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**American Translators Association**

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## New England Translators Association 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

May 5, 2007

Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel  
Marlborough, Massachusetts

- Translation Theory
- Patent Translation
- Business Basics for Freelancers
- Subtitling and Script Writing
- Introductory to Localization
- Getting Started as a Professional Translator
- Medical Interpreter Panel Discussion

For a complete listing of presenters, exhibitors, and registration: [www.netaweb.org](http://www.netaweb.org).

# Go Team! Go! Success is All About Collaboration

By Scott Crystal



## Team collaboration is

important for the success of all translation and interpretation projects. Despite this fact, there are many linguists out there who do not understand what it

**Own Your Work:** Each linguist needs to realize that the quality of their work not only affects how people regard them as professionals, but also has the potential to help or hinder the reputation of the entire group. Thus, it is

rather than emotionally charged discourse helps to maintain a positive atmosphere among team members.

**Plan Ahead:** Devising a schedule requires the team to be responsive in order to meet the deadline. It also will not hurt to have a contingency plan to prepare for the unknown.

## Putting together a group of team players can be tough.

means to work as part of a collaborative effort, and, as a result, risk jeopardizing the hard work of everyone involved in the production flow. This is why it is imperative for project managers to make sure that all linguists they assign to a project team have the skills and the personality necessary to work together to achieve optimal results.

Here are a few key principles of team collaboration to keep in mind:

**Define Responsibilities:** Your team needs to know what role each person is responsible for handling.

important for everyone to take responsibility for the success of a project.

**Communicate:** Being responsive and communicating in a clear manner gives your teammates an informative advantage.

**Give (and Take) Constructive Criticism:** Some people can dish it out, but cannot handle it when others challenge their expertise. This can be dangerous when a teammate is unwilling to budge and accept what others have to offer. Therefore, using constructive criticism

### Assembling Your Team

Putting together a group of team players can be tough. The most difficult aspect of team collaboration is getting everyone on the same page. In many instances, the project manager is selecting team members from a pool of freelance linguists who have never worked together before. Thus, each team member has a different approach to their work and brings to the table various levels of experience. Some receive professional training at frequent intervals, while others have minimal training, but possess many years of on-the-job experience. The project manager must work with these diversified individuals to ensure that they understand the parameters of the project and that there is consensus regarding the

desired outcome. The following are two ways to make this happen:

**Decentralize Decision-Making:** Whatever variables are involved, developing a spirit of collaboration calls for leadership, people skills, business acumen, realistic expectations, and the ability to establish trust among team members. An excellent way to build trust in a group is to decentralize decision-making, thus making the process more objective. If the entire burden for a decision is placed on one individual, he or she is likely to be overwhelmed. If each team member is given equal input regarding a particular course of action, problem solving becomes an

team will function effectively when their contributions are appreciated.

**Establish a Sense of Belonging:** Aside from the charisma of a good leader, teammates will likely desire to feel a sense of belonging, which will give them the motivation and passion to accomplish the job at hand. A team player without a sense of belonging is destined to fail. He or she will lack the commitment and integrity, and will likely just be doing the task to collect the paycheck at the end of the day. On the other hand, those who feel like they belong to a team exert the extra effort, work the late night hours to meet deadlines, accept responsibility for their

“I remember from my racing days all the lessons I learned about team work. The spectators always saw the pilot as the star, but you have to realize all the team effort behind having that car and pilot out on the track: engineers, mechanics, designers, and so forth. Many would consider that the most menial job on the team was the one performed by the guy who wipes your windshield with a squeegee when you make a pit stop. Well, let me tell you, when you are taking part in an endurance race lasting 6, 8, sometimes 12 hours, the sun eventually goes down and the artificial lighting goes on, and you depend on your headlights. The last thing you want is a smeared, glaring, greasy windshield at over 180 miles per hour. Then you discover that this guy’s little job can make a huge difference.”

## Team management is all about keeping the wheels of the project turning toward the finish line.

opportunity to focus on the issues, not on who has the most clout in the group. Along with this team-guided approach to decision-making, it is important for the project manager to encourage constructive criticism among the team, and to recognize those contributions that lead to the resolution of issues. Individuals on the

mistakes, and endeavor to improve themselves through experience.

### A Well-Oiled Machine

A former racecar driver I know, and now translator, Luis Fernando Moreno, described to me how each team member is equally important. This is how he looks at a team:

Team management is all about keeping the wheels of the project turning toward the finish line. The translation team must work together with the project manager to make sure that all the elements involved come together to achieve the best possible result. Successful team collaboration is more essential now than ever in this shrinking and competitive world.

*ata*

### May 13-16, 2007

Society for Technical Communication  
54th Annual Conference  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
[www.stc.org/cfp/cfp\\_GenerallInfo.asp](http://www.stc.org/cfp/cfp_GenerallInfo.asp)

### May 18-20, 2007

National Association of Judiciary  
Interpreters and Translators  
28th Annual Conference  
Portland, Oregon  
[www.najit.org](http://www.najit.org)

### May 26-28, 2007

Canadian Association for Translation Studies  
20th Annual Congress  
Saskatoon, Canada  
[www.uottawa.ca/associations/act-cats/Eng/congress/congress.htm](http://www.uottawa.ca/associations/act-cats/Eng/congress/congress.htm)