



Preparing Your Website for Localization



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Introduction

Translating a website for a new language market is almost always a more complex task that it seems at first glance. Given the mandate to *localize* your business's or organization's website or site content, how can you contain costs, expedite time to market and ensure that you deliver a high quality translation that meets your end users' requirements?

This white paper outlines tips that will help you prepare for and successfully manage the localization of your website – from advance planning to final testing. With a solid web strategy in place, and integration between your web design team and your localization service provider, you will be well prepared to embark on your web localization initiative.

This white paper will help you:

- Understand website localization, including terminology, technology, processes and pitfalls
- Create web architecture, copy and graphics that are easy to replicate across language markets
- Think cross-culturally to help avoid cultural missteps
- Set up solid management and review practices

Please note: Throughout this paper, we use the term Localization Service Provider (LSP) and assume that you will be using a third party to localize your site. However, the points in this paper will apply equally well if you are using an internal localization team.

Build a site that's ready to be localized

The more you do up-front to prepare your site for localization, the less you will spend, both in time and money, fixing issues that affect your ability to have a fully functional, localized site.

Business decisions

Going from a monolingual (English) site to multilingual can have a major impact on your business at many different levels. Consider the following questions:

- Did you clearly define the objectives of your multilingual strategy, and did you communicate the objectives with your teams, your partners and your local offices or resellers?



- If you want to move away from having to support and maintain completely separate, multiple local sites, and would like to install a centralized, connected multilingual setup, you have to be careful for sensitivities. Are you aiming to centralize, de-centralize or take another approach?
- Is your business set up to handle requests in foreign languages?
- Is your web team ready to develop, maintain and support not one, but multiple sites, most of which they will not be able to read?

1. **Architect a navigation scheme that is localization-friendly.** Designing a navigation scheme with localization in mind from the onset will make it significantly easier to create and test your new localized versions.

- a. **Consider creating a global gateway to country-specific sites.** Consider creating a list of countries (in their own language) as a drop-down select on the upper right-hand side of the gateway homepage that will link the visitor to the country site. Additionally, provide local, country-specific URLs (www.website.de, www.website.es, etc.) from which users can directly enter their own country website without having to go through the .com gateway site.
- b. **Pick a theme for your multilingual navigation.** Decide on how your international visitors will choose their viewing language. Will you have flags? Language tabs? A map? Will users language preference be noted automatically by pulling it from their browser? Will it be remembered in a cookie or some other way?
- c. **Determine navigation and directory structure for the localized site before handing off the files for localization.** Will the localized sites sit at the same folder/directory level as the English? Will they sit one level up, or down? Source files for localization must be (re)coded according to that structure before localization begins.
- d. **Decide on how you will handle partial localization or non-localized pages.** Oftentimes, cost will dictate that only portions of the site will be translated. If so, you need to decide on relationship between localized and original sites. How will the sections be separated? Will you notify users of a language change?

2. **Make your content localization-friendly.**

- a. **Make sure your site is properly internationalized.** Ensure that the programming of your site will be able to properly handle the input, storage, retrieval, sorting and display of different character sets as well as time, date and currency formats. Your LSP should be able



to provide a “globalization readiness assessment” or “internationalization assessment” where specially trained software engineers analyze your site for common internationalization problems.

