



Localization Best Practices

Do you sell your products or services to international markets? If you do, you probably already know the value of localizing your business documents, whether they are marketing materials, web content, or technical manuals for customers or support staff. But how can you make sure that you're receiving accurate translations, and that your costs aren't higher than they need to be? Here are three *best practices* that can help you get high quality at an affordable cost.

- **Make sure that your localizers live in the market for which they localize.**
All languages change over time, with new terms cropping up, old terms falling from favor, and grammar and punctuation being continually modified. Also, regions that share the same language (for example, Portugal and Brazil) don't necessarily share the same dialect or terminologies. A localizer who lives in the target market will be more aware of the language's idioms, idiosyncrasies, and on-going evolution.
- **Your localized documents should feature the same internal consistency and standard-wording practices as your English-language documents.**
You'll want to create a terminology list for the English-language documents that you pass along to your localizers, so that terms are used correctly and consistently throughout your company's documentation. This is especially important if you will have more than one localizer working on a project for a particular language, or if you happen to change localizers on later projects. Be sure to request updates to your terminology list as you send new projects out for localization.
- **Select one of the many translation software packages available on the market, and make sure that all your localizers use it to create translation memories as they translate your content.**
A translation memory tool is a database of translated sentences. The database is populated by human localizers, who translate complete sentences and then add them to the tool. Then, whenever a new document is submitted for translation, the localizer can use the translation software to run the document, sentence by sentence, against the translation memory and automatically replace recognized sentences with the translated version of those sentences. This not only saves time—it's much quicker for a localizer to confirm an auto-translated sentence than to translate it from scratch—but it also helps ensure consistency in your translations. Better still, if you update a document you've translated in the past, the database can automatically translate all those parts that remain unchanged and highlight those strings that are new or revised, further reducing your translation costs. Always request an updated instance of translation memory from your localizers, and be sure to maintain one for every language that you regularly use for localization.

Remember that your documentation influences how your customers feel about your company. High-quality localization helps you broaden the reach of your goods and services. It also helps you make a good impression with customers in new markets around the world.