

Multilingual Knowledge Management Empowers Global eBusiness

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With the wholesale penetration of Internet technologies into global business operations, employees at every level of an organization are collaborating across multiple geographies. But with no common language, knowledge workers—be they colleagues, customers, suppliers or partners—face a new challenge in communicating ideas and sharing information effectively.

To bridge this linguistic gap, global companies are adopting knowledge management and globalization platforms that support ongoing translation and dissemination of multilingual content. Whether content repositories include file systems, databases, Web-based applications or all of these, achieving the critical transformation of eBusiness information into multilingual eBusiness knowledge requires astute planning and robust localization management tools.

Five Critical Questions Before You Start

There are five factors that must be considered before embarking on any globalization initiative because they will directly impact the design of your knowledge management system.

1) What languages will your constituents require? Success in supporting a second language invariably spawns pressure to add others. The key is to adopt a globalization platform that can easily accommodate additional languages, as need demands.

2) How quickly must content be translated? A multilingual knowledge management system needs to be optimized for the velocity of new information coming into the repositories and the criticality of information going out. Virus warnings necessitate turnaround in hours. Technical manual updates require a longer, more intricate workflow.

3) What data formats will be handled? Are you looking strictly at HTML pages? Or will you need to handle other formats like Word documents, QuarkXPress, soft-

ware resource files, and database strings with XML tagging? Translation is a linguistic task. But localization involves engineering and creative disciplines to preserve design values in the new language. To give you long-term flexibility, the platform you choose should be sufficiently versatile to handle any and all formats.

4) Where does the content originate and where will the localized version reside? The multilingual knowledge management system you implement must be able to detect, extract, and route new or changed content whether it originates in an application repository, file system or database. It needs to automatically route this content through the localization process and various approval stages, then insert it to a target location. Quality control and data security must be maintained at every stage of the publishing process.

5) Who will be responsible for handling content? Accountability is key. Other duties may impede in-house staff from completing translation assignments in a timely manner. A string of freelancers may make it difficult to maintain quality standards. To improve accountability on scheduling and quality issues, establish an ongoing partnership with one external supplier. Maintain sufficient in-house staff to manage the partner relationship.

Selecting the Best Globalization Platform

Implementing a multilingual knowledge management system is a complex process. Here are four ways to ensure that you invest in the right platform.

1) Choose the right vendor. Get off to a good start by selecting a business partner with the expertise and global presence to help you make it work. This partner should not only have consulting experience in the IT infrastructure of global companies but

expertise in critical areas such as internationalization engineering, translation engines, workflow management, and content localization as well.

2) Choose a platform with the right connectivity. Make sure that the globalization platform you adopt is capable of connecting diverse and distributed content repositories to an automated multilingual workflow. The workflow itself should follow a rigorous discipline—from preparing files for translation to routing content between editors and publishers, to easy incorporation of verification and compliance reviews.

3) Choose a platform with intelligent language processing. The language processing technology needs to include two key components: translation memory and terminology management. Translation memory ensures that once any sentence or paragraph has been translated and stored, these text strings can be reused time and again. This not only eliminates redundant translation, but speeds translation turnaround—saving time and money. A terminology management system ensures that translation teams consistently employ key words and phrases.

4) Choose a platform that provides project transparency and a detailed audit trail. To maintain process efficiency and control costs, implement a solution that allows you to track the whereabouts of each translation unit through every step of the workflow. Real-time visibility helps you avoid bottlenecks and delays. Detailed reporting not only helps you manage budgets and turnaround, but also enables you to audit costs and system performance over time.

Empowering eBusiness in a Global Economy

Whether your initiative is eLearning, eSupport, or eCommerce, the right globalization platform dramatically improves the way colleagues, customers, suppliers and partners communicate and collaborate around the world. A multilingual knowledge management system both increases revenue capture and reduces operating costs to empower eBusiness growth in a global economy. ■

For additional white papers on the technical aspects and ROI of multilingual knowledge management, log onto www.lionbridge.com/KM.

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge Technologies, Inc. integrates data repository connectivity with language management technology and global workflow systems to create and maintain Web-based products and dynamic databases in multiple languages and cultural formats. Based in Waltham, MA, Lionbridge operates sites in Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Germany, China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Brazil, and the United States.