

A person is captured in mid-air, jumping across a deep canyon. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon behind a range of rugged mountains. The person's silhouette is dark against the bright sky. The canyon walls are rocky and textured, and the overall atmosphere is one of adventure and challenge.

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# 13 Key Challenges of Website Localization Projects

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Website translation poses unique technological, management and budgetary challenges. Do you know what to plan for?

## Introduction

When it comes to launching localized websites to serve global customers, **few considerations are more important than speed to market.** Whether it's to gain a first-mover advantage or to rapidly respond to competitors, it's often critical to get in-market, in-language, quickly.

Getting there, usually under aggressive timelines, often falls to the Marketing department. **But marketers often have little or no experience overseeing website translation projects.** That, combined with a lack of linguistic fluency and knowledge of global customers, can leave them feeling outclassed—fast.

Newcomers to these projects can't fully anticipate what a minefield they can be. Website localization is very different from conventional translation projects. Many unseen issues can delay a project. **Others will downright derail them.**

Here are 13 “gotchas” to consider, and prepare for, as you embark on your website translation journey.



## 1 Clearly Define Your Business Goals

Website translation projects can sink or swim, based solely on the goals and expectations companies place upon them. Identifying a target market isn't enough to ensure success. You must take a thoughtful and strategic approach to serving customers there, too.

Has your company answered these key questions, to clarify the business objectives of your translated website?

- ▶ **What will the site be used for?** Direct sales or conversions? Capturing leads? Information sharing? Support for local teams? If there's more than one goal, prioritize them to help focus your project to achieve them.
- ▶ **What parts of the site are crucial?** This might be your site's conversion path, a portfolio of case studies, or other important sections. Identifying this content will help determine which should be prioritized for translation.
- ▶ **What local legal or regulatory requirements must be met?** Determine what content needs to be added, changed or localized to meet local laws and regulations.

Your answers can form the foundation of your project, both from a technical and content perspective. From there, you can more easily determine what sections of the site to prioritize for localization.

## 2 Choose an Efficient Translation Approach

While the actual translation of your website's content is not the *only* part of the project—though it's often sold as if it is—it's certainly an important and essential one. Ideally, this process should be nimble, manageable, efficient and scalable both in the short-and long-term.

Companies often select one of these three approaches to website translation:

### 1. Translated Microsite

Companies often launch and operate translated microsites for their global customers. While well-intentioned, **these sites often alienate customers** who expect content parity and functionality with a company's flagship website.

Further, localized microsites are difficult to update regularly, leading to stale or inaccurate on-site content. **This creates negative user experiences, poorly-optimized conversion paths and other problems.**

### 2. Multilingual CMS

In recent years, content management systems (CMSs) have deployed multilingual, multisite capabilities to address the growing needs of global businesses. **While flexible and powerful, CMSs often fall short under the rigors of daily website translation.**

How? Updates to your CMS or tech stack can break brittle “connectors” that funnel translated content to your multilingual sites. Further, translated content can wreck page templates originally designed for (often shorter) English text. CMSs also lack robust translation workflows and workbenches, resulting in inconsistent and delayed translations.



### 3. Proxy-Based

The proxy-based approach to website translation sidesteps those issues. This solution **leverages the code and content of your flagship website** to translate, deploy, and continuously operate multilingual versions. Fully turn-key proxy solutions also exist; these nearly eliminate all effort on your side.

The proxy approach operates independently of your CMS, monitoring your site for new or updated content. It also detects translatable text in multimedia files, applications, third-party content and more. It automatically routes this translatable content to linguists who translate, QA, and publish the localized content right away. Proxy solutions seamlessly adapt to site redesigns and re-platforms, too.

## 3 Understand the Scope of Work

The scope of website translation projects are often defined by two primary considerations—**your goals and your budget**.

Finding the right balance can be challenging. **A lot rides on keeping costs down, while still fully meeting—if not exceeding—customer needs and expectations.**

When determining the scope of a project, consider the following factors:

- ▶ **Budget:** Will the project budget allow for a fully-featured, fully-translated website? Or will it only cover “just enough” to establish a beachhead in the market?
- ▶ **“Must-Have” Content:** Among your new customers, which sections or pages on your site deliver the most value and visibility for your brand? Those deserve translation.
- ▶ **Conversion Paths:** Be sure to translate any site elements that lead to proven conversions (both transactional and non-transactional), such as shopping carts and newsletter opt-ins.

Website translation projects are about **striking the right balance between budget, business goals and customer needs**. Great vendors can make it affordable to enter new markets by limiting your project’s scope to the most critical and relevant content.



