

BUILDING YOUR GLOBAL BUSINESS

The Necessity of Language Translation Services



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What are the top 10 languages on the web?

English - Approx. 537 mil. users

Chinese - Approx. 445 mil. users

Spanish - Approx. 154 mil. users

Japanese - Approx. 100 mil. users

Portuguese - Approx. 83 mil. users

German - Approx. 75 mil. users

Arabic - Approx. 66 mil. users

French - Approx. 60 mil. users

Russian - Approx. 59 mil. users

Korean - Approx. 40 mil. users

As a business owner in today's market, it is more important than ever to be able to reach new customers and expand your market to increase revenue.

The internet has provided greater access to greater resources than ever before, and this has led to many extreme changes from the top level to the bottom.

In the past ten years, it has never been easier to start your own business and get wide spread publicity, but at the same time, due to the overcrowded marketplace it has become harder than ever to stand out from everyone else.

What is Globalization/Localization?

For many years, English has been the predominate language of web content. English speaking viewers made up the majority of the browsing audience, and there was never any need for businesses to extend beyond their native language clientele.

That trend is shifting, and at an exponential rate. As more and more non-English speaking users are going online, there is more demand not just for non-English content, but a bigger push for businesses to address these potential clients as well. This effort to reach non-native content speakers is what is referred to as “**globalization**”, and going further, targeting a particular region within that market through content customization is referred to as “**localization**”.



How Does Globalization and Localization Help My Business?

According to a recent survey, almost 50% of internet users feel they are missing interesting or important information because web pages are in a language they do not understand.

Similarly, only about 18% purchase products online from a foreign language website.

The growth of non-English language users offer businesses a unique opportunity in catering to a relatively new and untapped market.

As the internet continues to connect people from all over the globe, the effort to provide content in users' native languages has pushed **globalization/localization** of the web to the forefront of business and technology.

From a business standpoint, it is clear that a lot of possible revenue can be acquired simply through translation of website content as part of their globalization initiative. The sooner companies begin catering to multiple language groups, the better position they are in to gain new customers.

Small companies and big companies alike can easily multiply their customer base by **localizing** their content.

As the number of various language users continue to grow at the rate they are now, it would appear that entering the global and multilingual market is not only profitable, but may soon become the standard.

What Are Recent Technological Advances in the Globalization/Localization Effort?

In the past, translations were primarily handled by professional linguists with, perhaps, a language dictionary as a reference for some of the more technical terms.

Now, thanks to technological innovations, there are many available tools and online applications that help translate text, often for free. These programs are known as “**machine translators**.”



How Useful Are Machine Translators?

“Technology has played a role in making the world smaller and increasing the need for multilingual communication. Also, the diversity of the U.S. adds to the need for translated materials.”

--David Smith,
LinguaLinx President

You’ve probably used one at some point, even if just for a few words. Depending on those results, you more than likely either love or hate these free translators.

Languages have many subtleties and nuances that, as of right now, machines are incapable of replicating perfectly.

Machine translators simply take the text that is entered and translate it word for word. Therefore, often the translation that is delivered is not grammatically correct, or sometimes, not even coherent.

Some language pairs, however, do provide more accurate results than others. Usually if the two languages are close to one another (for instance, English and Spanish), the machine translators can provide a decent enough translation to let you get the overall meaning of the foreign text.

Regardless of this fact, when dealing with your business, it is not a good idea to cut corners when it comes to accuracy. Research has shown that the majority of potential customers will not order from a website if it has poor grammar or spelling errors in the content. It gives the impression that the company is careless, unprofessional, or even worse, fraudulent.

Unless machine translators become advanced enough to provide 100% correct translations, it is highly recommended not to rely solely on them for your business.



What is Crowdsourcing?

Machine translators still play an important technological (and economical) function in globalization development, especially when combined with human translators through post-editing and crowdsourcing methods.

Crowdsourced

Due to Facebook's large community of followers, they were able to crowdsource their entire site into French in 1-2 weeks.

Crowdsourcing has become popular in a variety of different industries, with varying success. The concept of crowdsourcing is to allow the internet public to contribute information to solve the desired task. Crowdsourcing has been successful with companies such as Wikipedia, which gathers its content entirely from the general public for free.

The same concept is applied to crowdsourcing translation projects. Crowdsourced translations use the general public to either provide their bilingual knowledge/translation expertise, assuming only those with knowledge of that language volunteer, or edit a pre-existing incorrect translation (post-editing).

“If one million people used [a crowdsourcing program]... the entirety of English Wikipedia could be translated to Spanish in just eighty hours.”

--Professor Luis von Ahn, DuoLingo

Currently, translation crowdsourcing is becoming more mainstream as a viable alternative to traditional translation methods. There are great strides currently being made in the tech industry to perfect translation crowdsourcing, as globalization of the web has become a priority.



“We believe that investing in the community of translators is an integral part of our international growth and success...they know our product best and capture the Twitter spirit through their translations.”

--Laura Gomez,
Twitter
Manager of Localization

Crowdsourcing allows for large amounts of text to be translated at lightning fast speed, provided there is a large enough community of translators who are actively engaged in the process.

Three Factors to Consider When Crowdsourcing Translations

1. **Cost:** Crowdsourcing translations can be extremely cost effective, sometimes even free if the community is engaged in the project, or receives some other kind of intrinsic reward for their services. However, even with community translations there may need to be linguistic review to ensure the translations are accurate.
2. **Speed:** Can be extremely fast, but it depends on the size of the translating community and their involvement with the product.
3. **Quality:** Depends on the community. There have been instances where malicious users banded together to mess up the system and promote inaccurate and offensive translations. Also, depending on the project, sometimes there may need to be prior or advanced knowledge of specialized content in order to translate accurately.

While crowdsource translation continues to develop, with the proper controls in place, crowdsourcing is still currently able to provide relatively fast, accurate, and cost-effective translations and is a viable globalization method to help expand your business economically.



Professional Translation Services

“These language specialists do more than simply translate words—they relay concepts and ideas between languages. They must thoroughly understand the subject matter in which they work in order to accurately convey information from one language into another. In addition, they must be sensitive to the cultures associated with their languages of expertise.”

--Bureau of Labor Statistics

While new methods of translation are being developed all the time in an effort to make the process easier or more cost effective, the traditional method of hiring a professional translation service company or individual translator can still be the best method.

Although professional translations may cost more than machine translation or crowdsourced methods, if you choose the right company or translator, you are guaranteed professional quality, accuracy, and by the agreed upon deadline.

In order to ensure accurate localization of a particular text, professional translation services outsource their translation projects to native professional translators of the target language. This way, you are sure your translation includes all of the proper grammar and nuances of that particular language, so as to deliver a natural sounding translation.

There are many translation services out there, however, some may be more reliable than others. Oftentimes, you never know who you're getting to provide your translation when you go searching for translators. You may end up with an inaccurate translation, by someone who isn't a native speaker, or you may end up without any translation at all, even losing your money in the process.

It is important to use a reputable company in order to ensure the quality translations you need are received.

Whether you choose to go with a traditional translation, crowdsourced, or post-edited method, it is important to weigh the pros and cons of each, and decide what is best for you and your company.

In the end, the only guaranteed wrong move in globalizing your business is not making one.

