Aligning people, process and technology to improve quality and speed to market

To succeed in the global business arena, companies that manufacture and distribute products must be agile, efficient and operationally adept at marketing in unique local geographies. At the center of this formidable challenge is the often complex process of translating and localizing high-quality product-related content – typically under intense time pressures. Combined with an ever-expanding list of markets and languages, these multilingual projects can become overwhelming. This requires companies to treat translation as a critical path event, not merely an afterthought, in the product marketing life cycle.

Despite advances in technology, multilingual projects continue to rely on the individual talents and efforts of people – from project managers and authors to translators and reviewers – both inside and outside your organization. Including language professionals on the product team from the outset can mean the difference between timely market entry and costly delays.

Employing proven best practices and processes throughout the language life cycle results in higher quality documentation, delivered faster. For example, training authors of source documents to compose “translation-ready” content significantly reduces the time required to translate, review and edit documents, and provides the basis for a more efficient global language platform.

As content becomes more modular, updates more frequent and processes more complex, the time and cost of translation management often exceeds the time and cost of the translation
task itself. Technologies that automate and streamline job tracking, workflow, project management and content management yield greater control, lower cost and faster turnaround times.

Of course, the optimal strategy proactively aligns and integrates people, processes and technology associated with each stage of multilingual translation projects. This ebook will guide you in leveraging the right technologies, managing human resources more effectively, improving time to market, increasing efficiency and quality, and ultimately enhancing your product’s global brand identity.

PEOPLE

Synchronizing diverse, global teams

Successful multilingual projects demand absolute commitment to the development and localization process from all contributors. Authors, designers, reviewers and project managers within the client organization must commit to delivering localization-ready content within agreed time frames. In return, localization partners must use all available resources, knowledge and experience to ensure the final product embodies seamless language quality and brand identity. Ensuring the commitment and delivery from this diverse and often globally distributed team requires the right people and partners, and a project strategy that guarantees your project goals are clearly defined, well-communicated and thoroughly understood.

Managing multilingual projects

By definition, translation projects involve multiple participants in multiple countries separated by language barriers, time differences and work cultures. Several key factors can help you better manage teams engaged in complex translation projects:

• Designate one person to coordinate the effort and ensure that all contributors - internal and external - understand their roles in the translation process and deliver accordingly. Critical contributors should receive necessary training and resources to ensure success. Also, make sure that all internal and external team members have effective communication channels.

• Deploy a technology platform that integrates and supports a multilingual translation process that encompasses document creation by internal teams and localization by external teams. Your localization partner should be an integral part of this discussion and should be willing, and have the capability, to integrate with your platform.
• Be sure to set clear expectations. All team members must understand how their performance affects the outcome of the translation process and how to optimize their contributions. Authors and designers must understand the potential impact of any deviations from the principles, practices and processes you’ve defined.

Creating “localization-ready” documentation

Authors and designers of source content can take steps to significantly reduce the time and effort required for translation pre-processing and translation formatting. These steps, in turn, can dramatically reduce time to market.

Designers of source language documentation should recognize that their documents will ultimately support a number of languages, each of which will have different characteristics.

The following is a list of factors to consider when creating an internationalized document template:

• Avoid callouts and text on images. Callouts and text embedded within images add complexity and time to translation projects. Placing callouts or annotations within the document body and using numeric references on the images simplifies subsequent translation and layout tasks.

• Design for text expansion. Many languages expand when translated from English. This can impact the number of pages, readability (font size), layout time and cost. Allow for an average additional text volume of 20 to 30 percent.

• Auto-generate tables of contents. This avoids the need to translate these items as they are automatically generated from the translated body text.

Authors can further reduce localization challenges by adopting a careful approach to the authoring process:

• Establish a glossary of source language terminology. Using consistent terminology in source documents reduces costs and saves time because translation technologies enable localization resources to translate material once and reuse it multiple times. It also ensures consistency in both the source and localized documentation.

• Avoid complex sentences. Consider the difficulties that translators face interpreting a sentence and trying to communicate your intent accurately. For instance, clever word play in one language rarely translates well in another language. Short, simple sentences are easier to translate and ultimately easier to read.

• Avoid cultural references in language and images. Remember that target audiences for your final document may encompass two, three or multiple different cultures.

• Avoid using hard returns to format text. Translation tools use formatting to determine where a segment or “thought” begins and ends. Hard returns in the middle of a sentence instruct the translation software to treat the two halves of the sentence as separate thoughts.
WORKING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

For most localization projects, you will select a partner outside your organization. The project might involve individual translators for each language, requiring you to complete desktop publishing functions yourself. Or you may choose to outsource full-cycle processes to one or a few partners, which will result in print- and distribution-ready multilingual documentation.

At first glance, individual translators may appear to offer cost advantages. However, the need to qualify and coordinate translators, editors and proofreaders across multiple languages (potentially operating in multiple time zones) requires considerable knowledge, skill and time.

The quality requirements that are integral to specific industries mean that the costs of such close oversight quickly become prohibitive.

