



Guide to Global Readiness

12 steps before rolling out
your multilingual website



IS YOUR WEBSITE READY FOR GLOBAL MARKETS?

Is your website ready for Global Markets?

When done right, a multilingual website can help you expand your marketing reach, and also convey the fact that you **are** a global player. An ever-growing number of companies recognize that a properly localized website can be a significant competitive advantage when entering new worldwide markets.

However, within (and perhaps underneath) your nicely-designed website, there may lurk unnoticed and hidden issues that need to be resolved before you localize for other languages/cultures. A poorly localized website not only delivers reduced ROI, but it also may do considerable harm to your company's perceived image and your product brand.

Here are 12 key points that you should consider before you begin to translate your website:

Global Technical Readiness

1. How will you show the correct language content to your site visitors?

You can detect the users preferred language by using Javascript code in your HTML to detect the users browser-language setting, or you can offer language choices on-screen. For on-screen language choices, "Language", or "Select your language" may mean little to people who don't speak English, and pulldown menus may hide critical information. They may be limited to only one character set and may not properly display all languages. Perhaps discretely displaying all available languages on your homepage (avoid the temptation of using flags, a globe icon is a great way to portray this menu) or having a localized gateway where the user can choose their language or location may be better options. Your Home Page is the one that is first seen and the impact of a first impression is extremely important.

Some companies use country-domains like .uk, .jp., and .cn. This is usually done for reasons of searchengine optimization, when the country-domain is actually hosted in-country (which may yield faster user-interaction with the site). It is also done where the local users tend to have a preference for doing business with apparent local-country businesses.

Examples of unhelpful language selection techniques:

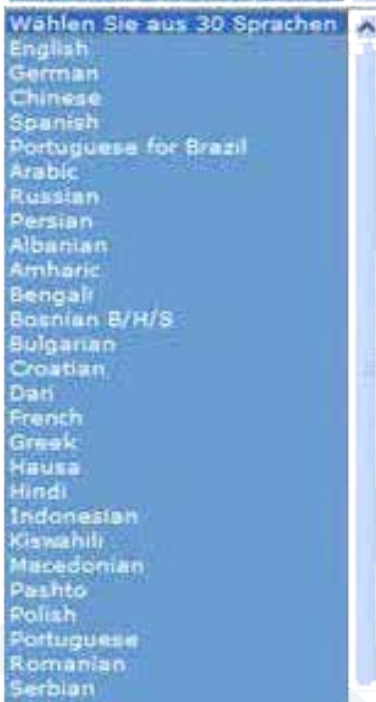
A) Language



A non-English speaker may easily overlook "Language" and not find his/her site of choice.

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B) Drop-Down Menu



Notice in this German website example that the "Select from 30 Languages" is in German, yet the actual language choices are all in English. Also, it's cumbersome to drop down and sort through 30 different language choices, especially since these particular choices are not even in alphabetical order.

Examples of better techniques:

A) Native Language List



Note that the languages themselves are in their respective language.

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B) Global Portal:



One nice feature for a global portal is a World map to locate marketing regions. Even if the users do not speak English, they know which spot to click. Ideally, a user click might cause a “zoom” to show a more detailed map of the region, with language choices or with specific locales as shown below.



This global portal page makes it easier for customers to find what they need in their language.

We can help your webmaster make the best decision, and show how to implement it.

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2. What will happen when the translated text gets “bigger” (longer) than your current language?

For example, Spanish, German, Russian, etc. will typically “expand” by 30% or more over the original English. This can result in unsightly distortions, turning your beautiful pages into a real mess.

Original English version:

Expanded, “pseudo-translated” version:



Notice what happens when the bullet-items on the right expand by 30% in length due to translation. Pity the poor fellow in the image! Oops --- the title went askew. Oh-oh --- the bullets no longer line up.

We can run tools to help you pinpoint problem areas.

Some web-design tools (DreamWeaver, for one), will often “force” all images to conform to the size of the original image.

Here is original DreamWeaver-created English:



Here's what happened when image buttons were localized to German:



Here's the HTML-corrected version:



We can help detect this problem, and correct the underlying HTML code.

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3. Is your site browser-friendly? Is your CSS Internationalized?

When background images with text are embedded in the style sheets, they can corrupt your layout.

Browsers (IE, Firefox, Chrome, Safari) can respond in different ways to your underlying code.



When the browser window is reduced, Firefox (left) displays this website as intended, but noticeable shifts occur in IE (right).

