



The beginner's guide to website localization

- ✓ If you have a website to translate into six languages and you do not give your language agency the source format. In this case, you are intrinsically setting yourself up for post-processing work times six. By making sure you receive the final, web-ready format back from your agency, you will not have to do any postprocessing or cutting and pasting at all.

Localize thoroughly

For your international audience, the content you publish should be in keeping with both your global marketing strategy and your local campaigns. In mid-sized and large corporations, any pan-regional and multi-platform campaign must strike a balance between promoting your global identity and supporting locally relevant information. Translating the main texts of your website is not enough. Additional online resources you provide must also promote your brand identity consistently across cultures and languages. Localizing your website into other languages becomes obsolete if your downloadable content and your support contacts are presented in Spanish to customers who only speak Japanese, for example.

Translate files in their source format

By merely copying and pasting website texts into Word files for translation, you may well be missing a huge amount of information that also needs localizing, such as meta tags, link names, image descriptions, and any other alternate texts embedded in the code. Sending your translation provider Word documents, calls to action, PDFs, or similar files is a waste of resources. Instead, send the original HTML files to your translation agency. Professional translation providers use specific tools to convert the HTML, XML, PHP, CMS, Flash, and other common web file formats and prepare them for translation. The translated files are then delivered back in their original format ready for upload. You may be charged a processing fee, but this will be faster and ultimately cheaper than a manual process, and will ensure that the entire code and content will be localized properly. Otherwise, you will have to redesign localized web pages because graphics are not displaying properly, links are broken, or your Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has been overlooked.



To efficiently move content to and from your language agency, make sure your CMS facilitates the following:

- ✓ Easy import and export of multilingual content in suitable formats for translation
- ✓ Entering and editing of content by authors and service provider team members directly into the CMS

Apply a CMS translation workflow for transferring content to your LSP

With frequent website updates, a manual copy-paste process for moving translations in and out of your Content Management System (CMS) is highly prone to errors and presents a huge drain on resources. By committing to a CMS translation workflow, you eliminate the need for making phone calls, sending emails, reviewing and managing files, monitoring translation progress, and copy-pasting returned translations back into your CMS.

Without a CMS that can manage the update process, you will have to rely heavily on translation memories (TM) for the progress of your translations and spend additional resources on securing those translation memory assets. And without a direct content-editing feature, your texts will generally be revised in Word, which will cause version control issues with each iteration of a document being created in the corresponding target languages. Either your CMS has a multilingual export feature which will export the content in a markup language to preserve formatting (such as XML), or you can invest in software that connects your CMS with your vendor's translation management tool (e.g. Clay Tablet). Alternatively, you could set up an application programming interface (API) to allow you to move content intended for translation out of your CMS and back again in an automated fashion (Cloudwords offers a plug-in for Drupal-based websites, for example).



Manage and maintain your multilingual content with the CMS

A CMS-based solution reduces the number of people who handle content on multilingual websites, which significantly reduces errors. A system that further eliminates the need for webmaster involvement or technical expertise from client-side authors or translation agency linguists can significantly lower costs. Invest in investigating what your CMS can do before you buy it:

- ✓ Does the CMS allow you to import and export multilingual content unaided?
- ✓ Does the CMS permit exporting files with existing translations also present to give better context to translators?
- ✓ Does the CMS show which content has already been translated without additional software/add-ons/API?
- ✓ Does the CMS provide an automatic way to indicate which parts of source content have been added or modified?
- ✓ Does the CMS allow you to automatically reuse translations when making updates to your website content via import/export features?

Updating content has a domino effect on all other languages. Some localized content is generated locally and some centrally, so all translations need to feed into a centralized TM database or you will not be able to leverage content that has been previously approved. Without a centralized TM or a centralized vendor, the latter can get very costly, so investing in improved data flow and a centralized localization workflow through a feature-rich CMS will greatly assist with managing your content update process.





When budget limitations come into play, you may be able to skip translating less relevant pages. PDF files with a product description should be translated, of course, but some pages, such as contact details, support pages, and marketing campaigns, will be ruled by local market needs. To save costs, identify which pages are not relevant for local markets and therefore may not require translation, while making sure to provide the correct information, such as local contact details, along with the source files.

