

# View from THE FRONT

An armchair chat with Florita Mendez, globalization-industry luminary and formidable competitor.

Forward

Language International spoke with Florita Mendez, senior vice president at Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products, and president of their Globalization and Internet Translation practice.

**Language International: The translation industry continues to consolidate. What impact do you foresee for clients and globalization companies? What strategic moves should each be making to defend its positions?**

**Florita Mendez:** Well, the consolidation of the market is going to make our clients' lives easier. They will be able to work with companies that will offer a much broader portfolio, not only in terms of the languages they can handle, but also as far as array of services and solutions they can offer.

As for translation and globalization companies, both large and small, I believe the translation industry will go through the same process the audit industry went through a few years ago. Five or six companies will dominate the market worldwide, while smaller companies will act locally and will tend to serve niche markets. I don't believe that consolidation as such will have a major impact on individual translators, but the increased use of technology definitely will, in particular

machine translation and other linguist technologies, plus the Internet.

**LI: L&H has invested heavily in language technology. Which do you see as most viable in the next few years?**

**FM:** The L&H iTranslator family and all L&H combinations of machine translation and human translation, which are available via the Internet.

**LI: How does L&H plan to compete and differentiate itself vis-à-vis the other large globalization players?**

**FM:** L&H is the only player in the market who can offer the combination of machine translation and human translation. When you see that we can also offer workflow management and other expertise, we can only say that the solution we offer via our iTranslator family is unique in the world.

**LI: What will be the impact of the Web on the translation industry? Do you consider companies like eTranslate and Uniscape to be a major threat?**

**FM:** We are convinced of our own strength. No company in the world has the same combination of strong machine-

translation engines and a network of thousands of linguists all over the world.

**LI: Of which of your own accomplishments in this industry are you most proud?**

**FM:** Educating the market on recognizing the translator as a professional, bringing technology to this industry, and pioneering the consolidation of the industry.

**LI: If you had to take back a major business decision you've taken in this industry, what would it be?**

**FM:** You can't undo what you have already done. You should only regret *not* having done something.

**LI: What do you see as the most significant trend under way in the language industry?**

**FM:** The globalization of the Internet and the tendency to more non-English Web content. Above all, the increasing need of people to be able to communicate with others speaking different languages.

**LI: If a genie gave you one wish for your profession or the industry, what would it be?**

**FM:** Make real money with the Internet business right now.



Florita Mendez

Florita Mendez began her career in 1979 managing finance and business development for Mendez Translations, a company her father founded in 1971. The company focused on human translation for technical documentation and the information technology market. A year after joining Mendez Translations she became the company's managing director. After taking the helm, Mendez expanded the business into the automotive and aerospace markets while adding machine translation to the company's services. In 1996, in an effort to further expand the company, Mendez sold it to L&H, and took the reins as president of the division.

Mendez completed a program of post-graduate studies in management at Brussels University, where she also earned a master's degree in business administration.

**What role do you play in your organization? What is a typical day for you?**

I oversee day-to-day operations of L&H's Globalization and Internet Translation Division and am responsible for managing the division's 18 offices, 820 employees, and 3,000 freelancers worldwide. With revenues of more than US\$100 million, the division is Europe's largest translation company, and the global translation and localization market's largest "one-stop shopping" solution for creating and translating technical, business, and multimedia documentation in more than 75 languages.

I spend a big part of my time writing email and on the phone. I like to be involved in the many aspects of our business, from sales to R&D, marketing to operations. I am also on the road quite often, either visiting our customers, our branch offices, or participating in events.

**What are the three most important items in your briefcase?**

My laptop, my cell phone, and my diary.

**What type of computer do you own personally?**

We have two computers at home: a Dell Dimension Pentium III, 500 MHz for me, and a Compaq for the kids.

**What are your favorite Web sites?**

I only visit the NASDAQ site where I can check what is going on with my competitors and other major players in our industry or the Internet.

**Where do you like to vacation?**

I like to go to Switzerland in the winter. During the summer, I go to the Spanish seaside to do all kinds of water sports and play tennis.

**What's your ideal leisure reading?**

I read mostly business or success stories. I also read loads of best sellers by authors like John Grisham, because they help me to disconnect from the day-to-day routine.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Spanish, French, and English.

**What are your hobbies?**

First and foremost, I enjoy spending time with my family. I like cooking for them, playing with my youngest son, and just chatting and relaxing with all of them. I also like to spend time decorating my houses, which I tend to make over every once in a while. Whenever I want to relax, I play piano.

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