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How to Manage a Multilingual Website

Successfully translating and operating a website requires streamlined involvement from many stakeholders and departments.

Introduction

Managing a multilingual website involves far more than translating content into another language.

The end-to-end process of building and operating an accurate, up-to-date and relevant localized site has many steps. Most of them require specialized expertise in areas ranging from SEO optimization to software coding—and that means close coordination with departments such as marketing, IT and web development.

The ramifications of effective (or ineffective) website management are also complicated and extend across your organization. For instance, a well-managed site supports sales efforts in new markets by building awareness of your brand, products and services. But a poorly translated or outdated site leads to customer confusion ... or lack of awareness entirely.

With such high stakes, there are two key questions to address:

- ✓ In the face of all this complexity, what's the best way to manage a localized website?
- ✓ Once armed with that information, how do you begin a website translation project?

This guide can help you tackle the logistical challenges of managing your multilingual site. By analyzing internal resources and identifying solutions to fill gaps, you can establish a smooth, coordinated workflow.

What's Involved in Multilingual Website Management?

Website localization often requires many unseen tasks. For instance, to translate content from your origin site, it must be processed through a translation workflow, which often includes these steps:

- ✓ Identify new or updated content for translation
- ✓ Extract the content from the origin site and separate it from its code
- ✓ Send the content to translators
- ✓ Receive translated content and review for accuracy
- ✓ Incorporate the translation into the website design
- ✓ Make sure new content displays properly and all functionality works
- ✓ Repeat as needed to keep the site current



Beyond translation, other aspects also require management:

- ▶ Vendors such as translation services and web hosting providers
- ▶ Technologies such as CMS connectors and APIs
- ▶ SEO keyword libraries and other optimization tools
- ▶ Analysis and reporting of site performance

Given all the steps and tasks necessary in these sorts of projects, a critical first step is identifying the internal resources you can enlist to perform or oversee these tasks.

Which Resources are Available for Multilingual Website Management?

The breadth and depth of expertise available in your organization to handle multilingual website projects typically depends on how specialized and experienced they are with projects of this type and scope. A large IT team that includes developers can provide a distinct advantage, while leaner teams may struggle with both the workload and needed subject matter expertise.

The functions on the next page typically play an active role in multilingual website projects.

You should analyze the skill level and experience of your employees in each function to identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps.

Marketing

The marketing team usually has overall responsibility and ownership for a website localization project. Consider whether people in your marketing organization:

- ▶ Fluently speak the language of the global market you wish to serve
- ▶ Understand the market's culture, business practices and customer preferences, which can influence content selection and translation
- ▶ Are versed in UX best practices and key technical needs
- ▶ Are knowledgeable about international SEO, including regional and local nuances

Web Development

Take a look at your web development team to determine if the staff:

- ▶ Has experience working with sites in other languages, which is important for understanding cultural expectations for layout, design elements, navigation, etc.
- ▶ Understands how to localize information such as date formats, regionally preferred spellings, currency and special characters
- ▶ Has enough bandwidth to deploy and manage another website in addition to your origin site

IT

This team may be needed to solve a range of technical issues during the translation and deployment process, from broken site code to CMS connector updates, so find out:

- ▶ Which internal systems integrate with, or depend on, the website
- ▶ How much experience the team has in web software coding and troubleshooting
- ▶ Whether the IT manager is willing and able to dedicate resources to the website localization project If funding is available for training in website administration, if needed

These departments may have also a supporting role in the multilingual site:

Customer Success: Provides guidance on the types of content that local prospects and customers are looking for.

Sales: Provides feedback how the website is being received on the ground in the new country or region.

Legal: Reviews the site for any compliance issues specific to the target geography.

How Does Inefficient Multilingual Site Management Impact Business Goals?

Realistically, few organizations have all the marketing, IT and web development resources needed to efficiently create and operate a multilingual websites.

Even if you have the right teams with the right expertise, they may be too busy to take on the task of building, deploying and managing another site. And if you have siloed departments that don't work well together or have poor communication, your project can suffer for it.

When a translated site is poorly deployed and managed, the site's ongoing content quality and UX can suffer. Partial or inaccurate translations, outdated or inappropriate information, and broken site functionality can negatively impact your site's business performance.

