

Alpha CRC is a leading provider of multilingual adaptations of software, help, documentation, websites and marketing collateral. We provide a total solution covering translation, engineering, QA, graphics/DTP and audio.

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Case Study: Espresso

In July 2007, Alpha CRC was commissioned by Espresso, the UK's leading educational broadband content company, to translate over 420 videos into Swedish within just 10 weeks.

The principle behind Espresso's service is simple, but effective. The company creates short videos of news footage garnered from ITN but then individually voiced and reworked. The videos are aimed at primary school children aged between four and eleven, and are uploaded to a server supplied by Espresso and located at the school. This enables fast download, making it easy for the content to be accessed in the classroom or by pupils on an individual basis. The service is currently available in around 50% of the UK's primary schools. Espresso's aim with this project was to expand the service into Sweden.

As New Business Manager Darren Hughes explains, Alpha's involvement stemmed from an initial meeting with Espresso's Editorial Director and MD at the BETT Show. 'We first met David Summers and Lewis Bronze at BETT,' comments Darren. 'About a month later, David visited us to talk about the project in more detail. It quickly emerged that our experience in localization, engineering and multimedia was of great interest to Espresso in their attempt to localize their videos for the Swedish market.'

The project was planned along a very tight timeline, yet required great attention to detail and the highest levels of quality, especially as the Espresso Service is targeted at two very demanding and critical audiences: teachers and schoolchildren. As Alpha Project Manager Mette Clark observes, the project threw up a number of issues, both technically and operationally. 'As with any project of this nature, we faced a number of challenges,' comments Mette. 'On the technical side we were using videos which dated back as far as 2000. Many were flat tracks and we therefore did not have access to their individual assets. In most cases, as well as transcribing the scripts and translating them, we had to strip out the soundtracks, compose new music and record new voiceovers. In order to preserve the integrity of Espresso's original video, we decided early on that we needed to avoid lip synching, and opted for voiceovers, which in itself is not straightforward when the target language differs in length to the source language.'

Aside from these technical issues, the project presented a number of operational challenges and tested Alpha's in-house team to the full. 'In all, we reworked 428 videos with 317 being completed in five and a half weeks. This meant 70 videos being added to the project each week and running concurrently,' comments Mette. 'Each batch of 70 took the team three and a half weeks to complete. To ensure quality we decided to use our own in-house Swedish translators, with Swedish people clientside reviewing the translated text. This small team of translators guaranteed the consistency of translated text and enabled us to keep on top of the schedule.'

For New Business Development Manager Darren Hughes, the project underlined Alpha's key strengths. 'The Espresso project was great for us for a number of reasons,' says Darren. 'Above all, it allowed us to demonstrate our ability to work together as an effective in-house team utilizing our strength of having translators, engineers, quality assurance experts, post-production specialists and project managers all under one roof. The project was executed to the detailed project plan under great time pressure, and allowed us to develop an excellent relationship with the client. And it is this team effort which has led to our second order for 500 additional videos from Espresso.'