

Prepare Your Site for the Global Market

Tips on Web Site Localization and Translation

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To increase your company's return on investment and enhance its appeal to a global market, the company's Web presence must reach the maximum number of users worldwide. Localizing and translating Web sites for worldwide use can significantly increase the number of potential customers. In this article, we discuss the major steps in localizing, translating, and implementing multilingual sites.

The first step, of course, is to write the Web content. Follow your company's guidelines for writing content for translation. The sidebar on page 17 lists basic rules for writing Web content.

Register Your Domains

While U.S. users are accustomed to seeing .com Web sites, users in other countries are accustomed to seeing domain names specific to their countries. Setting up domain names in multiple countries increases the likelihood that international users will visit your site.

As early as possible during Web site development, register the domain names for translated sites. In choosing domain names, consider the language of the target country and decide whether to translate the URL for your English site to an appropriate URL for the target language. If the URL for your domain name is your company name, it's best to retain the name and replace the ".com" with the appropriate domain for each country.

For certain countries, you will use a country-specific registration service. The cost of registration varies by country and domain name service. Shop around for the best service at the lowest price. Some countries may also have certain requirements for registering a domain, and you may need to prove that your company is already doing business in that country in order to obtain a domain name. Two of many sites that offer domain registration are *eurodns.com* for European languages and *asiadns.com* for Asian languages.

Define the Metadata

Metadata in Web pages help ensure that sites are found by search engines and enable you to define how your site will be displayed on the search engine

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results page (SERP). Search engines such as Google and Yahoo read these tags and extract the information for searching and displaying Web pages. Following is the format of metadata that search engines use:

```
<head>
<title>Daylite Training: Classroom and
Customized Training</title>
<meta name = "description" content =
"Training Corporations, Individuals and the
Community. We offer Daylite training at our
training facility or we can deliver Daylite
training to you.">
<meta name = "keywords" content =
"training, Daylite">
</head>
```

Figure 1 shows how the information from the metadata is displayed on the SERP from a search engine such as Google. The searched term or parts of the searched terms are in bold. The page is found based on the <keyword> tag, which specifies "training" and "Daylite" as search terms. The page title—Daylite Training: Classroom and Customized Training—comes from the <title> tag, and the page description from the <description> tag.

Figure 1. Results from a SERP page.

```
Daylite Training - Classroom and
Customized Training
Training Corporations, Individuals and the
Community. We offer Daylite training at
our training facility or we can deliver Daylite
training to you.
www.web-etc.com/daylite - Cached - Similar
Pages
```

Be aware that literal translation of the title, description, and keywords of your English content may not achieve the best results. Before writing any Web content, work with your language service provider to define metadata both for your English site and for each language into which you will translate. In some cases, you will need to adjust translated content to work with the metadata for that language.

The Title Tag

The <title> tag generates the title that is displayed in the SERP. Google, Yahoo, and MSN all pull their titles from the <title> tag, and Google displays up to sixty-six characters of the tag information. To define the <title> content for both English and translated pages, make sure the title describes the essence of the page content and induces users to access your site. Limit the title to five to eight words and sixty-six characters.

The Description Tag

The <description> tag generates a description of your Web page in the SERP. Most search engines use the text within your <description> tag when displaying results. If you omit a <description> tag, most search engines will use the first few lines of your Web page.

The <description> content for both English and translated pages should be accurate and convey the objectives of the sites. Include your main keywords and whatever you want visitors to see in the SERP. Limit the description to 150 characters and write it as an advertisement to draw visitors to your page. For ideas on what to include in the description, research competitors' descriptions.

Keywords

The <keywords> tag contains keywords or key phrases that search engines use to find Web pages. For both English and translated pages, choose two to seven important keywords, separated with commas. Search engines add more importance to Web pages that are focused on a particular search term, so write the content for each page with one to three keywords in mind. Keep at least 40 percent of the content different on

each of your pages to help ensure that search engines will view your content as reliable and worth displaying to users.

To define the right keywords, try one of these methods:

- Use the Overture tool at inventory.overture.com/re.com, which provides free keyword analysis.
- Check the keywords of competing Web sites.
- View related searches on AltaVista.
- Use information from your Web site visitor logs or Google Analytics.
- Obtain a Google Adwords account from adwords.google.com, which provides a keyword analysis tool that indicates the number of searches for a keyword.
- Use a tool that finds keywords that generate high traffic, such as www.google.com/press/zeitgeist.html, www.metacrawler.com/perl/metaspdy, or 50.lycos.com.

Correct placement of keywords in Web page content is essential. Make sure that the keywords listed in the metadata appear in the content of the Web page. Never attempt to hide keywords by masking them with white space: not only is this practice unethical, it can result in search engines blacklisting your company's Web pages.

Some search engines may attach more importance to pages where keywords appear in bold. Since images do not contain text that search engines read, place important keywords related to images in the <alt> text of the image. Be sure also to place text links on the page, because search engines have difficulty reading links within image maps.