In addition, consider these common impact areas:

MARKETING GOALS

When the marketing team can't handle web management or doesn't receive support from the organization's IT, development or legal

departments, multilingual sites end up with subpar quality, accuracy, comprehensiveness and ease of use. A half-baked site can impact the brand, alienate customers or even affect regulatory compliance in the new market.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

Inconsistencies in a localized website's content and branding undermines the success of demand generation campaigns, ad campaigns and media outreach.

SALES GOALS

If sales and marketing don't communicate well, multilingual sites can fail to meet the needs of local audiences. The outcomes often include lowered conversion rates and sales performance—both on the website and overall in the region.

CUSTOMER SUCCESS GOALS

International customers looking for support, guidance or additional information on localized sites can be impacted by a poor or fractured translation experience, too. This poses risk to retention goals and future business.

IT GOALS

When the IT team is constantly distracted by marketing requests for assistance with the localized website, other strategic projects take a back seat. However, if the localized site ends up at the bottom of IT's to-do list, the project's performance and operation suffers as a result.

How Can You Overcome Management Hurdles?

Assuming you have at least a few gaps in your multilingual site management capabilities, let's look at ways to fill them—including implementing third-party technology solutions.

Your goal should be a smooth, streamlined process that stays ahead of potential issues, minimizes stress and keeps everyone on the same page.

Here are some common scenarios and suggestions for addressing shortcomings:



1 A marketing team **without technical expertise** will need IT assistance to identify multimedia and technical web elements that require translation (such as images with embedded text, graphs and charts, metadata, third-party apps, forms and linked documents). They'll also need help fixing any technical issues that arise, like the mistaken translation of web code that might affect site functionality.

SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ Hire a dedicated IT person for the web localization project
- ✓ Request ongoing resourcing from the IT team
- ✓ Choose a technology-based translation management solution that can handle technical aspects of website management as well as translation with minimal IT involvement

2 A marketing team **that includes a web manager** has a technical edge over the previous scenario. Web managers understand CMS technology, SEO, simple code fixes and technology integrations that might impact a translated site. Although the team may need occasional IT help, the web manager should be able to handle most of the site's requirements.

SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ Use a connector that is compatible with your origin website's existing CMS to transmit content to and from an external translation service. Keep in mind that the connector will need to be customized by IT each time the CMS is updated or changed
- ✓ Upgrade the current CMS to a system specifically designed for multilingual sites
- ✓ Concurrently deploy a proxy translation solution that works seamlessly with any CMS

3 A dedicated **IT administrator and project team** to support a website translation project offers marketing a great combination of technical savvy and resource availability. Having technology-savvy teams involved in the project also means marketing can rely on advanced translation solutions that require just a bit more technology work to leverage.

SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ Use an API supplied by the translation vendor to create a workflow that accommodates content both within the CMS and submitted outside of it
- ✓ Develop a tailored API interface that works with the company's back-end web systems, CMS platforms and any other core technologies that supply content

The Turn-Key Proxy Advantage

During this strategy phase, it's a good idea to research the latest technology-based tools for website translation and operation ... especially if you have lean resources, limited knowledge and heavy demands on your time and organization.

Advanced technologies—such as turn-key proxy translation solutions—can take the burden off of you and help:

- ✓ Minimize labor-intensive processes

- ✓ Avoid manual effort and translation management
- ✓ Seamlessly integrate translation tech with your CMS
- ✓ Streamline workflows for your website project

Leveraging a great technology solution that makes the most of automation and human expertise can help you deliver a multilingual site that meets the highest expectations of your local customers—and accelerates your success around the globe.

Conclusion

Managing localized websites is more complicated than it may appear, and that complexity trips up many companies that are surprised by the workload.

Success requires planning, collaboration, communication and support from web translation and management technologies. Translation solutions range from comprehensive, turn-key solutions to point products that require more IT development and oversight.

Ongoing technical advancements continue to simplify and streamline the website management process. Getting the process and technologies right can ensure that your global business can benefit from a fine-tuned, well-translated site that supports your customers now and in the future.

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