

Internationalizing Your Content: Authoring with Localization in Mind

Step Two: Create a Knowledge Base

Lisa Pietrangeli - Director, Global Client Solutions



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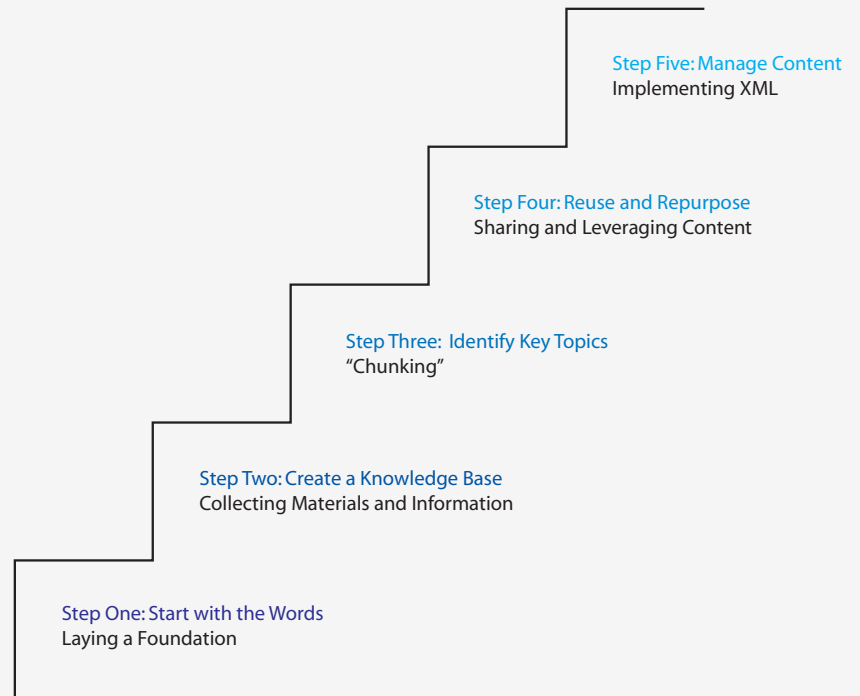
T: +1 (585) 244-5578

E: lpietrangeli@languageintelligence.com

W: www.languageintelligence.com

In part one of our five-part series, you learned some best practices for authoring content destined for localization.

Following Step One, you have built a foundation of words that makes your complex subject easy to understand and that is ready for localization.



STEP TWO: CREATE A KNOWLEDGE BASE

Now that you have learned some rules about choosing your words, you can begin to create a repository of knowledge to support them. During the course of a project, you collect information from several sources: product developers, product managers and other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). Consider the vast amount of information about product features and specifications that you have at your disposal when writing the documentation.

Condensing all of that knowledge into writing that is comprehensible and accessible is a challenge, indeed. Your talent is your ability to transform very complex, technical information into clear, understandable language and make it appropriate for a variety of users. You tailor information for installers, sales teams and customers so that your documents are appropriate for each target audience specifically. In developing new products and creating supporting documentation, technical writers and SMEs become the gateway of information for all stakeholders and users.

SHARING YOUR INSIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE WITH TRANSLATION PROVIDERS

Now consider this: everything that you need to know in order to author content is also information translators will need in order to translate successfully and accurately.

Based on my experience working with writing teams, knowledge is often undocumented, or stored in such a way that it can't be easily referenced or shared. Once you have all of the facts about a product—features, specifications, warnings, standard procedures, etc.—it's important to organize this information in such a way that makes it accessible to you and others who need it. What is the best way to compile and organize your information so that it can be shared with other content stakeholders and maintained efficiently for future use?

GETTING YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE STARTED

An effective first step is to review the information you have collected from the product SMEs and develop a set of term-recognition tools:

- Glossary

Create a list of key terms and link information about the terms: definitions, parts of speech and examples of use within documentation. The goal is clear and consistent term use: there will be no question about what a term means and in what context it applies. This is an essential tool during authoring and translation. Part or all of the glossary can serve as an excellent reference for end users as well. Consider making it part of the product documentation or part of a Quick Reference Guide.

