audience Breakdown



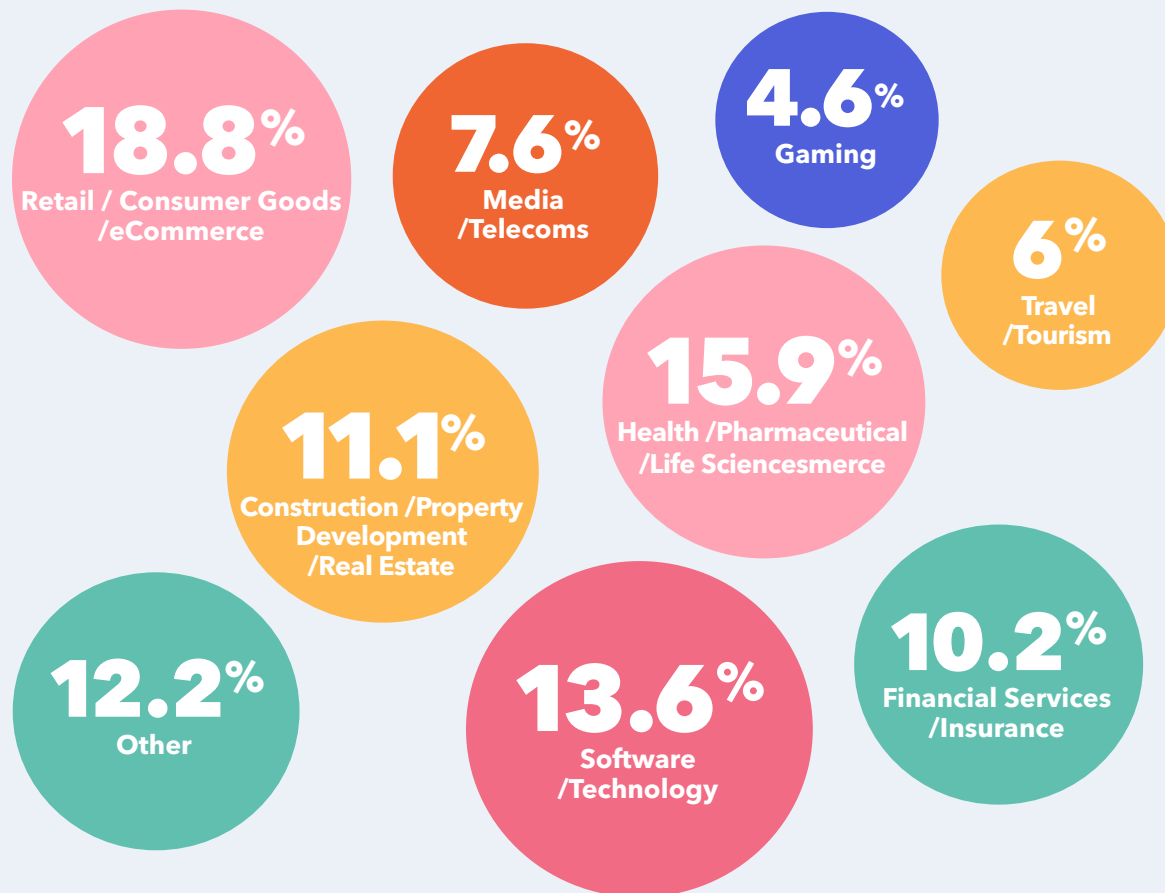
## Role



# Survey Methodology

Unbabel utilized SurveyMonkey to survey 1,230 professionals across five prominent business markets. The survey was fielded in November 2023 and collected responses from professionals in the United States, France, Japan, Brazil, and Germany.

## Industries



## Company Size