Translate economically

Your home page, landing pages, and all other pages with high traffic should be translated at the highest quality. Ask your translation provider for additional review cycles to incorporate feedback from your Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) after the translation of these pages. Such feedback loops for your high-profile pages should ideally be handled by a specialist in marketing translation who can adapt the translations to the local language flavor of the target market in collaboration with your SMEs within a transcreation workflow. Transcreation provides focused rewrites of your source material rather than word-for-word translations that may not reflect local idioms or nuances relevant to the new target audience. This approach maintains the original meaning and simultaneously engages the local market with expressions familiar and native to its customers. Depending on the size of your website, additional review cycles may cost you a bit more, but they are worth the expense.



Develop your terminology

In order to maintain consistency of key brand and product messages across web platforms and supporting resources, you should develop appropriate corporate terminology extensively and build a multilingual term base from it.

Among all the team members and sub-contracted participants creating content for your project, from programmers to marketers and all others in between, not everyone will be personally invested in the end product. Without properly developed terminology for each target language, your brand consistency will therefore be nonexistent.

Website localization rests on a fine line between global and brand identity, so you need to address each local market with care. The more accurate your product information is, the more in-line each locale will be with your main brand identity. Provide term bases for your translation agency reviewers and translators, and ask your regional managers to approve the accompanying style guides in their respective language. This focus on style guides, target audiences, and tone of voice at the regional level paired with centralized terminology management at the global level will allow you to protect your global brand identity while succinctly capturing regional variants.



Make sure that the final version of your localized site employs common terms, good keyword frequency, site structure, and other SEO considerations, and build this into the translated content. Work with an SEO provider with multi-language experience and in-country teams that know the SEO landscape of your target markets.

Plan SEO early in the localization process

Planning for website Search Engine Optimization (SEO) early on is a key step in the website localization process. Many companies localize their website first and only consider their SEO and Pay Per Click (PPC) localization campaigns later. Including SEO at the localization stage reduces review and revision times and saves costs when compared to optimization after the site has been completely localized.

Some of the most efficient tactics for a multilingual SEO plan include:

- ✓ **Local domain name:** A local domain name (.ae, .au., se, .br, .ar, .ru, etc) is more effective for local search engine results than a global one
- ✓ **Keyword localization:** Creating initial keyword lists will help you optimize both your content and your website meta tags with the most effective keywords for the local market
- ✓ **Local landing pages:** Landing pages are the most visited pages on your website. While creating your localized website, you should focus on the content that pertains to your local target market. This will require more research on your provided content.

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Localize multimedia content

People living in non-English speaking countries frequently encounter websites with properly translated texts, but with images, Flash animations, etc still in the source language. This distracts from the actual content, seriously damages your image in local markets, and makes your international marketing team's work much more difficult. Make sure you request feedback from regional managers about the multimedia content to be developed. Is the imagery appropriate? Next, ask your translation provider about the localization of images, video, and other rich content to ensure your site looks and feels completely local. For successful localization, this type of content needs to work in the local market you are reaching out to.

Be aware of extras

Launching a new website usually involves quite a few extras such as email campaigns, downloadable collateral, event invites, or calls to action. Global website managers often forget these items as they are not completed within the CMS. They frequently emerge on the fly and are difficult to coordinate post-localization if your budget does not include the time or money for having them translated.

In addition, such extras are often managed by different people, complicating matters further. Imagine a project to translate a 90,000-word website into six languages. Resolving support document issues on such a site, may easily end up taking longer than the translations. These extra documents are needed in all the languages that the website supports. It is important to consider these extras and their development in advance and decide whether they should be managed locally or centrally.

Assign quality assurance

The localization process encompasses language support and branding far beyond simple translation; therefore, it requires an accompanying Quality Assurance (QA) process right from the project development stage.

Typically, there are many parties involved in launching the resulting multilingual website campaign: designers, web agencies, CMS developers, marketing managers (internal and regional), marketing agencies, interactive agencies, IT departments, etc. Add to this the translation agency team members working on your website, and localization becomes complex by its very nature.

Here, it is important to set up boundaries and decide which person(s) will be responsible for assuring accuracy within the localization process. Take the time to organize suitable workflows with QA steps and review cycles built into your procedures and decide who will ultimately have the final say on localized content.



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