- b. **Develop your site in Unicode.** Unicode is the universally adopted standard established by the Unicode Consortium for encoding international character sets. Selecting Unicode encoding for your site will allow you to accommodate nearly any language in the future.
- c. **Clearly separate code from translatable text.** Be careful to not hard-code any text into your code making it difficult to separate out for translation. Use templates that call text from language-specific files.
- d. **Create your content in good, straightforward English.** Of course this is not always possible, as with marketing sites for highly stylized products or services, but to the degree it is possible, keeping it simple will be rewarded later with lower costs and better translation quality. Be aware that colloquialisms, idioms, humor and ethnic or cultural references are difficult and costly to translate and may not be relevant to people of other cultures.
- e. **Keep your terminology consistent throughout the site.** This is especially important if there are content contributors from multiple departments. In general, it is best to use industry-standard terminology, rather than internal jargon and less commonly known acronyms. However, companies sometimes need to invent terms and jargon, like blogging and Podcasts. In that case, just be sure to identify those terms ahead of time, decide how you intend to handle them in other languages, and let your translators know that in your glossary.
- f. **Minimize text that is built into graphics.** Text should be accessible and easily extracted. Embedding text into graphics may look great but it adds time and expense to the localization process. Rather than embedding text in a graphic, consider using navigation text in bigger and bolder fonts within your HTML code, which produces a similar effect to a graphic-bound navigation but is easier to localize.
- g. **Use layered graphics.** If it is not feasible to keep text out of graphics, be sure to use design tools like Photoshop that allow you to isolate text into a separate layer from any background image. Be sure to leave sufficient space in your graphics to allow for text expansion. And, you’ll want to make those original creation files (.psd, .ai, etc.) available to your LSP at localization time rather than any flattened images stored as GIFs and JPGs.
- h. **Keep your graphics in special folders.** Keeping your graphic files separated away from HTML files will allow for easy analysis and localization.
- i. **Make it easier to localize your Flash files.** If your website is Flash based, consider building Flash files so that their source text comes from a separate .txt file with a unique name. In this way, the reference to that English .txt file can be replaced with a reference to the



localized .txt file, and the localized text will display in the Flash file without incident. This is a more localization-friendly production method than inputting text directly into the Flash file. You'll find additional tips for localizing flash at this link on the Macromedia website: http://www.macromedia.com/support/flash/basics/flash5_localization/.

- j. **Use dynamic resizing to allow for text expansion.** Rather than hard-coding the dimensions of your windows, tabs, panes, etc., allow them to resize dynamically and account for text expansion. (Remember that most languages need at least 30% more space than English.) If you can't allow elements to resize dynamically, be sure to pad them out with more space to allow for this expansion. This is an absolute must when you have tables with numerous cells and buttons, and sometimes for short sentences like company slogans. Also, some languages, including most Asian languages, require more space because they need a larger font size (min. 12 pt.).
- k. **Avoid fancy fonts.** Choose fonts wisely. Although some fancy fonts may look good in English, they may not be reproducible for other languages, especially those from Asia.

- 3. **Be culturally aware with your content.** Oftentimes this can involve a delicate mix of standard global content along with content of local interest only. Being culturally-aware when creating global content will make it easier to localize later.
 - a. **Maintain your global branding.** Make sure all your corporate information (company information, mission, history and culture) is localized but kept consistent throughout the site in order to maintain consistent identity and branding.
 - b. **Keep local content local.** For highly local content (press releases, news, HR information, etc.), make sure that it is either generated or reviewed locally with an eye toward maintaining the overall consistency of the site.
 - c. **Avoid overtly culturally biased photographs, graphics or expressions.** Make sure you have a good stock of photographs that represent the different ethnic groups of a particular country and the varied social situations.
 - d. **Double-check your support telephone numbers for other countries.** If they are 1-800 numbers, they cannot be called from outside the U.S. Be sure to provide non toll-free numbers instead. Also, if service and support can only be supplied in English, it is best to specify that as a courtesy to the user.
 - e. **Beware of different privacy laws.** Remember that there are legal differences between countries. If you collect visitors' data on your website, you need to be aware of data protection laws for their country. If you advertise aggressively on your website, remember that negative or comparative advertising often is not allowed in other countries.



