

# THE SECRET TO GOOD WEBSITE TRANSLATION



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SIJIHIVE INC.



SIJIHIVE  
LOCALIZATION



# TRANSLATION IS NOT SUCH A SIMPLE PROCESS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	3
<b>1. The importance of a website</b> .....	6
<b>2. Why is website translation so difficult?</b> .....	7
<b>3. Marketing translation challenge mini-test!</b> .....	8
<b>4. More than just translation</b> .....	10
<b>5. Mini-test answers</b> .....	11

### Disclaimer

This is an English version of our official Japanese blog article "The Secret to Good Website Translation" published in September 2020. SIJIHIVE Inc. reserves all rights to the content.

<https://www.thesijihive.com/post/how-to-create-best-multilingual-website>



# FOREWORD

## ONE OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS

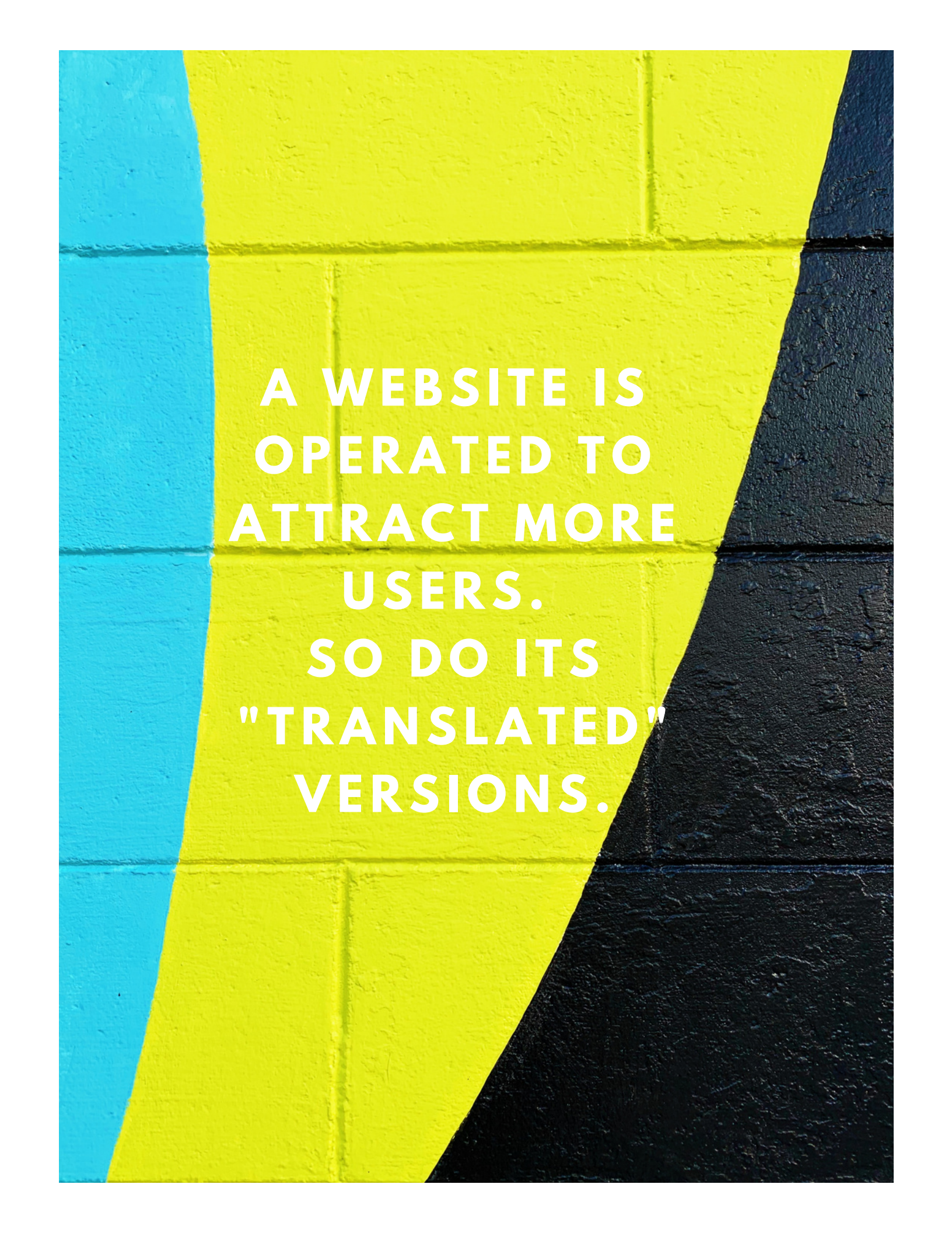
often talks about living in China and a favorite spot he often visited: 批发市场 (Pífā shìchǎng) or a wholesale market. In Japan, ordinary consumers are not allowed to shop at these markets, but in China, it's a place where anyone, not just retail vendors, can go if they want to find the cheapest prices.

