

# 10 Tips on Achieving Quality in Localization and Translation

Your boss walks into your office one afternoon and says: "The VP of Sales just announced the closing of a seven-figure sale in China, pending the availability of our product in Chinese."

He then proceeds to instruct you to "mobilize all available Chinese resources in the company to participate in the translation of the product so that a working Chinese version can be released as soon as possible."

Is this scenario familiar to you? If so, you are not alone. Misunderstandings in the area of localization are still very common even in this global age. Read [Top 5 Myths in Localization](#) to learn more.

This sale in China is a golden opportunity that your competitors fought for and will continue to fight for. You are the chosen person to make the sale happen by keeping your competition away. This is not the time to panic; it's the time to lead, educate, and execute to meet your newly acquired customers' needs and thrill them with your product.

The following ten tips will help you navigate through the requirements of this project and deliver a quality product that your international end-users will thank you for.

## 1. Identify all the requirements and strategy *upfront*

Before starting any work, careful consideration should be given to what the client is promised. It is essential that all localization requirements are identified, documented, and signed off on from the beginning. The requirements may include the localization of software components, online help, user or reference manuals, tutorials, installation scripts and notes, license agreements, support website and other supporting materials. Knowing what the exact requirements are up front will eliminate the last-minute scramble that can lead to rushed work and inferior quality.

Once you have identified the requirements, your next task is to identify a strategy for handling the localization tasks. Three strategy options are available to you: over-the-wall, coupled, and integrated.

**Over-the-wall:** In the over-the-wall approach, you undertake localization tasks after the source is final. The main advantages of using this strategy are that first, it shields engineering from localization activities so they can focus on releasing the source language product; and second, it minimizes the costs of localization since a stable source will minimize updates to the target files.

The disadvantage, however, is that quality may suffer due to the lack of ability to influence the source. If the localization team detects problems in the source, it may be too late to address them. Also, time-to-market for international products will suffer since localized material won't be available until many weeks after the source is finished.

**Coupled:** In the coupled strategy, localization staffs coordinate with the development team to initiate localization efforts shortly after the product is stabilizing and the documentation is taking shape. This is usually around beta release (or pre-release) of the product. Since translation is often the critical phase of localization, starting the translation early will accelerate the release of international products. This coupled approach solves the problems identified in the over-the-wall approach, but it does not permit for simultaneous beta testing of all localized products with the source product. Since localization is taking place while the source product undergoes beta testing, testing of the localized product will follow testing of the source.

*Localization is the adaptation of a product, product documentation, website and supporting collateral to meet the language and local needs of a specific geographic market.*

*Quality comes at a price justifiable by its dividends: fewer support calls, wider product use, and satisfied clients.*

Integrated: The integrated strategy permits the simultaneous release of source and localized products. This approach enables the release of beta or pre-release products in multiple languages at once, allowing testing in all languages.

Using a fully integrated strategy will require the localization staffs to have continuous access to source files even at the alpha (product development freeze) stage. Here, frequent updates to the localized files will be necessary to keep up with development and to permit frequent builds of the localized product. These frequent builds will permit the localized products to be ready for beta or pre-release testing with the source language version. While the integrated approach permits true simultaneous release of the product in all languages, frequent updates of the files will add to the costs.

Regardless of which approach you choose, expert help at this stage is critical. If you do not have it, hire it. Having the correct strategy and methodology in place up front, along with the expertise to make it work, constitute the most critical elements of success. Read [Your Localization Strategy Should Evolve with Your Needs](#) for more on localization strategies.

## **2. Get a commitment from the top**

Once you have identified your localization requirements and the proper strategy, getting top executives' commitment becomes of key.

Going ahead before securing their commitment will turn your project into an under-funded and unsupported nightmare. Quality and scheduling problems will be everywhere and almost with certainty your international end-users will shelve your so-called localized product and revert to using your source version-- or your competitor's product.

Your best bet is to approach decision makers with several strategies and scenarios and present them the pros and cons of each. You will then need to get them to commit to the one that best fits the company's strategic requirements with adequate budgets, staffing and time.

## **3. Evade the schedule and budget ax**

It took two months for the project to be approved. Once it was, they wanted it done yesterday and at the least possible cost! Have you ever been there? You have to resist the pressure to tighten schedules and budgets. Projects under schedule pressure either require more translators thrown on the project or force the translators to rush the project. Neither contributes to producing the best quality result.

