



What you Need to Know About Website Localization

Ready to take your website global? It's hard to know where to begin! This brief provides an overview of key considerations that will help you get your website translated quickly, cost-efficiently, and with a minimum of hassle.

There are three crucial steps to a website localization project. Good news: they're all under your control! Below we offer some tips for:

- how to prepare the website text for translation
- how to run a review of translated content before it gets uploaded
- how to verify the translation before it goes live

Preparing the Text for Translation

Websites can be built on a variety of different platforms, such as WordPress or Drupal. There are two basic ways to get content out of such platforms and into a translatable format:

- content management system (CMS) export
- manual copy and paste.

In most cases, you'll save yourself time and money by exporting the content to a standard, translatable file type like XML, HTML, or JSON. Unfortunately, most platforms don't have an easy, built-in export function. This means that you will need your web developer to install a plug-in and help you with any importing and exporting.

But this leaves you with a big question: did the plug-in properly export everything you want translated (and nothing you don't)? Before translation begins, your translation provider should help you check by offering a "pseudo-translated" version of the exported content. It is possible that you will need to export, pseudo-translate, and test the re-import a couple of times before you're certain that all the translatable content is ready. Don't fret, this is perfectly normal!

Occasionally, and particularly if your website has only a few pages and limited content, you may find that exporting and importing in the CMS is more time-consuming than simply copying text into an MS Word file (and then copying it back after translation). How can you tell when this "manual" route is the better option? Simply by asking your web developer how much time each option would take him or her to implement. If the copy-and-paste approach is significantly faster, it is worth considering. If you do go this route, here are a few tips to help:

What is Pseudo-translation?

Pseudo-translation is an automated process that your translation provider can offer before the translation project begins. It effectively replaces each translatable string with either a foreign-looking "gibberish" translation or non-linguistic placeholders (such as "\$\$\$\$"), which your team can then integrate into your CMS as a test. Pseudo-translation serves two key purposes:

(a) ensuring that all content has been properly captured for translation

For example, if your team performs a practice integration and still finds English words on-screen, this text is not being exported by the CMS.

(b) ensuring that non-translatable content has been excluded

When content is exported from the CMS, it is coded with meta-information, such as formatting tags. Your translation provider will need to ensure that these tags are perfectly replicated. Pseudo-translation gives your provider an opportunity to check that they have properly prepared the content and locked these tags so that re-importing the translation to the CMS will be seamless.

If you have any encoding concerns, particularly for accented letters, right-to-left languages, or Asian character sets, the pseudo-translation process can help your team confirm that everything will work correctly once real translation is complete.

Create a table. After translation, your developer will need to paste all this content back into the website. This will be substantially easier (and less prone to error) if the developer can see exactly which English content matches which translated content. We suggest a three column table:

1. Location of the content (e.g. page address)
2. Source content
3. Blank column for the translated content

Quadruple check. Days before the planned launch of the translated site, you definitely don't want to find that you missed a couple bits of content that will frantically need to be translated at the last minute. So make absolutely certain that you've captured all content before you send it off for translation.

What about graphics? You may have translatable text embedded in images, particularly diagrams or timelines. It is simplest to consider these as separate, translatable elements and handle them in the same file format that was used to create the English graphic. Track down those native file formats (such as Illustrator or PhotoShop files) and provide those to your translation vendor together with the extracted website content. They can translate the text and return to you identical images that can be uploaded to your CMS library for the translated website.

Lastly, translators always work best with context. Even if the English website isn't yet live, provide your translators with access to a working English version (for example, in beta) so that they have a visual on every word they will be translating.

Why Can't My Provider Just Download the Site?

When you visit a web address, you may see an HTML page, but the structure of the site is actually more complex and is almost always built in a different tool. Although it is technically feasible to "download" a website via a web crawler, this is not a solid strategy for translation for several reasons:

- a crawler may not capture all content, particularly for pages that are isolated from the main content web (such as special, standalone landing pages), protected pages (such as those sitting behind a user login and password), or dynamic content that only appears when the user interacts with the site in some way (for example, by mousing over a button). Some website are even secured against crawling, which can make such a strategy highly dubious.
- a crawler will capture template content more than once because it must read each page individually
- a crawler may capture "old" content that doesn't exist anywhere on the live site anymore and that you therefore would not want to pay to have translated
- even if the crawler works perfectly, you'll need to figure out how to get the translated content back into your CMS so that you can deploy the translated site...and your web developer may not love the limited options now available for making that happen.