When he visits China, he often goes to the wholesale tea market to buy souvenirs. Yet, even for the same "Iron Buddha" tea, there are dozens or hundreds of shops lined up in a vast area, making it almost impossible to tell which ones are cheap and which ones are selling good quality products. However, after exploring a few times, a visitor can learn how to choose the right vendor.

One important indicator is that the store is not flashy but clean and well-organized. And perhaps more importantly is the humanity that the store owners bring to the interaction. While they might be shrewd business people, they are also real people with real lives.

Now, you might think that the world of the internet is similar in some ways to the one we live in today. If you're a user, how do you choose which site? If you're a website operator, how do you make sure you're in front of as many users as possible? Each of us (especially marketers) has developed a unique "sense of smell" to achieve that goal, and it may be somewhat similar to the senses our team member developed in the wholesale market. What we are all looking for is something that is well-maintained, tastefully designed, and has warm content.





**A WEBSITE IS  
OPERATED TO  
ATTRACT MORE  
USERS.  
SO DO ITS  
"TRANSLATED"  
VERSIONS.**



# HERE AT SIJHIVE,

we also translate websites, so we pay close attention to structure and layout along with the quality of translations from other languages. And, to be honest, sometimes we see some disappointing translations. The fact that the website is being translated from one language into another indicates that the website operator wants to attract more users. However, if the translation is done with translation software, this can actually deter potential users. In this article, we will discuss the following basics of website translation, an area that has become increasingly important in marketing translation in recent years:

- 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A WEBSITE**
- 2. WHY IS WEBSITE TRANSLATION SO DIFFICULT?**
- 3. MARKETING TRANSLATION CHALLENGE MINI-TEST!**
- 4. MORE THAN JUST TRANSLATION**
- 5. TRANSLATION MINI-TEST ANSWERS**

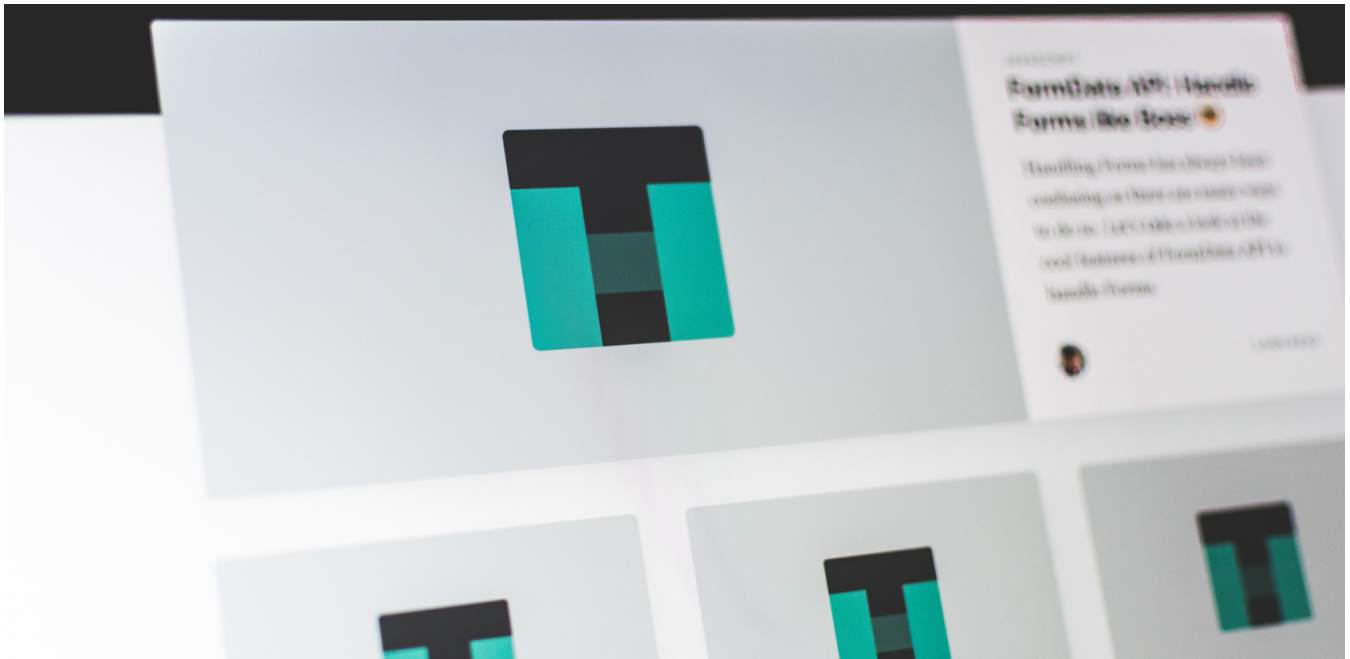


# 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A WEBSITE

A decade ago, websites were simply a tool to introduce information about a company or store and functioned like an electronic version of a brochure. The only requirement was to update them from time to time to ensure that the information did not become outdated.