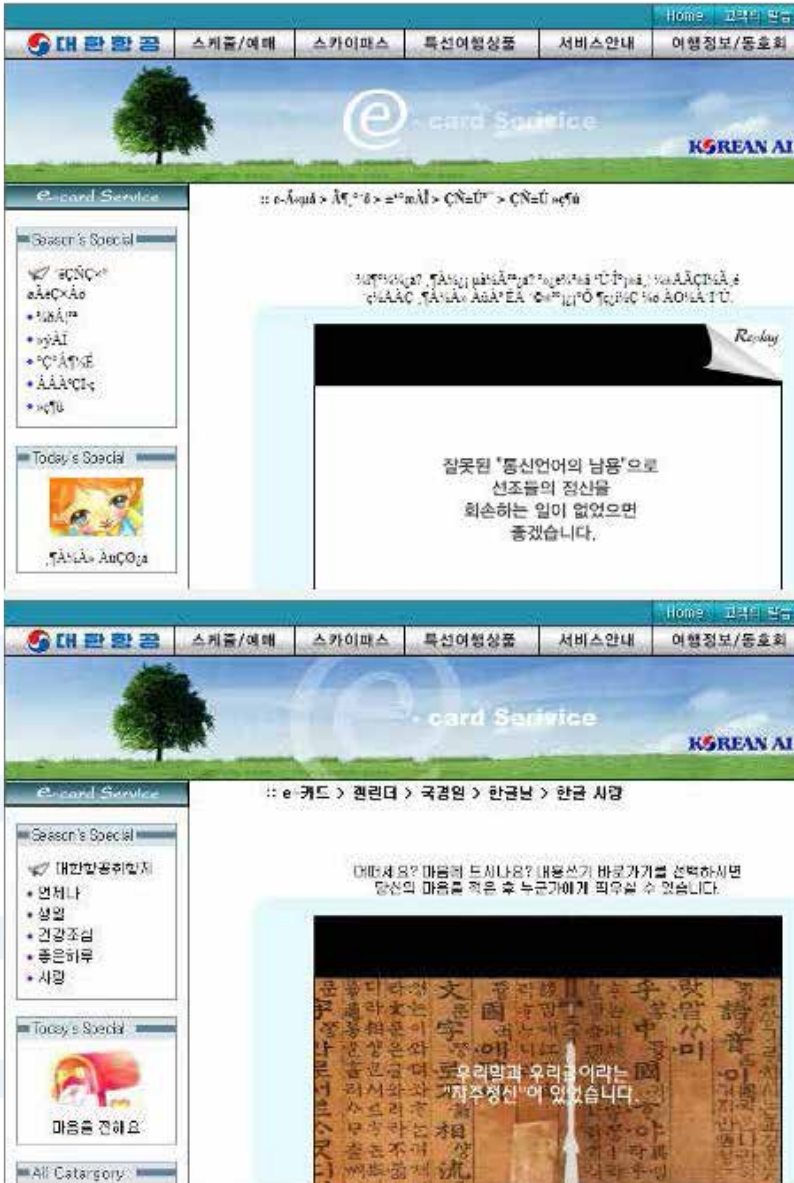
We can make your CSS trouble-free, and verify that your site is browser-friendly in all languages.

4. How will your web pages display Asian languages or those used in the Middle East?

Chinese, Korean and Japanese, for example, must be displayed in odd-numbered font sizes. 9-point is the minimum; 10-pt cannot be used. 11-pt is OK. For readability with modern high-resolution laptop/notebook PCs, Lao requires a minimum of a 13-pt font. Improper font sizes cause “clipping” of the text, making the text unreadable or ugly, and also making prospective customers go elsewhere.

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Nothing causes a quicker exit than visiting a web site and having it look broken:



Most visitors are not very knowledgeable about font display issues, and would not know to go to View/Encoding/More... and select Korean — because the actual web pages are not entirely in the standard Unicode UTF-8, but in the obsolete (pre-2000) "code page" encoding and thus don't display properly. If the user takes the time (and knows how) to fix it, then the result will look as shown below:

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If you are planning for Arabic and Hebrew, then your underlying HTML must have the capability of properly rendering RTL (right to left) text. Not only that, but your design must be capable of flipping the Navigation Menus to the "right" side of the page, without flipping underlying images that may be part of your corporate branding.

Here is an example of US English into Arabic:



We can help you create web pages that will respond properly to internationalized text, including both LTR and RTL languages.

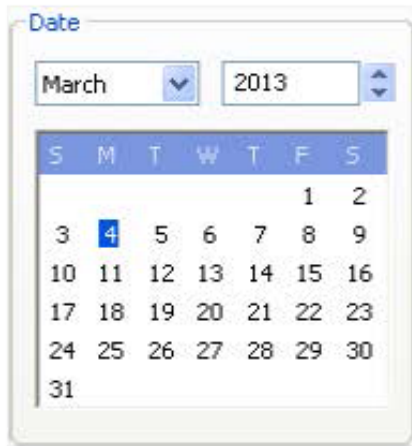
5. Will your website properly handle display, entry and editing of text in other languages? If you store information in a database for later use, will Asian language text, Cyrillic, or extended characters get stored and retrieved properly?

