

I want to ...

localise my website for
international business



Supported by

Are you a small or medium-sized business ready for international success?

Do you need to adapt your business operations for the local languages and cultures of your target markets? This specialist area is termed localisation, and is one of the most important areas to consider in today's business environment, particularly in connection with your company's web presence.

Our guide will advise you how to adapt your website so that it works effectively for you across different languages and cultures throughout the world.

Using this guide, you will find out how to plan international web development, decide which languages you need to think about and how to choose the right supplier.

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What is website localisation?

Website localisation is about knowing how to adapt your web content for non-English speaking markets. This certainly requires the services of a professional translator who understands that, for marketing purposes, a direct translation is not enough.

The meaning behind the words, their general sense and the pictures selected to go with them, need to be creatively interpreted and adapted in a way that is sensitive to the target culture. You need to think about the suitability of visual content, file formats for different scripts and a whole range of factors this guide will familiarise you with.

Competition is fierce and weak currencies can drive companies to increase their web globalisation spending. Planning is the key to getting it right and localisation should be an integral part of your international communication plan.

“By 2010, less than 25% of the world’s Internet users will be native English speakers, as emerging markets such as China, Russia and Brazil drive millions of non-English speaking people to the Internet”.

‘Global by Design’, Byte Level Research

“89% of searches on the web are done in the user’s first language”.

University of Brighton



Planning your website localisation

There are some simple steps you can take to plan your international web development:

- Take advantage of UK Trade & Investment's services in the form of an Export Communications Review or an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) to examine your international communication planning and international marketing strategies. Or try UK Trade & Investment's Market Visit Support or Export Marketing Research Scheme to visit a new market and access free, professional and independent advice about the language and cultural challenges involved in export.
(see *Where to go next*)
- Include localisation as an integral part of your international communication plan for your new markets.
- Identify employees or agents to assist you with the language and cultural expectations of your new customers.
- Choose your suppliers, whether copywriters or web designers, carefully. You will find more detailed advice later in this guide.

Which languages for which markets?

Here is an indication of the markets your website can reach – and the languages you’ll need to be using.

Top ten Internet users

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| USA | 205,327,000 |
| China | 123,000,000 |
| Japan | 86,300,000 |
| India | 60,000,000 |
| Germany | 50,616,000 |
| United Kingdom | 37,600,000 |
| South Korea | 33,900,000 |
| Italy | 28,870,000 |
| Brazil | 25,900,000 |
| Russia | 23,700,000 |

CIA World Fact Book, 2007

Languages spoken by country

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Brazil | Brazilian Portuguese |
| China | Mandarin Chinese |
| Eastern and Central Europe | Russian and German are widely used |
| France | French |
| India | English is widely spoken, 33% of the population speak Hindi |
| Indonesia and Malaysia | Malay and Indonesian (based on Malay) |
| Italy | Italian |
| Japan | Japanese |
| Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE | Arabic |
| Spain, Mexico | Spanish (vocabulary differs between mainland Spain and Latin America) |
| Singapore | English is the language of business |
| South Africa | English is widely spoken, 33% of the population speak Afrikaans |
| South Korea | Korean |
| Taiwan | Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese |
| Turkey | Turkish |
| Vietnam | Vietnamese |

The web interface

Businesses reach out globally through their websites. Consider the user, think like them, design your site around them and you will succeed. Google, Caterpillar, Xerox, HP and Cisco agree. Their strategies are all about providing relevance to the user from a linguistic and cultural point of view.

The following facts are all key when considering the localisation of your website:

Domain name

Register a domain name with the appropriate country suffix to get a higher ranking on local search engines, e.g. .br (Brazil), .cn (China), .in (India), .mx (Mexico), .za (South Africa), .vn (Vietnam).

Mark-up and language coding

Each language has a code – for example, Chinese is ZH – which shows the browser what language your site is in. It also helps some search engines to show who the content is designed for.



Browser recognition

Set your website to recognise where visitors are viewing your site from, so that, if a user is logged on in Brazil, they will be automatically directed to the Portuguese language section.

Search engines

Searches on the web are usually performed on localised search engines. In China, a popular one is www.baidu.com, and in Russia www.yandex.com is preferred. When a user searches, sites in their language and from their country will appear with a higher ranking.

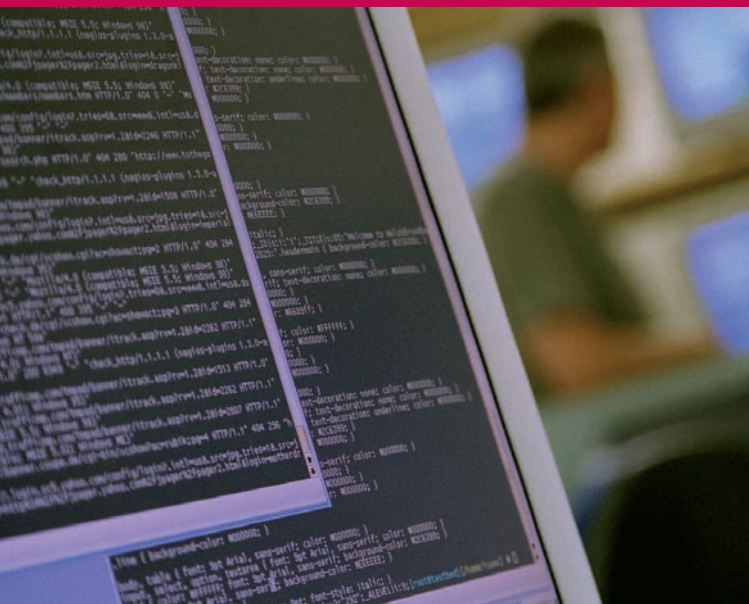
Keywords

People have different ways of searching in different countries, and use different terms and techniques. Use Pay per Click (PPC) research – see below – to understand what multilingual phrases to use for the target country.

