



## Humorous Translations Mistakes

As you can see from the examples below, an investment in professional translation can prevent your company from committing serious cultural faux pas. KWTC provides competitive rates for professional translation through its relationship with the third largest translation service provider in the world. Overcome the language barrier and ensure you get your message across. For more information, contact us today at 316-264-5982 or at [tradeservices@kansaswtc.org](mailto:tradeservices@kansaswtc.org).

- **Locum** is a Swedish company. As most companies do at Christmas they sent out Christmas cards to customers. In 1991 they decided to give their logo a little holiday spirit by replacing the "o" in "locum" with a heart.
- The Japanese company **Matsushita Electric** was promoting a new Japanese PC for internet users. **Panasonic** created the new web browser and had received license to use the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker as an interactive internet guide. The day before the huge marketing campaign, Panasonic realized its error and pulled the plug. Why? The ads for the new product featured the following slogan: "Touch Woody - The Internet Pecker." The company only realized its cross cultural blunder when an embarrassed American explained what "touch Woody's pecker" could be interpreted as!
- The Swedish furniture giant **IKEA** somehow agreed upon the name "FARTFULL" for one of its new desks. Enough said.
- In the late 1970s, **Wang**, the American computer company could not understand why its British branches were refusing to use its latest motto "Wang Cares". Of course, to British ears this sounds too close to "Wankers" which would not really give a very positive image to any company.
- "**Traficante**" and Italian mineral water found a great reception in Spain's underworld. In Spanish it translates as "drug dealer".
- In 2002, **Umbro** the UK sports manufacturer had to withdraw its new trainers (sneakers) called the Zyclon. The firm received complaints from many organizations and individuals as it was the name of the gas used by the Nazi regime to murder millions of Jews in concentration camps.
- **Sharwoods**, a UK food manufacturer, spent £6 million on a campaign to launch its new 'Bundh' sauces. It received calls from numerous Punjabi speakers telling them that "bundh" sounded just like the Punjabi word for "arse".
- **Honda** introduced their new car "Fitta" into Nordic countries in 2001. If they had taken the time to undertake some cross cultural marketing research they may have discovered that "fitta" was an old word used in vulgar language to refer to a woman's genitals in Swedish, Norwegian and Danish. In the end they renamed it "Honda Jazz".



- **Kellogg** had to rename its Bran Buds cereal in Sweden when it discovered that the name roughly translated to "burned farmer."
- When **Pepsico** advertised Pepsi in Taiwan with the ad "Come Alive With Pepsi" they had no idea that it would be translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead."
- **Clairol** did not test market in Germany the name of its "Mist-Stick"-- a mist-producing hair curling iron. Mist translates in German as "excrement" and a "manure-stick" did not draw much interest.
- **American Motors** tried to market its new car, the Matador, based on the image of courage and strength. However, in Puerto Rico the name means "killer" and was not popular on the hazardous roads in the country.
- A new facial cream with the name "**Joni**" was proposed to be marketed in India. They changed the name since the word translated in Hindi meant "female genitals."
- Scandinavian Vacuum manufacturer **Electrolux** translated the following in an American ad campaign: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux."
- **Colgate** introduced a toothpaste in France called 'Cue', the name of a notorious porno magazine.
- **Coors** had its slogan, "Turn it loose," translated into Spanish, where it became "Suffer from diarrhea."
- In Italy, a campaign for **Schweppes Tonic Water** translated the name into "Schweppes Toilet Water."
- Managers at one American company were startled when they discovered that the brand name of the cooking oil they were marketing in a Latin American country translated into Spanish as "Jackass Oil."
- A golf ball manufacturing company packaged golf balls in packs of four for convenient purchase in Japan. Unfortunately, pronunciation of the word "four" in Japanese sounds like the word "death" and items packaged in fours are unpopular.
- French label of foreign-produced goods: "Fabriqué en Dinde" (Made in Turkey) Turkey (the bird) is "dinde," whereas the country is called "la Turquie".