Nowadays, however, you won't find anyone running a website like that because e-commerce has entered every aspect of our lives. We currently live in a world where we seem to spend more time on the Web than in the real world.

In this situation, a website becomes the face of a company or store and is the gateway to defining its image and brand. If a website is judged at first glance to be poorly designed, understocked, boring, or even off-putting, it will not be taken seriously, no matter the quality of the products or services being offered.



Increasingly, websites are now becoming a tool for shaping business trust. For example, after receiving a business card in a face-to-face interaction, more and more people are visiting the website printed on the card to learn more before actually contacting the person. For many businesses that receive the same questions time and time again from potential customers, it has become normal to put all the information and answers on a website and direct customer inquiries there first.

## 2. WHY IS WEBSITE TRANSLATION SO DIFFICULT?

Translation is often thought of as a simple process of converting a message or information from one language to another language. However, for the purposes of this article, the first thing we need to clarify is that marketing translation is different from general translation.

Marketing translation refers to the translation of promotional materials, such as advertisements, websites, social networking sites, brochures, presentations, etc. Yet, this is very different from creating a document that is as identical as possible to the original. The essence of marketing translation is to create a strong message in the target language that moves the reader to action. For this reason, the emphasis is not on an exact translation of the original text but on replacing it with the most appealing and appropriate expression.



For example, on the Osaka Metro's English website, the name of the Midosuji Line (御堂筋線) was once translated into "Midosuji Muscle Line" because the translation tool picked up on the last two Japanese characters (筋線) appearing in the Japanese word "筋繊維" which means "muscle fiber."

When people saw this English translation, their first thought might not be "That's Osaka just trying to be funny!" No one will get the joke... Native English speakers will probably look at it with confusion and say, "Yet another example of bad English in Japan. Don't they have any professional translators?"

This is one example of how a single mistranslation can undermine the trust in a company and how a website can reflect badly on its overall image.

### 3. MARKETING TRANSLATION CHALLENGE MINI-TEST!

Now that we've explored a little about the differences, it's time for a mini-test!

Please take a look at the image below.

This is a part of short landing page which introduces BEEHIVE CHEESE FACTORY's new product, the extraordinarily stretchy cheese. (\*1)

How would you translate the following text from the image into English?



(\*1): Original content created by SIJIHIVE



**PLEASE TAKE  
FIVE MINUTES TO  
COME UP WITH  
AN ENGLISH  
EQUIVALENT.**



The translation from our team is at the end of this article.

## 4. MORE THAN JUST TRANSLATION

Maybe you want to create English content for your company, or maybe you want to translate other languages into Japanese.

One of the quickest ways is to use a translation tool such as Google Translate. With just a copy and paste, you can do it yourself. It's true that free translation tools have become much more accurate than in the past but try translating the word "かつ重" into English using Google Translate and see what you find...

Here at SIJIHIVE, we do more than just translation. We offer "localization," a process of adapting the text to suit the characteristics of the target language and culture. Strictly speaking, translation is only part of the larger framework of localization with marketing translation being an important part of that process.