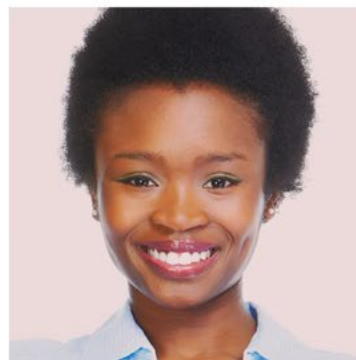
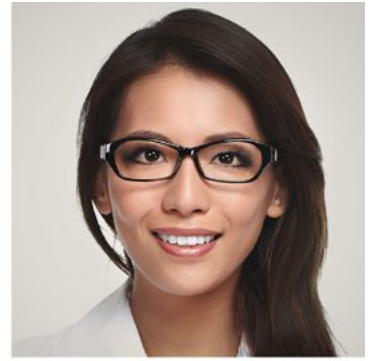
## 4 Understand the Market, Its Culture and Customers

Market fluency is often overlooked as a critical factor in website translation projects. Understanding a market's customers, their shopping preferences, and unique culture can generate brand credibility and trust.

This fluency can be reflected in *localizations*, a type of translation that captures locally-preferred lingo, while accounting for customer habits and other considerations. It can also be showcased in *customizations*—presenting specially-modified elements of your translated site to offer market-specific promotions, imagery and more.

These thoughtful additions demonstrate that your brand knows the market, and “speaks the language” in a natural, relevant and engaging way. **Customers love this.**

**This fluency can't come at the expense of slowing your time-to-market, however.** You need a solution that combines efficiency and speed with a team that understands the nuances of every language, as well as the people who speak it.



## 5 Define Your In-Market Brand Voice

You've worked hard to define the voice and tone of the marketing in your primary market. **It's now time to put the same thought into defining the voice for your global markets.**

Ideally, your brand's personality **should be consistent across all markets.** It's especially important to define this with your translation team at the outset of a project. A lack of vision or commitment can result in changes to translations down the road ... **which create major delays and increased costs.**

## 6 Create a Glossary and Style Guide

Language is used in unique ways within **specific markets.** That means every website translation project should have a unique set of translation guidelines.

Once you've confirmed your website's global voice, it's important to formalize those guidelines and others. You, or more ideally, your translation vendor, will want to create two resources:

- ▶ A **glossary** of the terminology, phrases and product names that are important to your company and industry

- ▶ A **style guide** that documents the tone and voice of your company

Both serve as vital resources for not just the launch of a translated website, but for its ongoing operation as new content is published. **These rulebooks help preserve tone and translation quality.**

Two parties are often involved in creating style guides and glossaries: **your marketing team** brings the brand and company knowledge, while **your translation vendor** brings expertise in market fluency and translation.

Both documents are fluid, and change as your in-market business needs or priorities evolve.



# 7 Choose Your Translation Approach

Make sure you also have clarity on which **kind of translation you want to use on-site**, and **how authentic you want your brand to be to local customers**. There are several approaches, each with their own strengths and drawbacks—including an impact on the customer experience:

## 1. Machine vs. Human vs. Hybrid Translation

**Machine translation** promises speed and low costs, but downsides include simplistic word choice, lack of cultural nuance, and off-brand messaging. **Human translation** eliminates these concerns, and can be implemented affordably if you choose the right solution.

A savvy “**hybrid**” approach works well for many companies: use machine translation for lower-priority pages, and use human translation on higher-value sections of a site.

## 2. Translation vs. Localization

**Conventional translation** enables you to publish content that is understandable to anyone who speaks the language, regardless of where they might live. This “**region neutral**” word choice is enough to establish baseline credibility for entering new markets.

However, **localizations “level up” your translations** by incorporating cultural and linguistic nuances. These special translations present a more authentic message to the audience, which often drives deeper engagement.

## 3. Localization vs. Over-Localization

**While localization is important, it is possible to go too far.** Such “**over-localization**” results when the localized content is difficult to track, manage and update by your translation team—or when customers notice just how “**localized**” your site might be, and how different it is from your primary-market website.

**It’s a tricky balance.** An 80% / 20% mix of translated to localized content demonstrates market fluency without alienating customers.