Make sure you're ready to begin the localization project

1. **Determine your localization strategy.** Will you need to localize all of your website or only parts of it? This is one of the trickier decisions as it usually involves balancing your localization budget against the business objectives you have for the site. Your objective is to localize the minimum set of pages that allows you to meet your objectives for the site.
 - a. **Define your business objectives.** Websites can have many and multiple business objectives. Your localized site may have the same objectives or perhaps a subset. Is it lead acquisition, product sales, global branding, nurture marketing, relationship development/management, customer support, etc? This will help you prioritize the sections of your site for localization.
 - b. **Profile your target visitors.** That begins with an assessment of your target visitors. Who are they? What is their purpose for visiting? What role do they play? What is your objective for that visitor, what would you like her to do, etc?
 - c. **Define your subset site.** Using the information from points a and b above, scope out the pages that need to be localized and iterate that against your budget.
 - d. **Validate your sub-set site in the source language.** Sub-setting the pages of your site can often lead to a site that is difficult to understand or navigate. Create your subset site and validate it with test users to identify any problems. In some cases, you may need to re-write some of the source-language pages and it's far better to identify that before beginning the localization project.
 - e. **Estimate the frequency of change and assess maintenance requirements.** The frequency of change to the pages of your site will determine the length your initial localized site will be valid as well as your maintenance budget. For sites with a high frequency of change for certain pages, you may even have to re-think the organization of your source language content in order to isolate those pages into non-localized sections.
 - f. **Iterate again.** As you might guess, sections a through e above are interrelated. Once you've made your first pass, go back and see where adjustments might be made.
2. **Provide source files for project sizing and budgeting.** Whenever possible, it is always best to provide source files to your localization team. This helps ensure that any budgets or quotes developed will be more accurate and any potential problems can be spotted in advance. In turn, this also helps ensure the integrity of your localization schedule.
3. **Establish a freeze date.** Pick a reasonable date that everyone can agree to for freezing the source content and extracting a copy for localization. Once you deliver the source files to your LSP, do not change anything in those files. If you do need to make changes to the source files, deliver an updated drop of files to your LSP.



4. **Make sure you've got everything.** Once you've frozen your site and extracted your files for localization, make sure the files are properly organized and complete. Taking the time to double-check how will save you time and money downstream in the localization process.

Set up good project management practices

1. **Establish a staging server for online testing.** Whether you set it up yourself or ask your localization partner to establish one for you, you will want this server so that online testing can be performed without affecting your live site. Making this staging site accessible to your localization partner will save your internal staff many hours of content management time.
2. **Establish good file and content management processes.** How often will updates happen? Will they be small or large?
 - a. If you are hosting the staging server, keep track of which versions of the files are on the server.
 - b. Establish clear ownership guidelines. In general, if your LSP has made a final delivery, you should take ownership of the files. However, if testing is still ongoing, the LSP should retain ownership of the files and you should not make any changes.
 - c. Keep the staging server up to date.
 - d. Be sure that you overwrite old files with new files. Good version control is imperative to smooth processes.

Conduct effective linguistic reviews

1. **Identify qualified reviewers for each language.** The ideal reviewer is a native speaker of the target language who knows your products and marketing messages and has time to complete the review in a timely manner. Their role is to support the translation process and serve as a final quality check that translations are technically sound and that marketing messages are conveyed correctly.
2. **Manage your reviewers and review cycles.** Don't let your project get bogged down in review. Schedule the reviews ahead of time and get a commitment from your reviewer that comments will be returned within an agreed upon period.
3. **Establish terminology and style guidelines early on.** Have your translation vendor develop and submit a glossary and style guide for each language early in the project. This will streamline subsequent reviews and will lay the groundwork for a good rapport between the translators and reviewers. Comprehensive glossaries enhance quality, consistency and overall efficiency.



Summary

As you can see, much of the work of localization starts well before you begin the process of localizing your site. As the localization manager or coordinator for your organization, you can make your job easier when localization actually begins by getting your web development team into the discussion early on. In fact, many LSPs will provide free assistance to support you in communicating this information to your development team even if you're only contemplating the possibility of localized sites in the future.

About Acclaro

Acclaro is an international translation and localization firm that helps the world's leading brands succeed across cultures. With its global headquarters in New York and offices and affiliates in Boston, San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Bangkok and Paris, the agency translates websites, marketing campaigns, documents and software, giving clients an authentic voice in key language markets.

Since its founding in 2002 Acclaro has grown rapidly while maintaining a customized, personal approach. Acclaro's global team of technical and linguistic experts has served as a trusted partner to industry leaders and global businesses.

For more information, please visit www.acclaro.com.

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