- Lexicon

This list begins with the glossary terms but includes additional key terms, parts of speech and the corresponding translations. A comprehensive lexicon should contain all of the terms in the documentation set that must be used consistently. These terms may include product software user interface (UI), instructional terms used within procedures, product feature terms, or terms used to indicate the purpose of the text (such as warning, note or caution.) Once the term is translated, you have an established one-to-one word relationship. The next step is to link the lexicon to a database so it's easy to use, store and update.

- Term Base

A glossary or lexicon becomes a term base when it is applied to a database. The term base is linked to translation memory software and other term recognition tools. As a linguist translates the text, he or she receives an automatic notification when a translation for a key term is available.

- Style Guide

While a term base defines the use of terminology, a style guide defines other linguistic and design specifications. For example, a style guide may contain information about punctuation, capitalization, tone and register. From a design perspective, a style guide helps maintain consistency in the appearance of the documentation. As a reference, a style guide provides consistency guidelines for all content stakeholders to adhere to in both source and translated materials.

- Translation Memory

A translation memory is a database of previously translated content that is related to your source content. Translation software stores translations in segments, typically sentences or phrases, and aids human translators during the translation process by recalling relevant previously-translated segments. Consistent terminology use will ensure higher return on TM matches, which means translations are more consistent from project to project. When consistency is maintained in the source, there is also significant potential for reducing the cost and accelerating the turnaround time of translation.

Once you have collaborated with your LSP to compile and organize information, it's important to ensure that all future translation providers will have access to that information. Remember, the translators need the same information to provide accurate translations as you need to create accurate content.

Your LSP should be your partner in this effort. At Language Intelligence, we not only help clients create knowledge base content, but we also provide translation of glossary and lexicon terminology, help clients conduct in-country reviews to help ensure accuracy of translated terms, and create and maintain term bases and translation memories.

[SEE IMPROVEMENTS IN YOUR SOURCE, TOO](#)

The steps you take toward knowledge base creation help translators create better translations, but the overall benefit to your source content is significant as well. Creating, maintaining and adhering to knowledge base material will result in better writing in the source: accurate use of terminology, consistent style, and correct information. With everyone able to access the same pool of information, you can ensure that you are conveying a clear and consistent message to consumers at home and abroad.

[WORK WITH LANGUAGE INTELLIGENCE TO INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR CONTENT](#)

For more than 20 years, Language Intelligence has prioritized the evolving needs of its clients, developing innovative technical solutions to meet changing requirements and helping companies communicate more effectively with their international customers. Our extensive experience has shown that the time spent during the content development phase pays off greatly during localization by allowing content to rapidly advance from source to localized content. Additionally, preparing content for internationalization increases the clarity and quality of the source text itself. We work with our clients to teach best practices for internationalizing their content:

- Hands-on training and workshops
- Presentations
- Consulting
- Collaboration with writing teams during content development
- Authoring
- Review of content and preparation for the localization phase

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Step Three: Identify Key Topics

Topic-based authoring, also known as structured writing, involves molding your words into discreet standalone units that focus on a single subject. Gone are the days of thinking of your document as a narrative. Instead, think of your document as a collection of individual topics that, when assembled, provide the reader with a complete picture of all the information they need to know about your product.

About the author:



Lisa Pietrangeli
Director, Global Client Solutions

T: +1 (585) 244-5578 ext. 18
E: lpietrangeli@languageintelligence.com

As Director, Global Client Solutions at Language Intelligence, Lisa Pietrangeli works with clients to develop internationalization strategies for all stages of the content development process, including authoring, terminology management, XML implementation, translation and output finalization. Lisa has experience working in many areas of the business, including project management, resource selection, localization consulting, quality assurance and overseeing the localization project management staff. This experience allows her to approach translation challenges from diverse perspectives. With this insight, Lisa is able to help clients streamline their process, allowing them to set the stage for higher quality translations with increased consistency, quicker turnarounds, and better cost efficiency. Lisa holds degrees in Art History, Spanish, Italian and certification in American Sign Language. She has been with Language Intelligence since 2000.