**A valuable virtual conference and networking event for the localization industry**

On June 15, 2020, we had a virtual conference and a networking event, **#LocNowAndFuture**, which attracted the attention of 1,200 streamer viewers as well as gave the opportunity to learn from industry leaders and network with many people from within the localization industry from all around the world. There were 7 sessions and 6 panel discussion sessions with 2 to 4 speakers and a moderator in each session. 1 hour was spared for each panel discussion session during which the distinguished professionals from the localization industry spoke.

**Agenda of #LocNowAndFuture**

This virtual conference that can be deemed to be the biggest of all virtual conferences specifically for the translation and interpretation industry had great topics and very valuable speakers and moderators.

The opening speech was done by Henry Dotterer, the President at ProZ.com and Burcu Demirörs, CEO and Co-Founder at HeliCo Translation. Henry and Burcu drew attention to the time we are passing through and our experiences brought by the pandemic at this event, which was driven by the disruptive creativity caused by the pandemic.

The topic of the first panel discussion after the opening speech was “**How LSPs are Dealing with and Capitalizing on the Challenges Brought by COVID-19**” and the speakers of which were Burcu Demirörs from HeliCo Translation, James Myatt, CEO at Word-Connection, Lucrecia Jarab, Regional Manager at Translation Back Office for the Asian Region, and this session was moderated by Anne-Marie Colliander Lind, Business Consultant and CEO at Inkrea.se Consulting AB. We got the chance to hear how the pandemic started for LSPs, when the effects were tangible, what challenges the pandemic brought to LSPs, how they coped with those challenges, and how LSPs could turn those challenges into opportunities. The audience had the chance to ask as many questions as they wanted to the speakers and the questions were conveyed to the speakers in a professional manner and by using the time wisely.

In the second session that was moderated by Kathrin Bussmann, Founder & President at Verbaccino Inc., we had Alberto Ferreira, User Research Manager at Vodafone, and Jennifer Vela Valido, Localization Vendor Manager at Expedia Group. The speakers and the moderator gave some thought to the topic “**The Shift in Marketing and Sales Strategies in the Localization Sector Due to COVID-19**”. This was a session with valuable information for the localization industry that we would only get by reading a couple of books or attending various events by getting into the trouble of travelling to another part of the world. During this session, the questions that were asked and weren’t left unanswered were “What is the best sales approach for LSPs to end-clients?”, “Is outbound-marketing still relevant today compared to inbound-marketing in respect of localization services marketing to potential clients?”, “Is social media being used efficiently by the industry members?”, and “What can be the best marketing strategy for LSPs during this time without being intrusive?”.

The third session contained AI solution providers who are namely Adam Bittlingmayer, CEO and Co-Founder at ModelFront, István Lengyel, Founder and CEO at BeLazy, Kirill Soloviev, Co-Founder, CEO & CPO at ContentQuo, and Nancy Hähnel, Sales Director at Xillio and this session was moderated by Drew MacFadyen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at ProZ.com. The topic of this session was “**The Approach of Industry Members about Investing in AI Solutions after the Pandemic Started**”. With the guidance of the moderator, the speakers elaborated on the AI solutions that LSPs might be more interested in the phase after the pandemic, the approach of translation service providers to automation, whether machine translation post-editing will be more popular after COVID-19, and where the agencies and LSPs are investing more and more. This was a great session in which you could project the future of AI and automation with regard to the localization sector.

In the fourth session, Mário Júnior, CEO at AP Portugal, Maxim Motin, Head of the Region Ukraine at SPEAKUS, and Sandor Milovanovic, Global Head of Professional Services at Interprefy. This session was moderated by Burcu Demirörs who is also a simultaneous interpreter. The topic was “**The Changes to Be Brought in the Aftermath of COVID-19 in Interpretation Sector**”. While the interpretation sector was the most affected and became a hot topic after the pandemic, the panelists put forward how the future of the interpretation sector would be like induced by the pandemic. We heard how and when the effects of the pandemic were felt on the interpretation sector but how the professionals from this sector will shape the future of the interpretation sector.

When we came to the fifth session, we could get valuable insights from NGOs of the localization industry. We had four amazing ladies who are quite important for the localization industry, namely Allison Ferch, Executive Director at GALA as moderator and Aimee Ansari, Executive Director at Translators without Borders, Jeannette Stewart, Founder and CEO at Translation Commons, as well as Maria Kania, Sponsorship Program Director at Women in Localization as speakers. Their topic was “**The Impact of the Pandemic on NGOs in the Localization Sector**”. They shared valuable insights about how the pandemic affected staff and volunteers in the mentioned NGOs and whether the pandemic affected the workload of NGO staff or changed the nature of NGOs’ work.

In the sixth session, we had Belén Agulló García, Tucker Johnson, and Sarah Hickey, all from Nimdzi Insights, which is a market research and consulting company in the localization industry and this session was moderated by David Ruane, Digital Content and Partnership Manager at XTM International. The topic in this session was as interesting as the others and it was “**How to Be Prepared for the New Normal with Facts and Figures in Mind**”. This session offered quite many lessons both for LSPs and freelancers by giving examples about what approach would be a winning approach and what a losing during and after the pandemic.

**What triggered such a nice event?**

We had built a holistic system that kept economies alive only when people went out and made it run by working, and it would be affected by regional changes normally, but this time, the world was hit by a common problem that left no country intact. The pandemic affected both us individually and the things that we created, namely our businesses. So, we needed to feel that we were not alone and hear that there were others going through the same challenges. Hearing from different stakeholders of the localization industry would make us learn from each other, feel relieved, and shape the future of the localization world together. So, we left none of the stakeholders behind and came up with this great virtual event that can be said to be the biggest virtual event by that time for the localization industry with 1,200 simultaneous participants.

LocNowAndFuture put a positive spin on challenges we have been facing as everyone could get the chance to get valuable information and leave with precious take-aways. It is definitely worth watching again and again on [www.proz.com/tv/LocNowAndFuture](http://www.proz.com/tv/LocNowAndFuture) and be in the know on [www.locnowandfuture.com](http://www.locnowandfuture.com).

We thank Burcu Demirörs, our CEO and Co-Founder coming up with this great idea and putting it all together to actualize this event, and Henry Dotterer, Drew MacFadyen, and Rocío Tempone from ProZ.com for their impeccable cooperation as well as all speakers and moderators for the time spent in preparations and their efforts during the sessions. Last but not least, we have to thank HeliCo team and especially Furkan and Göksun for their contributions and help before and during the event. We hope that everyone being a part of the event and attending it enjoyed it.