To improve quality, time to market and efficiency, identify a limited number of full-service, partners who are nationally and internationally certified for quality standards that can manage the entire localization process on your behalf. Choosing a partner whose processes are verified through national and international quality programs and regular, independent audits will give you greater assurance that the required quality controls and repeatable processes are in place. Involve your localization partner early in the development cycle to enable them to assist your authors and designers in the development of localization-ready content. Factors to consider during evaluation of localization partners include:

- Proven track record in business or industry related localization and Industry certified qualifications
- Large team of specialized content linguists and experienced project managers
- Global capabilities and highly responsive service
- Integrated technologies and tools to minimize cost and turnaround times
- Include translation in the product plan
- Centralize translation management
- Establish clear communication channels and expectations
- Create and use a style guide and glossary
- Reuse existing text as much as possible
- Separate translatable text from formatting, graphics or software code
- Internationalize texts to support local measurements, currencies, date formats and more
- Allow for text expansion – in print and in product interfaces
- Use Unicode standard for software characters
- Avoid string concatenation - use whole sentences
- Ensure regulatory compliance
- Protect your intellectual property and brand trademarks
- Review terminology with in-country experts
**PROCESS**

**Streamlining activity, enhancing workflow.** Complex localization projects require the coordination of a diverse range of talented contributors playing different roles in different locations and organizations. Within your organization, coordinate the activities of authors, designers and reviewers, and integrate with the services of your external localization partners. Managing this successfully involves aligning all parties into a unified development process that supports language activities with complementary technologies.

**Project planning and information exchange.** Before a single word is written, authors and designers should acknowledge and keep localization requirements in mind. This means careful planning, training and discussion between the authoring team and the localization partner. Since unresolved issues will be replicated later across all languages in your multilingual project, upfront preparation and communication will save time and money.

The earlier you start glossary creation and translation, the better the quality of the source and localized documents. Translated glossary terms should, if at all possible, be approved by in-country reviewers within your organization. This helps ensure that translators create multilingual documentation with the same look and feel as previously localized documentation.

This is also the right time to ensure that the technology platform and your localization partner are integrated appropriately.

Be sure your localization partner can plug into your content management system to retrieve and translate files automatically. This integration process may require some initial setup time, but the return on that investment will be very significant. Also ensure that your localization partner acknowledges your project requirements, including:

- The number and estimated size of files in the project
- Source file formats
- Number of update cycles you expect
- Deliverables list
- Dates on which files will be available for translation
- Markets and target languages
- Number of review cycles required
OPTIMAL INTEGRATED PLATFORM

This information helps your localization partner ensure that all the required resources are in place. Also, plan to provide your partner with style guides, reference information and any training material available to help train linguists on your specific requirements and ensure familiarity with your products and style.

Managing review cycles. It’s a smart idea to conduct internal reviews of translated content, particularly in the early stages of a new localization partnership. Plan to have competent in-country reviewers of your own conduct the audits by reading the material and focusing on terminology and technical accuracy.

Update management. Managing updates is a complex process that must be customized to individual internal environments and practices. In some cases, it makes sense to take source documents to final form before releasing them for translation. In other cases, a two-stage process is warranted.

Where a content management system is present, it often is most effective to move final source content into the queue as early as possible and to manage updates dynamically. The key is to work with your translation partner to design an update process that is right for your business, with a focus on minimizing editing cycles.

TECHNOLOGY

The powerful enabling platform. Recent significant advances enable authors and translators to reuse increasing amounts of content from previous projects. This approach not only saves time and money, it also improves consistency across products and product ranges. In addition, project workflows have also become considerably more automated.

Many localization providers offer workflow tools and automation that not only streamline the localization process, but also allow remote automated job submission, automatic quoting and real-time access to project information. When applied carefully and appropriately, technology can accelerate authoring and localization, reduce costs and improve quality through consistency and version control.

Optimizing content. Content management systems (CMS) address speed and quality requirements by eliminating much of the manual effort involved in creating and managing multilingual content. By sending information in free-standing modular sections to be translated, a CMS ensures that the localization cycle runs concurrently with the authoring process. In this way, the entire localization process is finalized shortly after the last chunk of content is created by the authoring team.

Automated workflows. While content authoring, design and localization are inherently manual tasks, many project management
functions such as quoting, project administration and file management can now be performed by automated systems. When team members are distributed across multiple regions and time zones, automated project management is an absolute necessity. Every minute counts - it is critical that no one is waiting for a file from an author, translator, editor or localization provider. As a result, leading localization providers have deployed tools for online job submission and quoting, automated job initiation and tracking, translation memory management, file management and real-time job-status viewing.

**Translation memory and glossary management.** Keeping translation costs down, maintaining consistency and minimizing translation time are all critical components of a successful localization project. These objectives can be achieved through the use of industry standard translation memory applications. Translation memories are databases of previously translated sentences. Every sentence in a source document is leveraged against the translation memory to check for matches and enhance translation efficiency. Access to previous translations maximizes reuse and reduces translation costs and turn times. Glossaries are a critical component of any translation project, improving consistency and efficiency. However, translation teams should translate those terms before localizing documents. This enables your in-country reviewers to approve the translation of those words, phrases and sentences and gives you better control over the glossary creation and approval process.

**CONCLUSION**

As manufacturers extend their global footprint, timely, accurate and cost-effective language translation is essential. The key is aligning people, processes and technology.

The talented people involved in translation projects must work together as a synchronized team with clearly defined roles and well-understood expectations. Properly managing a team can reduce turnaround times, decrease edit cycles and contain costs. Structured processes - from product inception to multi-location shipment - enable companies to quickly develop and refine higher-quality documents in more languages and countries. New technology solutions continue to emerge that define, automate and streamline structured processes through job tracking, workflow, project management and content management.

By aligning the right resources, companies can improve the quality of their global efforts, control costs and accelerate time to market.