Dates, times, numbers, calendars, and currencies appropriate to the culture are expected by your visitors.

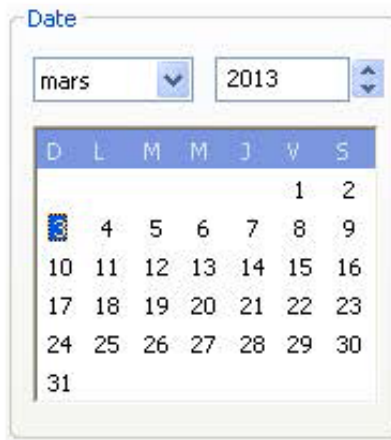
Not all calendars start with Sunday. Every culture has its own method of displaying dates, times, and numbers. And your design may be using implied "Western" methods. For example, "March 8th, 2013" could be displayed as "3/8/2013" in the US, but as "8/3/13" in France, or "8.3.13" in Germany. If you display pricing information, it might be worthwhile to examine an interface to a currency-exchange-rate converter.

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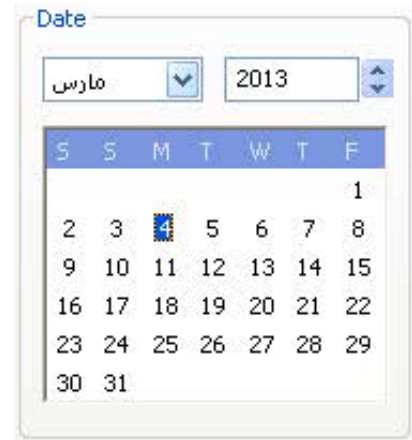
Here's an example of different calendars:



English



French



Arabic

Notice that the week has different starting days -- Sunday in the US, Monday ("lundi") in France, and Saturday in the Middle East (when Arabic is set as the system language, the Microsoft Calendar uses Western letters for days of the week).

Usually, there is underlying code that handles text entry and display. You may be using databases that are not properly configured, or the interface between your website and the database may not properly handle Asian double-byte characters.

Also, when you go global, your portal implementations may impede performance for your new markets. Perhaps your site requires usernames to be alphanumeric, limited to the 26 English characters and numbers and a few other characters. That may be viewed as culturally unfriendly to Jérôme Besançon in France, or Günther Schönhäuser in Germany, or Çağrı Özişiköglu in Turkey.

We can help you examine these issues, and assess the best methods of correcting them.

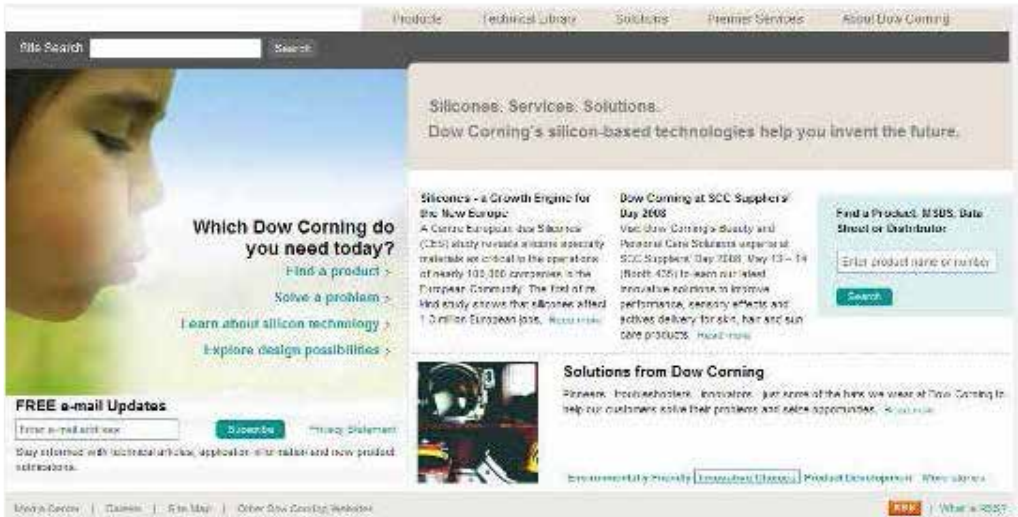
Global Marketing Readiness

6. Consider a global tone for your corporate website.

Even beyond the Home-Page/ Landing-Page, wouldn't it be nice if your new target-markets were not looking at an obviously "foreign-designed" website?

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Dow Corning (USA)



Dow Corning (China)



Basically the same format, although the imagery is "more native" to China.

