# An Industry Perspective with Josef Zibung – CEO, STAR Group

With 42 companies and 850+ employees in 30 countries, along with over 2,000 certified freelance translators around the world, STAR Group is a global player.

**Mr. Zibung, what motivated you to start STAR Group 24 years ago, how did you choose that name and is it true that you were somehow involved when CAT or translation memory was first conceived? Is there a common link between Transit and Trados?**
Before founding STAR, I was responsible for sales at a translation company in Lausanne, Switzerland for eight years. At that time I was involved in localization projects for IBM, which was also distributing the early versions of DOS developed by Microsoft.

While in those days word processing was generally handled by mainframe systems or special hardware for word processing, the IBM localization projects, in which we were involved, were already utilizing personal computers. The three founders of Trados were hired by me as freelance translators on the same IBM projects. As a result of the needs which became apparent during the work on those projects, three translation memory products emerged – Transit, IBM's TM2 and Trados, all three developed in the small town of Böblingen, Germany.

Inspired by the exciting possibilities opening up for application in the information and language business due to the innovative development of software running on the PC, my partners and I decided to found STAR at Stein Am Rhein, Switzerland. The name **STAR** is made up of the first initials of the town **ST**ein **A**m **R**hein, and incidentally also stands for **S**oftware, **T**ranslation, **A**rt Work



*Josef Zibung – CEO, STAR Group*

and **R**ecording, the core activities of STAR from the beginning.

**In many cases, translation considerations come about later in a product's life-cycle. When in a product's life-cycle is the optimum time to make translation considerations?**
Companies developing and manufacturing low-tech products tend to look at translation only at the end of the product development, whereas companies focusing on high-tech products consider localization much earlier due to the strategic importance of development results and documentation. Therefore the localization process may be initiated earlier in order to reduce the time to market.

Translation is all about making information available in different languages. Over time, more and more information itself is becoming the product. For example, software products or the software controlled configuration of the performance of

many hardware products, such as engines, machines, or electronic devices. That's why STAR focuses its business on managing the entire information life-cycle, from content (text and picture) creation to publishing in any language and for any media.

So STAR works more and more closely with R&D departments, already during product development.

**How has your passion for the business changed over the years?**
In the beginning I was challenged by all the possibilities offered by the new world of personal computers. Today my passion is focusing more on right principles and concepts in information management than on new software and hardware technologies. Once solutions are based upon healthy principles, you only have to take the time to continuously improve performance and market presence. Trying to avoid viewing business as running on a treadmill, STAR prefers to accept limits to scalability and to concentrate more on long-term relationships with our customers, employees and partners.

**Do you expect the pace of change in the translation marketplace to stay about the same or to quicken in the future?**
It will get faster and become more diversified.

**Where is the world of the professional translator headed?**
The technology-driven pace of change will drive the market demand for higher quality transla-

tions. Most translators have tools, but not a single tool is any good without the quality translator. Many translators get translation jobs because of the tools they have available, but these tools alone are not a guarantee for quality translations. The successful translator not only knows how to use software tools in order to increase his productivity, but is first and foremost a specialist in the subjects and the languages of his projects.

**What do you think about machine translation?**

Machine translation in combination with translation memory or good translators can be very helpful. Such solutions should be restricted to the role of support for the specialist, but cannot be relied upon to provide effective solutions for translation projects on their own. As long as the quality of the translation is not a priority, machine translation will do just fine.

**How does STAR manage its freelance translators and translation vendors?**

STAR expands its network of freelance translators after working with them over time. Once they have proven themselves with STAR technology, methodology and customers, STAR will engage them as contrac-

tors, or even employees. In the same way, translation vendors have become STAR subsidiaries, or have become part of the STAR network. We prefer to continue to work with the same people to cultivate experience between customers and translators. This process sometimes even takes years.

**Globalization resulted in the displacement of workplaces to less expensive countries, what do you think about this?**

In our experience, qualified intellec-

tual work is often more expensive and more difficult to be realized in countries considered as low-cost.