## 8 Understanding & Building Translation Workflows

If you want to manage your website translation project **with in-house resources**, you must develop complicated workflows necessary to translate—and maintain the daily operation of—your localized website. **That's a lot of effort.**

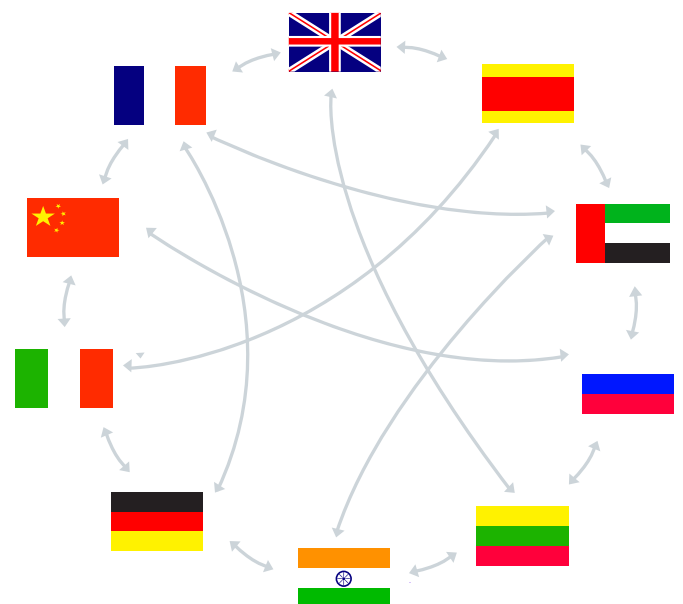
Consider this selection of workflow issues:

- ✓ Thoroughly identifying and compiling **all on-site content for translation** (including text, images, multimedia, PDFs and more), before the multilingual site is translated
- ✓ Acquiring the resources required to **develop and manage translation workflows**, quality assurance and project management
- ✓ Overseeing **the transmission of translatable content** to in-house translation teams or offsite vendors
- ✓ Owning the process of getting that material **translated quickly and accurately**
- ✓ Owning the process of **vetting the translated content** for accuracy, authenticity and brand consistency
- ✓ Integrating the translated content into **the proper international "instance"** of

your multilingual CMS, to serve the right global market

- ✓ Assuring the translated content **fits seamlessly within established page templates**, and doesn't "break" page designs due to word growth and other translation-related issues
- ✓ Managing the **exponential growth of personnel and resources** when adding even more languages to serve new markets

A gap at any stage of this management process can lead to **delays in publishing translated content, which leads to subpar user experiences**. That can damage your brand credibility. Bounce rates can soar, while conversion rates sink.



## 9 Build a Translation Team

Before you hire an in-house translation team or outsource translation tasks to a vendor, **make sure to vet those linguists for qualifications and expertise.** Failure to do so can quickly jeopardize a project, if your people are less qualified than advertised, or unfamiliar with your industry or target market.

The ideal team should include a mix of the following:

- ▶ **Subject matter experts** with a knowledge of industry terminology, business goals and target audience as well as relevant certifications and experience.
- ▶ **Brand experts** who are well versed in your voice and tone, as well as preferred terminology and word choice.
- ▶ **Editors and quality assurance managers** who ensure accurate translations are deployed every time. They also conduct regular audits to ensure consistency and perfect on-site functionality.

**It's also vital that this translation team be involved with your project at all stages, from planning to launch to ongoing operation.**

Their constant involvement helps increase

their familiarity and knowledge of your brand and industry—which improves their efficiency and accuracy.

## 10 Understanding Pricing

Website translation vendors want your business. And they'll often do just about anything to get it, including offering attractive—but deceptively low—prices.

The adage that “you get what you pay for” holds true here, unfortunately. Their promises of bargain translation pricing are often offset by:

- ✘ **Substandard technology** that delivers lousy translations
- ✘ **Hidden fees for proofreading and editing** that don't appear until work is invoiced
- ✘ Fees for translating **the same content more than once**
- ✘ **Slow translation turnaround times** that delay market parity and content implementation
- ✘ Per-page-view fees that charge you more when your site experiences increased site traffic—**effectively punishing you for success**

It's essential to find a website translation vendor that offers accurate, fair and transparent pricing models. Best practices include:

- ✓ **Per-word rates should be all inclusive**, reflecting translation, revision, on-site QA and other editorial oversight
- ✓ You should never pay more than once to translate your content—**translate once, pay once, use anywhere**
- ✓ Previously-translated content should be available **at no additional charge** for use in your multichannel efforts
- ✓ **Flat technology subscription rates**, not fluctuating costs based on website traffic or other month-to-month variables

## 11 Understand What You're Paying For

“Website translation” is certainly about the actual translation of your website. **But these projects are driven by powerful technologies, expertise, customer value and more.**

As you examine vendor pricing, be mindful that you're paying for the technologies, skills and resources of a team that's already been built to provide efficient, scalable solutions. You're offloading considerable linguistic and technical work to them not only **because you can, but because it's the best possible alternative.**

In the case of the best vendors, the price also includes the use of fully turn-key technology that keeps the translated website operating efficiently, and at parity with your primary-market site, with minimal involvement or worry. **This quickly provides clear and demonstrable long-term value.**



## 12 Consider Multichannel Translation

Your translated website will be a great marketing channel for reaching global customers, **but it shouldn't be the only one.** Localizing your content for in-market social media, advertising, sales support, in-store use and more will contribute to a **holistic and effective marketing effort.**

Your website translation vendors should support your multilingual multichannel needs. The best enable you to leverage the power of your *translation memory*—a complete database of your translations—at **any time, for any use, and at no additional cost.** This can be delivered through an API, or an intuitive user interface, or both.

