DYNAMIC LANGUAGE

The Global Marketers Checklist For Localization

Here are some tips for making your English source content easier to translate while minimizing localization costs.

Writing

- **Use short, simple sentences**. Longer sentences are more likely to be misunderstood and possibly translated incorrectly.
- **Choose words that are precise**, with one or few meanings. Words that have multiple meanings or that can be either a verb or a noun are easily misunderstood.
- **Use active voice and present tense**. Such sentences convey clear messages using the fewest words.
- **Write so that the subject and verb are near the beginning of the sentence**. This standard construction is easily understood and translated.
- **Be consistent**. If a warning statement appears more than once, write the warning exactly the same way every time. Refer to a product the same way every time. If a procedure or step appears more than once, write it the same way every time. Using repetition presents a consistent message to the user and has one of the greatest impacts on reducing translation costs!
- **Do not use slang or jargon**. Americans may understand *"keep a fire extinguisher handy,"* but such an expression may not translate easily or clearly.
- **Do not use contractions**. To facilitate translation, write *"do not"* rather than *"don't,"* for example.
- **Define abbreviations and acronyms on first use**. Use abbreviations cautiously. You may know what *"Cat. No."* means, but your translator may not.
- **Do not use Latin abbreviations**. Use *"that is"* instead of i.e., and *"for example"* rather than e.g.
- **Avoid awkward constructions** such as *"his/her"* or *"battery(ies)."* Such construction is awkward in English and even more challenging to translate, as many languages change grammatical construction or gender depending on whether the subject is singular or plural.
- **Avoid verb forms that end in** *"-ing"*. Some languages do not have a similar verb form, so the translator must rework the entire expression.
- **DO include optional words** such as *"that"* when they add clarity. Include words that indicate relationships to make your message clear.
- **Allow room for text expansion**. The general rule of thumb is to allow for up to 30% expansion; software strings may increase by up to 50%. Keep text expansion in mind especially when crafting headings, tables, and callouts. Be sure to consider text expansion when designing a multi-language document in which each language must fit into a predefined space, such a one column or one page.
- **Do not embed text in graphics**. Simplify the translation process by using numbered callouts and a corresponding legend, or define text boxes around your graphic to hold callouts. Another option is to use layered graphics and isolate translatable text on one layer.

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Is your content ready for Localization?
by Mary Dulin, Sound View Technical Writing.

Vendor Instructions

- **Fonts**. Be sure to specify (and provide, if necessary) all the fonts that are needed. If the font is not available in certain alphabets, work with your vendor to determine an appropriate substitution.
- **Software strings**. If your content includes software strings that are also translated on a device, be sure to provide the string translations to your vendor, so the translations in the text match the actual translations on the device.
- **Graphics**. If your graphic images are inserted by reference, be sure to provide your localization vendor with all graphic images.
- **Style guide and style sheets**. Provide your localization vendor with a copy of your style guide and style sheets.
- **Work with your localization vendor** to create locale-specific style guides that specify conventions such as units of measure, time and date formats, and address formats for specific locales. You may need variations of your English content to meet unique requirements in the U.S. versus England or Australia, for example. Your Portuguese content may vary depending upon whether your audience is in Portugal or Brazil. The locale-specific style guides specify these details.
- **Glossary**. Provide a glossary of key terms to help the translators understand your product.
- **Trademarks and service marks**. Provide a list of trademarked terms and service marks, and specify how they should be handled - these terms are typically not translated.

Structure

- **Adhere to a template**. Localized content can be easily formatted when template styles are used consistently.
- **Limit the number of styles in your template**. A clean, simple template allows your translation vendor to quickly format the localized content with a minimum of effort, which keeps your translation costs down.
- **Avoid manual formatting** such as tabs or extra line breaks. Define template styles that provide the necessary indentations and spacing.
- **Avoid style overrides**. Overrides may go undetected by the translation vendor.
- **Use a table to present alphabetized content**, such as a glossary or list of terms. Terms that are present-ed in a table can quickly be rearranged into alphabetical order in the localized language.
- **Use the features of your authoring tool** to create cross-references and tables of contents. Using the automated software features allows your localization vendor to quickly recreate the cross-references and tables of contents in the localized text.

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Numbers & Symbols

- **Provide metric equivalents** for all weights and measures.
- **Write dates in a format that is universally recognized**. Specifying dates in month-day-year format is common in the U.S., but many countries commonly use day-month-year format. Determine a format that will be understood by all your users – you may want to spell out the month, use month and year only, or follow some other convention that is common for your industry.
- **Include contact information** (address and telephone numbers) in a form that is useful for an international user. Toll-free 1-800 numbers are often valid only within the United States or North America. Provide an appropriate telephone number for users outside of the U.S. Spell out the words *"telephone"* and *"fax"* in contact lists.
- **Be sure to specify the currency** when listing cost, such as in a price list. Note that the dollar sign ($) alone does not indicate U.S. dollars. For example, (USD) indicates U.S. dollars, while (AUD) indicates Australian dollars and (CAD) indicates Canadian dollars.
- **Many symbols do not have a universal meaning**. For example, the # symbol can mean *"number"* or *"pound"* in the U.S., but its meaning may not be clear outside the U.S. Also, when referencing *"pound,"* be sure to specify whether you mean weight or British currency.
- **The double quote (")** that is used to represent *"inch"* in the U.S. may have little meaning to your global users. Provide an appropriate metric measure.
- **Choose colors carefully**, as colors may have religious or cultural significance.
- **Use caution when designing icons**. Try to use generic symbols that are internationally recognized. The Microsoft Manual of Style, 4th Edition, recommends: *"Do not use hand signs: nearly every hand sign is offensive somewhere."*
- **Put index markers and other hidden text at the end of sentences or paragraphs**. Hidden text that breaks up a sentence fragments the text in the translation memory and makes the translator's job more challenging.

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