We can assist your website-design team in understanding the elements that create a more global tone.

7. Are there cultural issues with your website content? (Images, Marketing Statements, Privacy Statements, Terms-of-Use).

It is not enough to **translate** your marketing messages — the messages themselves should be tailored to your individual markets. If you use graphs, be aware that the colors we use in Western culture (in the red, in the black, and green for a “go”), may be unsuitable in other cultures.

Also, though head-to-head comparisons are routinely used in the US, in Germany and Japan for example, comparative advertising is prohibited. Privacy Statements and TOU statements have different legal requirements in other cultures.

Even product names can occasionally be an issue; Rolls Royce was planning on adding a new vehicle to their successful Silver Cloud line, tentatively named the “Silver Mist”. Things were fine until someone pointed out that in German, “mist” means “manure”.



Nike Air

Nike offended many Muslims when the “flaming air” logo for its Nike Air sneakers looked too similar to the Arabic form of God’s name, “Allah”. Nike pulled more than 38,000 pairs of sneakers from the market.

We can find these problem, and provide solutions, before your visitors find them.

8. Is there value in having “culturally specific” pages or sections of the multilingual website? Pages (or portions of pages) that appear only in some cultures such as a “Thanksgiving Sale”, are not known globally, and local holidays may not be celebrated where your source content is developed.

The reasons for these are varied, and not uncommon. There might be legal reasons (import restrictions on certain kinds of products) or marketing reasons (targeting a specific “hot button” in a culture). Another common reason: paid-advertising links.

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USA (note the UNICEF advertisement; other sites opt to use this area for catalog items)



France



We can show you how to weave culturally-aware "logic" into your web pages that will bypass inappropriate links, or pre-inform the user that the link content is not in their native language.

9. Other cultures have different ideals of viewing or presenting a Home Page.

An American-style Home Page may not be as effective in Europe or Asia, where consumer taste and culturally identifiable images are different.

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Italian (www.ebay.it)



Chinese (www.ebay.cn)



Not only is the Chinese website more dazzling and colorful, it relies on extensive use of animation (which you do not see here), typical of the "flair" that Asian markets present immediately to the website visitor.

We can show you other interesting examples, and suggest how to implement a more appropriate "landing page" for each culture that immediately captures the interest of the prospective local customer.

10. How effective is your international visibility?

Using English keywords and descriptions in your <Meta>tags for your SEO (search-engine optimization) elements will not help you sell in Asia or Europe. You really need to be "found" by search engines. Even in other English-speaking countries your keywords or descriptions may need to be optimized (A US clothing retailer selling in the UK, for example, should consider changing keywords such as "sweater" to "jumper", or "sneakers" to "trainers").

In addition to translating your keywords and descriptions, you might also consider adding a variety of different keywords/descriptions that are more country-specific.

We can suggest ways to optimize your visibility in foreign markets.

11. Have you considered "International Commerce" issues, such as order processing, customer inquiries, and tech support?

How will you respond to emails, phone calls, etc. from non-English speaking customers? How about customer-support requirements, product returns, payment options? Will your FAQs be localized? Is a global CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system appropriate for you to consider?

Contrary to what we see in advertising, some credit cards are not truly "International". Cards issued in one country may not be accepted for payment on another country's website. There may be import/shipping restrictions. Some countries require additional duties to be added when items exceed a certain value. Taxes can be a thorny issue --- a VAT (value-added-tax) is common in European countries. Canada has various provincial taxes. So, taxes and duties must be not only collected, but also disseminated to the proper entities. There may be various customs declarations. You must also, of course, ascertain if any of your products are forbidden exports to some (or all) countries.

We can point out the areas that should be of concern to you, and offer suggestions.

12. Spanish for where?

Spanish is the national language of at least 20 different countries. And in the US, there is Domestic Spanish, with all of its variations. It's important to target the right audience if you want to convey an authentic experience. For example, did you know that the translation for the widespread word "computer" is "ordenador" in Spain, yet "computadora" in Mexico?

Examples:

<i>U.S.</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>computer</i>
<i>Argentina</i>	<i>furgón</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>computadora</i>
<i>Cuba</i>	<i>guagüita</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>ordenador</i>
<i>Mexico</i>	<i>camioneta</i>		
<i>Spain</i>	<i>furgoneta</i>		

We can help assure the use of culturally-appropriate translations that match your target markets.

In conclusion...

The issues we raise in these pages are meant to point out some of the more common pitfalls of website localization. However, this list is certainly not a complete itemization of all conceivable challenges that could be encountered during a pre-localization check.

If you have questions or need help with your own website, please contact us for a detailed personalized assessment at [1-800-776-0857](tel:1-800-776-0857) or at info@medialocate.com.



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