This capability creates a consistent brand voice across all channels, **using the same words and phrases on any media the customer will encounter,** building trust and engagement.

## 13 Have a Post-Launch Update Strategy

Launching your translated website doesn't signal the end of the project. It's merely the beginning. **Websites are living, growing, evolving marketing channels that require constant updates and adjustments.**

Your branding and other messaging will change over time. You'll add content—including products, pages, multimedia assets and more. Customer conversion paths will be tweaked. You'll redesign your website, or migrate it to another platform altogether.

**Throughout all these changes, your website translation solution should effortlessly and seamlessly keep pace—even during disruptive re-platforming projects.**

This is important, even during the seemingly mundane day-to-day operation of your localized site. Managing the site is harder than it sounds. The best vendors have great change-detection technologies and efficient workflows that identify new content for translation, and typically publish it **within one business day.** Without that, you risk:



- ✘ Pages being added but not translated
- ✘ Overlooked content updates
- ✘ Compromised and inconsistent look and feel
- ✘ Delayed translation processes that create poor customer experiences

**These workflow failures often result in alienated customers,** which can damage to your brand credibility around the world.

## Conclusion

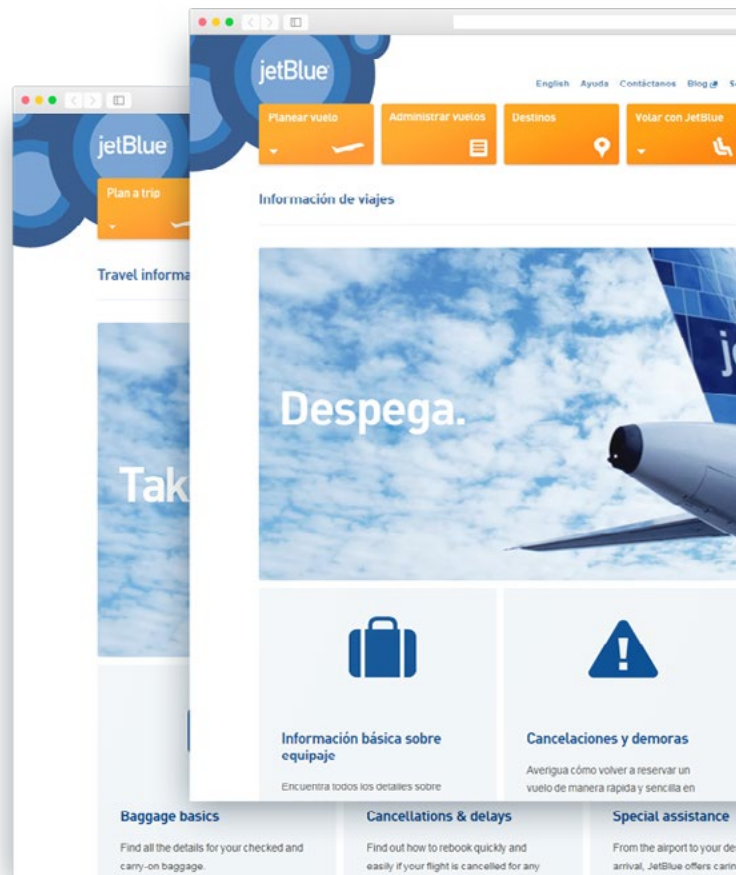
When it comes to launching and operating localized websites, speed-to-market is key. But you probably lack the experience to expertly oversee a website translation project. Overlooking even one of the 13 gotchas found in this document can derail the project before, during or after its debut. That leads to wasted effort, money and time.

Have you considered all the above points as you map out your site translation project? Does it seem overwhelming? If so, it may be time to leverage a world-class, fully turn-key translation solution.

## About MotionPoint

MotionPoint solves the operational complexity and cost of localizing web and digital content. Unlike all other approaches, our technology and turn-key solution are built specifically for this purpose.

We translate, deploy, and operate multilingual websites and other digital content, optimizing the customer experience across all channels.



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