Checklist: Preparation

- ✓ Extract all the translatable content. Check it twice.
- ✓ Gather editable graphics files for all images that contain text.
- ✓ Confirm a matching English site for visual reference during the translation process.

Running a Translation Review

Website localization is often an initiative driven by your marketing team. If you have stakeholders living and working in the target country, you may want them to take a look at the translated website before it goes live. How do you optimize this review and ensure that it doesn't derail your project timeline?

First, determine how broad the authority of such reviewers will be. Are they simply tasked with confirming that the translated terminology is appropriate and professional? Or are they being asked to make content adjustments based on local regulatory requirements? A simple check of terminology is easy for your translation provider to facilitate and gives them much-needed insight into how your local teams talk about your product and the words they typically use to do so. However, if you do not need your translated site to match the content of the English site and your team plans to make significant content adjustments, your project is moving beyond the scope of "translation." Check out the sidebar.

In order to optimize a content review, ask your translation provider to deliver the translation in a document processor like Microsoft Word. This allows your reviewer to use simple tracked changes to communicate their preferences. Even if your provider is working with XML or JSON files, industry-standard translation tools provide options to facilitate a review in MS Word. Using tracked changes and comments, your in-country team and your translation provider can finalize the translated content before you upload it back into your website's CMS.

For more tips on managing an in-country review process, check out [this brief](#).

Different Content for Different Countries

You may want your translation provider to "get the ball rolling" by translating your English language site before your in-country team starts making content adjustments. In this case, you should let your translation provider know that you will take over integration and verification after the review. Your in-country reviewer who has finalized the content for their market is in the best position to review their content in the final website just before launch. If you need to understand the changes that are being made, simply ask your translation provider to translate the revised content back into English for you.

Checklist: Review

- ✓ Plan for a review of the content before it is uploaded to the site.
- ✓ Determine scope of review and the reviewer's authority.
- ✓ Dialogue with your translation provider in order to provide any necessary technical training to reviewers on how to optimize the way that they provide their feedback.
- ✓ If reviewers are going to move the content away from the English version, plan to have them complete the final verification step.

Integration and Verification

Now that the content is translated and reviewed, it's time to integrate it to the CMS. This will be either an import (which you already tested with a pseudo-translation, so you know it works!) or a manual copy-and-paste of the translated text. Your developer also needs to upload any translated graphics and connect them to the appropriate pages.

Before you share this new site with the world, we recommend that you let a native speaker take a final look. There are two key reasons that you want to verify the translated site before launch:

- your developer is human, so he or she may have made an error when pasting in the translation and you will want to give yourself the opportunity to correct it before the site goes live,
- your translators (or in-country team) may identify an alternative translation that did not occur to them earlier in the process; once they see the translation, big and bold on the website, they may have a flash of inspiration, particularly for shorter text strings. In a perfect world, of course, the translation would be complete in a single pass through the text. However, as in any creative process, the quality of the final, translated product can be increased when the translator sees their work in its ultimate home.

This kind of verification should only take a few days, but it will give you the peace of mind that your translated site is truly ready for the world.

There are several paths that your website localization project may take. Choosing the right one depends on how your English site is built and how your web developer is most comfortable integrating translated content. By following the guidelines above, however, you can control 99% of the potential pitfalls that could cost you time and money, and thereby ensure that your website is a global success.

Checklist: **Integration**

- ✓ Upload graphics and load the translated text into your CMS.
- ✓ Have a native speaker review the entire translated website to ensure it looks professional.
- ✓ Launch!

About Idem Translations

Founded in 1983, Idem Translations, Inc. is a full-service provider of translation and localization services. Idem specializes in certified translations for medical device, biomedical, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as other organizations and entities working in the life sciences sector, such as contract research organizations, healthcare research centers, and institutional review boards. The company is a WBENC-certified woman-owned business and holds certifications to ISO 9001:2015, ISO 13485:2016, and ISO 17100:2015.

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