Search engines give priority to pages whose content includes keywords. In addition to ensuring that keywords are present in the <description> and <keyword> tags, consider placing them within these locations:

- The title of the Web page
- The header and subheader (<h1> and <h2>) of paragraphs
- The filename (within the URL)
- The top of the page

Define metadata both for your English site and for each language into which you will translate.

- The start of a new paragraph
- The end of sentences and paragraphs
- The link titles of hyperlinks

If you use two or more keywords, keep those keywords together. If you must split the words in the keyword phrase, keep them as close as possible to each other and make sure the keywords are evenly distributed throughout the page.

Keyword density—the number of times the keyword appears in the HTML of the Web page divided by the number of indexable words in the page—is also important. An optimum keyword density is 3 or 4 percent. To calculate keyword density, use the tools at www.webmaster-toolkit.com/keyword-analysis-tool.shtml and www.live-keyword-analysis.com.

Figure 2. The Google Analytics dashboard.



Translate Web Pages and Metadata

The process of translating Web sites is essentially the same as that used for other documents, but some additional considerations apply when working with an LSP:

- Work closely with your LSP to ensure that both the Web pages and the metadata are translated, following the guidelines for use of metadata tags.
- If you create Flash files for the English Web site, provide a separate text or HTML file to the LSP.
- Make video shots last longer than the spoken English that accompanies them. Because of language expansion, the length of time for the voiceover in the target language may exceed the length of the shot. When you send a video file, such as a .mov or .swf file, provide your LSP with a text file containing the script so that the words can be translated and voiceovers created.
- Remove unnecessary HTML coding to obtain a more accurate word count and reduce translation costs. Consider the following sample code:

```
<head>xxc for special purposes encoding=title page addfile
<title>Daylite Training - Classroom and Customized Training</title>
```

In this example, the string “xxc for special purposes encoding=title page addfile” does not appear on the Web site and is used for internal reference purposes. Because the string is not governed by an HTML tag, the words may be counted for estimating purposes and translated, although they should not be.

- Work with your LSP to reword English content if translation into certain languages inverts word order. Doing so will make content more suitable for searching in the target languages.
- Allow time in project plans for the Web developer to build each of the target language sites.
- If the content includes a URL containing English words that users may not understand, use hyperlinks instead of URLs in the Web page content.

- Conduct usability tests on each language site, especially for searchability. You may need to modify the translation or use different terms to make the content more searchable.

Submit Your Site

Increase the chances that the completed language sites will be found in user searches by submitting the sites to search engines and directories. The following list shows specific URLs for submitting sites to the major search engines:

- Google: www.google.com/addurl
- Yahoo: docs.yahoo.com/info/suggest
- MSN: beta.search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx
- AltaVista: altavista.com/addurl/default

Because most engines limit the number of Web pages submitted from a site, consider breaking up the page submis-

Never attempt to hide keywords by masking them with white space.

WRITING FOR TRANSLATION

The following tips will help you produce Web content that is ready for translation:

- Write in the active voice.
- Maintain separate text files of text and video scripts.
- Spell out the meaning of an acronym on each page where the acronym is used.
- Create glossaries of industry terms and share them with your language service provider (LSP).
- Omit irrelevant market requirements or regulations.
- Write short, simple sentences, using easy words.
- Use terms consistently.
- Avoid words that may cause controversy or confusion.
- Avoid the terms “foreign” and “domestic.”
- Avoid referring to geographical locations, holidays, celebrities, seasons, and humor.
- Do not refer to body parts, animals, or religious symbols.
- Avoid use of the apostrophe for possessives; for example, write “the length of the cell” rather than “the cell’s length.”
- Do not omit articles.
- Eliminate colloquialisms, jargon, and clichés.
- Do not turn nouns into verbs or verbs into nouns.
- Leave enough white space in your English Web pages for language expansion.
- Show telephone numbers in international formats; for example, use +33.1.22.33.44.55 for a number in France and +1 414.265.2171 for a number in the United States.
- Include both English and metric measurements.
- Use your keywords, which we describe later in this article, in the right locations on your Web pages.

sions over a few days. Be patient: Google and Yahoo can take six to seven weeks to index a submitted site. If you feel that your site has not been indexed after that time, resubmit the URL.

Registering sites with directories also increases the likelihood that they will be displayed in searches. Consider registering your site with the free DMOZ directory (www.dmoz.org) and the Yahoo directory (dir.yahoo.com), which charges \$299.99 annually.

Monitor Your Sites

Monitor and revise your sites to improve their visibility. Consider using software that provides keyword ranking reports. One such application is Google Analytics. This free service offers traffic measurement, interactive reporting, and other detailed statistics about how visitors are using your site. Figure 2 shows the Google Analytics dashboard.

As you analyze each language site, make adjustments to increase the number of users who access your sites. If a particular traffic source seems to yield little access to your site in a particular language, work with the LSP to make adjustments that will increase traffic from that source.

By planning ahead and following the steps outlined in this article, you can make significant strides in enhancing your company's image and sales to a global market. ❶

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