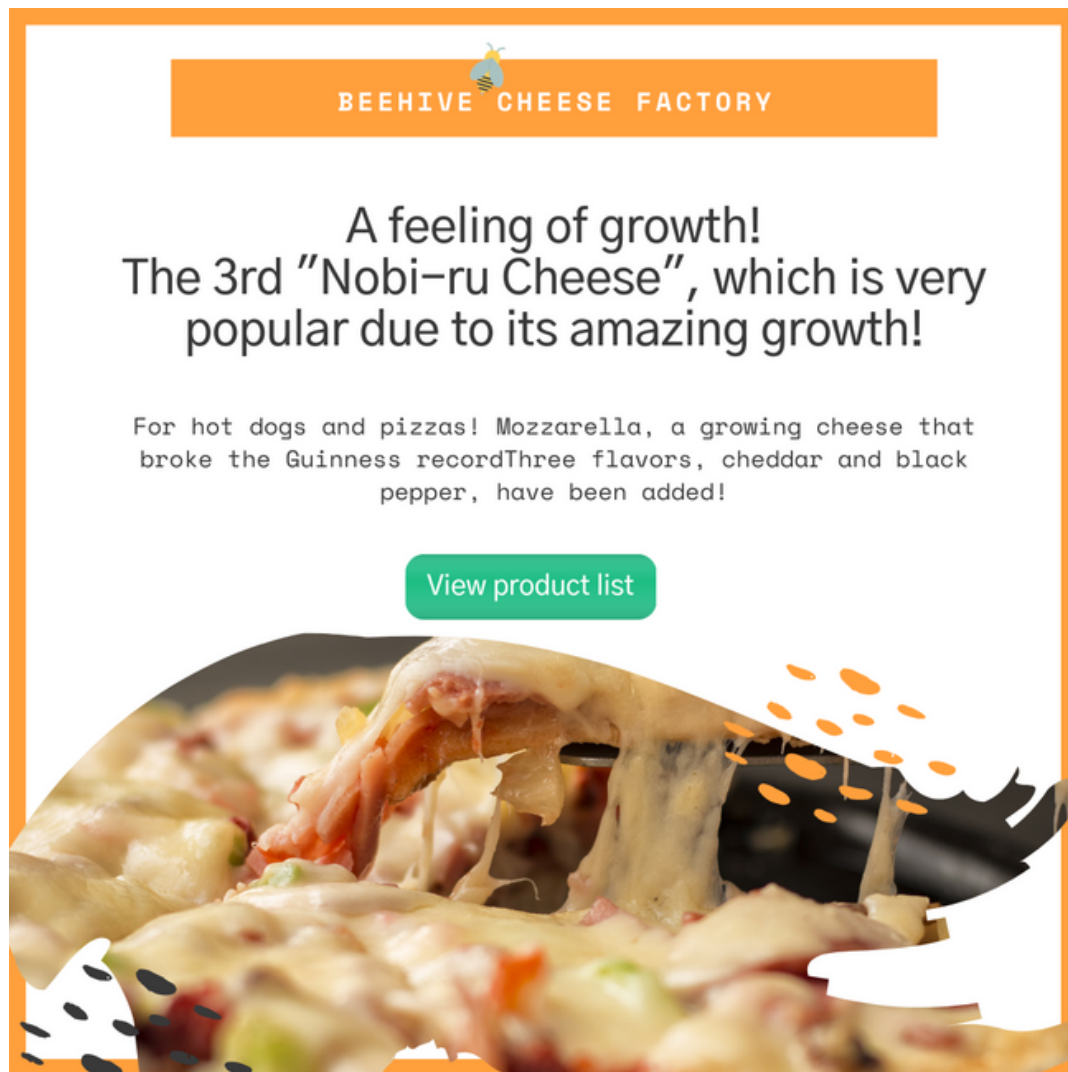
## 5. MINI-TEST ANSWERS

Remember the image in Section 3?


While there are many possible answers, let's take a look at machine translation compared to our version.

First of all, with Google Translate, this is what it might look like:

(We've all seen many sites like this before...)



Here is what we might suggest:

BEEHIVE CHEESE FACTORY


# The Stretchiest Cheese in the World!

## Get ready for new and exciting Nobiru Cheeses™ choices!

Perfect for hot dogs and pizzas!

Guinness World Record-breaking cheese now comes in even more flavors! Mozzarella, Cheddar, and Black Pepper!

Product list





And one more option in different design :)

# BEEHIVE CHEESE



**THE STRETCHIEST CHEESE  
IN THE WORLD!  
GET READY FOR NEW AND EXCITING  
NOBIRU CHEESE™ CHOICES!**

Perfect for hot dogs and pizzas!  
Guinness World Record-breaking cheese now comes in even more flavors!  
Mozzarella, Cheddar, and Black Pepper!

**PRODUCT LIST >>**



In situations like these, we will often suggest different wording or phrasing that takes into consideration the nuances of the target language and culture.

Of course, the goal is to exceed the client's expectations, so we always propose two or three different versions: one "close to the original" and one "more appealing from a promotional standpoint." (\*2)

Hopefully, you've gained some insight into marketing translation from what you've read so far.

Regardless of how long it takes, we are confident that we can successfully create a translation that best captures the original intent and conveys that message to customers and readers.

If you have any requests or questions about translation or content creation, feel free to contact us at SIJIHIVE.

(We provide regular translation services as well, so don't worry!)

- END -



2\*): Translations are only examples and are not necessarily the "correct" answers. They are provided only as examples.





## TEAM

**Original article:** 本当に使える Web サイト翻訳の極意

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### About SIJHIVE

Established in Tokyo, Japan in 2018, SIJHIVE is a translation company specializing in marketing translation, transcreation and content creation. Our team of native Japanese, English, and Chinese translators collaboratively create the best translations possible, focusing mainly on websites, presentation materials, and press releases. SIJHIVE's official blog regularly publishes content on increasing productivity and concentration, self-management, and the secrets of telework.

<https://www.thesijihive.com/>