MEDIALOCATE

TAKING YOUR WEBSITE GLOBAL

The Guide to Making Your Website Localization Pay

The web is worldwide. Your site must be too.

Content management systems (CMS) have made it much easier to create and maintain a website. However, localizing all the content you publish on your website to appeal to customers in other nations, or to those who don't speak English, is sure to present a number of difficult challenges.

But go global you must. The fact is 70% or more of the online population around the world doesn't read English.

More than 50% of the Fortune 500 offer multilingual websites.

Research conducted with over 2,400 consumers across eight countries revealed 72% are more likely to buy when the content is provided in their language. 56% claimed obtaining information in their language was more important than price. (Source: Common Sense Advisory)

In working with hundreds of global companies for decades, Medialocate has gained a thorough understanding of how to avoid costly mistakes and achieve successful outcomes faster and more effectively.

In this guide, we share insights to save you valuable time and money as you embark upon website globalization projects.

Are you ready for website globalization?

For a minute, let's set aside the website globalization issues which have cost project managers around the world countless nights sleep. We'll say you're done. Your web footprint went from its original language to a series of five perfectly localized versions.

The result? A tremendous increase in traffic. Many more inquiries. Obviously, you hope the new levels of traffic and inquiries "translate" to more conversions and sales.

Will they? They could. And they should. But you must be ready to answer the new prospects' questions and deliver the same quality of support to the new customers that your existing customers enjoy.

The point here is you must look at your company, inside and out, top to bottom, from the front to the backend. You need to be prepared to provide language-specific customer and product support. Also, your web team must be ready to maintain multiple websites.

Nothing eliminates the pain like a great plan.

Rushing into website globalization is a sure way to make mistakes, burn money, and realize disappointing results.

The remedy is to lay out a website globalization road map at the very beginning of the project, closely examine the objectives, thoroughly audit your IT and content assets and resources, and then, devise a solid plan based on proven processes.

TOP FOUR [EXPENSIVE] MISTAKES

- Poor website navigation
- Inconsistent branding
- Ineffective (or offensive) translation and localization
- Bad vendor selection

*You'll now learn how to avoid these and other mistakes.

We must talk tech. Websites are created with code.

The most successful website globalization projects, both short and long-term, begin with behind-the-scenes website re-engineering, or at least, modifications. The idea is to make it easy to do the subsequent localizations as well as the ongoing updates that will follow.

This process is generally characterized as "internationalization." Following are most the most important elements.

Website server—Cleaning up the files on your server will save massive costs over time. The process typically involves removing unnecessary files, fixing directories and naming conventions, and creating a structure to make it easier to reversion the site in different languages with proper localization.

Database management—There are a variety of approaches to configuring data tables for translations, so you'll want to use the one that best suits your needs. You'll need to consider external data sources such as RSS feeds, news feeds, and AdWords as well.

Content management systems (CMS)—Many different content management systems can be used, however, you'll need to be sure the system you select offers the required language support and delivers the flexibility and integration you require.

Digital asset management systems (DAM)—The storage system you use to store and track graphics and videos should integrate seamlessly with your CMS.

Unicode—Unicode Standard is the universal character encoding standard required for consistently encoding multilingual text.

Testing—A complete localization plan must outline how the website will be tested for quality assurance, how issues are reported, and who will be responsible for addressing issues.

Which languages will you use?

Deciding which languages you'll create localized websites for is a vital part of the process. Of course, you'll need to carefully consider your objectives. While increasing revenue tends to drive most localization projects, gaining market share and improving customer service might be equally critical to your success.

Medialocate recommends considering:

Your competition—Are your competitors successful in markets you've yet to address?

Web traffic—Tap into Google Analytics and Google AdWords to gain insights regarding where traffic is coming from and how visitors are interacting with your existing site.

Social media—Leverage insights from activity on your social media accounts.

Content—The amount of content you have such as software manuals and user guides might help you determine a more practical plan for localized websites.

Regulations—Some countries have mandated translations for pharmaceuticals and other medicinal products.

Non-English speakers—If foreigners represent significant sectors of your country, you may need to create non-English websites to better serve the needs of your domestic market.

Local market research is essential.

Market research must be conducted for each language version you'll create and you'll want to consider regions where multiple languages are spoken. Each should be validated and examined for customer habits.

An important part of website globalization—or any localization effort—is examining cultural "correctness" and identifying required customizations. Also, beware of the privacy laws of each nation. Your success will depend greatly on a firm understanding of locale-specific culture.

While language translation is the most obvious and important ingredient of localizing your content, you need to review a variety of additional issues, including: color schemes, numbers, measurements, addresses, currency, date formats, brand names, and imagery.

Smart approaches to website graphics.

Language selector—The first user experience can be a bad one if it's difficult for your website visitor to select their language. A number of different techniques are used, some of which have proven to be problematic.

Best choices for user language selection are (1) a list of languages, presented in the native language and (2) a highly intuitive world map.

Copy length—Your website should be designed with flexibility in mind, particularly to accommodate blocks of copy bound to be longer or shorter. With fixed-sized "containers" a language such as Russian (which could be up to 60% longer) may not fit within the allotted space.

Conversely, an Asian language (which reduces the length of the text) may not effectively populate the space. Also, due to the complexity of the characters, Asian language text may need to be enlarged.

Graphics with text—Websites that use a lot of graphics present potential problems. If you must use graphics or video containing text they'll need to be recreated. Of course, removing these types of graphics will lower your costs. In most cases, navigation based on cascading style sheets (CSS) will be a better approach for multilingual websites.

Website marketing with search and social media.

Search engine optimization (SEO)—Planning for SEO with strategies to include country domains, keyword localization and localized landing pages is vital to your success with search.

Social media optimization—Social media marketing now plays a vital role in the marketing of your website, blog and other content. Your websites must be optimized accordingly. Share buttons should be selected based on the services and sites commonly used for the location and language. Also, you'll probably want to consider new social media strategies to align with each specific culture's online habits.

It's time for a language service provider (LSP).

To help you understand the differences between LSPs and make a smart choice, Medialocate has published a helpful guide.

Click here to download *"The Right Language Service Provider Will Grow Your Business."*

In evaluating the LSP you'll work with, consider:

- How to budget for the service you require
- Identifying and documenting your specific needs
- The risks of working with multiple LSPs
- The company's approach to service
- Technology expertise
- Your media needs
- The vendor's track record

Download the free guide for insights regarding all of the above points and more.

Medialocate speaks web.

Medialocate has been eliminating hassles and headaches, delivering timely service, and curbing costs for growing companies for more than two decades. A full-service localization service provider, *Medialocate* is fluent in web technology.

We invite you to visit our website for additional free resources and to contact us if you have any questions about preparing for highly effective website globalization.

Learn more at: *www.medialocate.com*
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