Once the requirements are identified and documented, they will drive the schedules and the costs. There are techniques to apply to expedite the schedule, but certain limits cannot be exceeded without sacrificing quality. Experienced localization project managers should be consulted and listened to. Their application of the five P's of management (Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance) will ensure success. Keep in mind that it is not enough to know how to deal with the project issues that are at hand: You also need to know how to deal with the unexpected-- schedule changes, source updates, last-minute surprises...

When it comes to budgets, remember that there is a price to be paid for quality. Always keep in mind who you're localizing your product for and why. Cost-cutting measures should never steer your focus away from meeting the end user's promised requirements. The costliest scenario is having users shelve your localized product in favor of your source language product - or worse, your competitors.

**Translation Memory:**  
*As our staff translates your manuals and Internet pages, the computer stores all source and target texts. Throughout the translation process, all identical or fuzzy matches found in the database, are automatically retrieved.*

*This is possible with the advent of Translation Management software. It not only enforces consistency within the same manual, but also across multiple manuals and GUIs, leading to much improved quality in the localized products.*

*Articles are found [here](#). While you check them out, make sure you subscribe online to our monthly newsletter!*

#### 4. Employ the best people

Once you have set the appropriate budget and deadlines, seek the best for the tasks ahead. Localization is a job for professionals. In addition to hiring the best project manager, look to hire the best technical talents and native translators experienced with the subject material. Knowledgeable technical staffs know how to separate (then fuse) the art from the science in localization, and native translators can adapt the translations to suit the specific market and cultural needs of your client.

Industry professionals can also help you identify the right processes and technologies to apply. Their higher pay rates are always justified by improved efficiency, faster turnaround, and better quality.

#### 5. Remember that process is king

Quality can be reinforced by process and technology. Tools, like the use of [Translation Management System](#) to manage all localization efforts and assets are essential to promote quality.

Translation reuse automation is a proven efficiency and quality enabler. No matter what process you use --top-down, bottom-up, or a hybrid form (read [Localization Processes](#))-- building translation databases and repositories is a must. Translators should never have to re-invent the wheel, or re-translate strings already translated. You shouldn't have to pay for the translation of a string that is already translated and approved each time you update your product.

Terminology management is about maintaining glossaries specific to your industry, content, and technology. Automating the process will enable translators to work consistently and accurately. Tools should enable terminology databases to be built from the beginning of the localization project until the end, not just of the project but the very end of the localized product lifecycle. Easy, continuous maintenance as your product is regularly updated is essential.

Using the correct technology will add more value to translation and localization projects by improving quality while enabling everyone to work more efficiently.

#### 6. Don't forget: Garbage-in leads to garbage-out

The quality of the localized product cannot exceed the quality of the source. Often localization staffs gauge the quality standards of a company from the source, then raise (or lower) their standard based on their evaluation. For instance, if the source text contains many typos, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies, the localization team will assume that the target files can have a similar quality standard.

Source text that is clear, concise, consistent, and correct is essential to produce the same in all target languages. Localization involves adaptation via translation, not re-authoring. For more information on this subject, refer to [Authoring for Localization](#).

#### 7. Check and double-check

The complete localization process should include translation, full review, in-country proof, and quality assurance (QA). Mistakes introduced early on in the process can cause a large ripple effect, and the costs to correct at the end can be very high. Quality occurs at the source and throughout the process, not just during final QA. Each step of the process should be checked to ensure accurate localization.

*Translation Memory enables a top-down localization methodology for text reuse that minimizes costs during future updates/revisions of your products.*

*Sidestepping the budget and schedule ~~ax~~ requires experience and stature. The most cost-effective way to avoid these problems is to engage an experienced localization vendor, one that is capable of offering their experienced staff's support at a moment's notice to help you fulfill your global vision. Read [Top 5 Reasons Why Product Localization Fails](#) on why localization projects fail.*

Having a reviewer double-check translators' work by comparing source against target will ensure consistency in style and terminology between translators. A reviewer can also verify that translations are accurate, grammatically correct, and free of spelling mistakes.

Final QA should include linguistic and functional testing. Often in-country staffs, working for your company, are more experienced with your product and user requirements and can recommend changes that will make your product more useful to your users (refer to [How to select your in-country reviewers](#)).