**"… STAR's products and services are focused on the entire information life-cycle – not just on translation."**

Often, the technical background or the profession is non-existent and has to be developed through costly training and time-consuming project experience, in order to achieve satisfying long-term results.

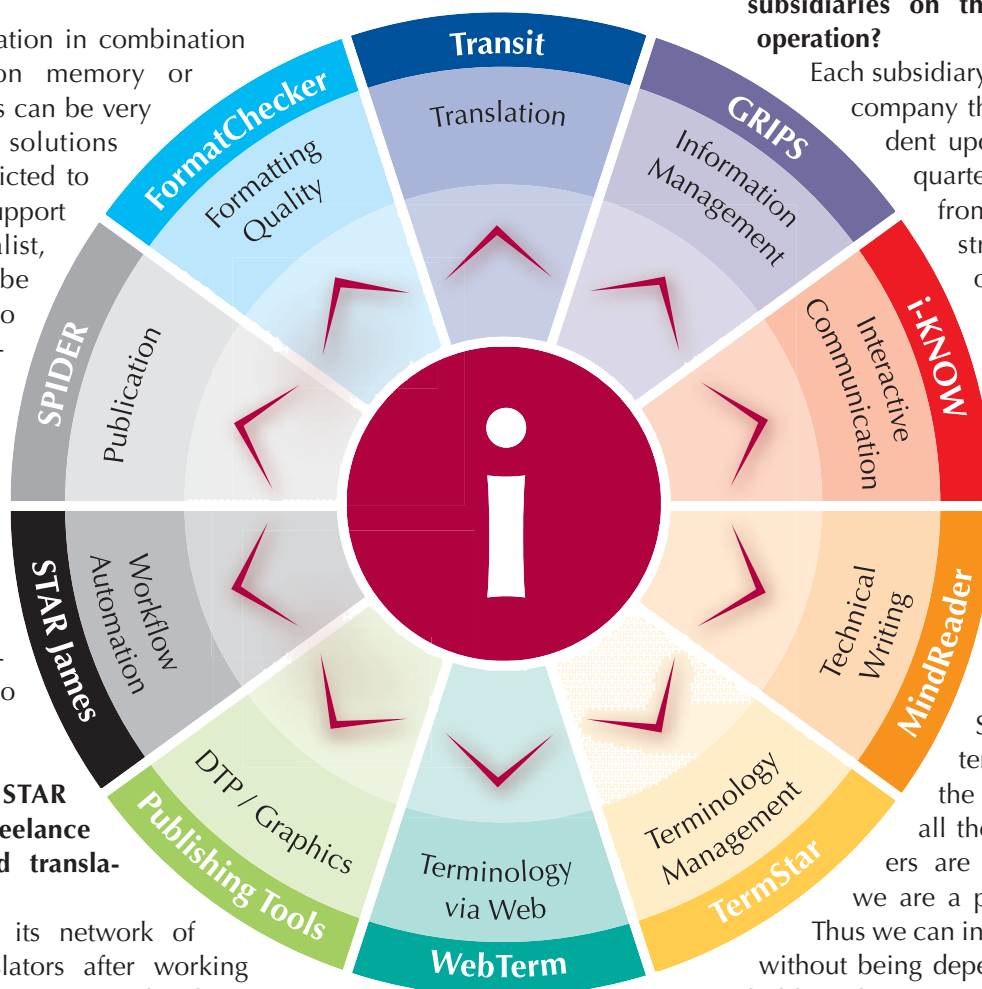**How dependent are the individual subsidiaries on the headquarters operation?**

Each subsidiary is a stand-alone company that is not dependent upon STAR's headquarters. They do profit from a common strategy, methodology, investment in software tools development and the STAR network.

**What distinguishes STAR from the other translation tools and services companies?**

STAR takes a long-term approach to the market. Whereas all the other big players are publicly traded, we are a private company. Thus we can invest a lot in R&D without being dependent on shareholders' decisions.

STAR's products and services are focused on the entire information life-cycle – not just translation. ∎