“On-line customers are three times more likely to buy when addressed in their mother tongue”.

Forrester Research

China is reporting more than two million new local domain names in one month, and is considering requiring companies to use local domain names if they want to do business in China.



Successful international websites, mini-websites and enquiry forms

Give some consideration to the localisation of all of your web content, including entries in international directories. Mini-websites or a small number of localised pages within your site can be equally effective given a small budget or a large number of languages to cover. Translate enquiry forms but remember, enquiries need to be replied to in the same language. Think about the following measures:

- Learn from the best: www.ikea.com dominates the rankings as the best retail website with its global site gateway, which shows each country's site registered under its country suffix and supports 26 languages. Or see how Google gets animated in Korea at www.google.co.kr.

- Use a splash global gateway with the names of the target languages, rather than country flags, to acknowledge that several languages may be spoken in one country.
- Design templates for the alternative language versions, adapted for each language and culture.
- Consider Pay per Click (PPC): paying for adverts on the search results page. See www.searchmarketing.yahoo.com, www.obanmultilingual.com and www.mirago.com

Some elements of international web content need particular attention during the localisation process.

- Dialogue boxes and field lengths
- Date, time, number, calendar and currency formats
- Colours, icons and graphics
- Company names and straplines
- Weights and measures
- Font and page orientation

Peppermint Garden is an environmentally friendly manufacturer of a unique willow barrier that prevents animals from trampling flowerbeds. Director Anita Schapper signed the company on to UK Trade & Investment's Passport to Export programme after their attendance at exhibitions prompted a number of enquiries from overseas.

Following a re-design of the company's existing website to drive sales, and its translation into German, French, Italian and Spanish, over a four-month period, site hit rates multiplied by ten. Sales have risen fourfold within a 12 month period.

Advice on selecting localisation services

Localised translation is a specialist service. A person who speaks more than one language is not qualified to do the same job as a qualified translator. A machine or web translation package may translate your content in seconds. However, this will almost always be an error-prone translation, not a localised one, adapted to your market.

When you are looking for a translation and localisation professional, remember to:

- Pre-select a qualified and accredited translator with experience in web localisation (see our guide in this series for costs of translation and interpreting) and view their previous work.
- Source at least three competitive quotes for the work required.
- Look for evidence of reputation and quality assurance, such as membership of one of the professional associations.
(see *Where to go next*)
- Find out if they are covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- Decide how much of your content needs to be translated.

Service Finder

Regional Language Network London has developed the Service Finder – an easy-to-use search facility to help you find the localisation expert you need.

www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

Hints and tips

- Don't forget the international dialling codes.
- Learn about cultural subtleties, such as presenting the male on the left in Asian family pictures and showing only one child in Chinese advertising.
- Choice of colour is very important. Green represents religion in Islamic countries; and in Korea, names written in red mean a person is dead.
- Certain numbers have different significances in different cultures. In China, the number 2 is considered lucky, whereas the number 4 is considered unlucky.
- Be sure to check how your translation will be understood.
- Remember to take account of holiday times and religious festivals when considering the launch date of new products.
- Check that your use of symbols is generally understood in your target market.
- Ensure there is room for adaptation in your word count. Certain language scripts may read right to left, and some languages take up a third more space when the copy is set on the page.

Where to go next

UK Trade & Investment

London International Trade Team

UK Trade & Investment's (UKTI) London regional team is dedicated to increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the capital through international sales development. A team of International Trade Advisers delivers tailored help to businesses who are either exporting for the first time or looking to enter new markets. UKTI also has a wide range of services available from market research to communications reviews, as well as seminars and workshops on overseas markets.

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www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/ukti/london

Regional Language Network (RLN) London

Information and advice on languages and culture.

www.rln-london.com

RLN London Service Finder

www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

Association of Translation Companies

www.atc.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Linguists

www.iol.org.uk

CILT, the National Centre for Languages

www.cilt.org.uk

Institute of Translation and Interpreting

www.itl.org.uk

LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association)

www.lisa.org

Other titles in this series

I want to ...

- ... adapt my brand, communications and packaging for an overseas audience
- ... develop my intercultural skills
- ... learn about international communication planning
- ... learn about language training and multilingual recruitment
- ... understand translation and interpreting



This series was commissioned by UK Trade & Investment and sponsored by RBS to support UK businesses in their international trade. Its creation was facilitated by Regional Language Network London.



Freedom to trade

As your overseas business starts to grow, you'll find you need a bank that can bring its international expertise to your doorstep.

Running a business can be complicated enough in a single country, but when you trade internationally, the issues can multiply. You need a banking partner with the skills, experience and scale to help you overcome the obstacles and minimise the costs. You need a bank that gives you freedom to trade. The Royal Bank of Scotland's global scale and experience mean that we can give you confidence, control and security, wherever your business operates.

For more information, contact your relationship manager or visit www.rbs.co.uk/international

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Fast track to the world^{UK}

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