Budget or schedule pressure may force cutting the second translator review or QA, or turn both into a cursory review. Final quality assurance may also seem unnecessary (refer to [Localization QA: How important?](#)). Bypassing any of these areas will lead to inferior quality, having a negative effect on your company's image, reputation, product usability, and end-user satisfaction.



### **8. Remember it is a two-way street**

Localization efforts are a two-way street between all involved - developers, authors, localizers, and reviewers. Encourage everyone to be proactive, responsive, and punctual. Create collaborative reporting procedures, ensuring that information is provided in a useful, accurate, and timely manner. Project managers should communicate and address outstanding project tasks or problems, update schedules, and chronicle project deliverables and milestones. If you are working with a localization vendor, respond to queries on a timely basis. Be complete and accurate with your answers. Remember, they are under a tight schedule to deliver and they will deliver, with your answers or without. With your timely responses, quality will be certain (refer to [10 Localization Resolutions](#)).

### **9. Close the feedback loop**

In control theory, an open loop system is unstable. Localization staffs should not work in a vacuum. They need feedback. Your in-country staffs and end users should have a way to communicate to your localization team. This feedback should be documented and implemented in the translation databases that are built in order to prevent similar mistakes in future updates of your product. If feedback is not present, disconnect is more likely to happen and convergence with your end-users' needs may never materialize.

If you choose to work with a localization vendor, make sure you pick a partner who will be with you for the long term and will want to learn and adapt to your end users' needs. If vendors are indeed acting as partners, they will want to learn of any issues that your end-users are having so they can correct them and better serve their future needs.

### **10. Never take short cuts**

Being in the heat of a localization project all the time may clutter your mind and cloud your judgment. Always take time to step back from it all to sneak a global look at what you are trying to accomplish. When a big deal is riding on the delivery of a product, it is common to make mistakes driven by short-term thinking.

Short cuts are products of short-term thinking and they are guaranteed to create schedule and quality problems. All ten tips mentioned in this paper need to be followed to successfully deliver a quality product. Cutting any of them will have short- and long-term ramifications leading to increased costs, lowered quality, and missed deadlines.

When you partner with a localization vendor, you have decided to work with professionals who understand all the nuances of localization. You should expect professional results that your end-user will be thrilled to use. Quality comes at a price justifiable by its dividends -fewer support calls, wider product use, and satisfied clients. The cost of poor quality far exceeds its savings. Never accept anything less than a completely satisfied end-user.

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## About GlobalVision International

GlobalVision is a full translation and localization solution provider to industries involved in information technology, manufacturing, business, medical and consumer products, and media. GlobalVision is equipped with experts who can convert products, literature, websites, and PPC campaigns from and into all commercial languages.



*Enabling Globalization*

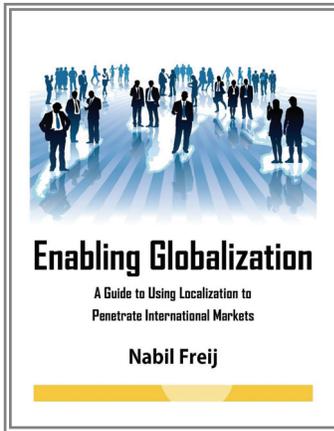
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## Enabling Globalization: A Guide to Using Localization to Penetrate International Markets

We've built this guide because despite the need, nothing like it exists: a concise, step-by-step handbook for globalization and localization in the new millennium.

New clients come to us with a desire to go global but unsure of what the process entails. Some face a catch-22 dilemma. They want to penetrate international markets, but cannot justify the localization costs.

Others – some who have been localizing for years – want to know more about the new tools and processes that will improve both their results and their bottom line.

Here you will find the practical advice you need to start on your way and follow through to a successful finish.

So, whether you're just entering the wide world of globalization or you're a veteran of the field, this guide is for you. We invite you to take a look inside the industry through the eyes of a successful localization company. [Enabling Globalization](#) will enlighten and inspire you – and leave you eager to tackle your next international market!

The eBook is offered free of charge to GlobalVision's clients or may be purchased from [Amazon](#) or the book's website at [www.EnablingGlobalization.com](http://www.EnablingGlobalization.com).

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