

## CREATING A GLOBAL WEBSITE

Today, companies have come to rely on their website to generate revenue, provide information and offer opportunities for marketing their brand. The global economy imposes that they look beyond their national borders to expand. But translating a website in another language is not enough, especially if it has been created with an American audience in mind. Visitors in another country expect to find information that is relevant to them and pictures to which they can relate to. It makes sense to start this effort right at the beginning, rather than intervene as an afterthought. Therefore, planning a global website early gives better results and reduces localization costs.

When going global with your website there are many aspects to consider: Business, Legal, Cultural, Language, Content and Multilingual Search Engine Optimization.

### **Business Challenges:**

It is important to consider what your business goals are for offering your website in other languages to other cultures, and what is the time frame you want to achieve these goals in.

- Clearly identify the markets you want to be active in, don't just throw your website out there.
- Consider the role of your local offices' in going global. If you don't have a local office in the country for which you are localizing your website, determine how you can offer support to your visitors.
- Appoint dedicated resources to be successful with your global website project. It is a commitment, not a part-time effort.

### **Legal Challenges:**

Different countries have different laws and different legal requirements:

- Trade names, Patents, Registered Trademarks are all things to consider when you are talking to an audience in another country.
- Personal data is protected with a much stricter set of rules outside the US, and thus a clear policy of secure data retention and storing must be in place to comply with privacy regulations in other countries (especially European Union countries, Australia and Japan)..
- Consider sales tax, VAT or any other tax when offering your products for sale.

- Consider whether your product may be subject to special regulations when advertised in another country (tobacco, alcohol, pharmaceutical products, cleaning, food items).
- Determine the level of protection you are giving children from accessing your site, is it what is required by the laws of other countries?
- Gather information on how you should present data relating to your Employment opportunities depending on the country you refer to.

### **Cultural Challenges:**

While preparing your content think as if you were wearing “global glasses”, which allow you to put your US culture and habits in the background and instead bring the “world” culture and habits to the forefront.

- Avoid Slang, Idioms, Jargon and Humor, or English words recently “created” for a particular industry, as they are difficult to translate, are culture specific, might not have the same impact in another language and often deemed inappropriate on a website.
- Do not use Sports References (unless your website deal with sports or sporting goods). Today, sports permeate culture to such an extent that everyday language incorporates game images and metaphors, especially here in the US. It must be remembered, though, that those images and metaphors are not always understood in other countries. Some sports are not so popular in other countries, (baseball for instance), and their rules are not understood or even known.
- A mixture of races in an image might be appropriate (and politically correct) here in the US where the ethnical mix is very evident in all levels of society and business environments, but it might not be quite as appropriate in other countries.
- Do not use play on words in your images, when you go to translation it will simply not work in another language.

### **Language Challenges:**

Graphics and images are an integral part of any website and during the design phase they will be chosen to establish or reinforce a brand. They must be chosen with care, as they need to be acceptable in all cultures, and need to convey the correct message.

- If there is text in graphics or images make sure it is placed in layers, so the text can be stripped out to be translated. Test that the translated words will fit on the image in the correct position. Keep in mind that many languages use words that are much longer than their English counterparts.
- Translated text grows an average of 30% compared to the English original, therefore your UI design needs to be worked out correctly to avoid that a button, where an English word would fit perfectly, might become too small or too narrow to accommodate the same command in another language.

- The text v. image relationship might have to be revisited as the text could be too big to fit next to the image it refers to.
- Some Asian languages require larger font sizes as anything below a 12pt becomes a black blob and the strokes of each character cannot be distinguished anymore making the text unreadable.
- Emphasis in the text given with Bold or Italics will not be possible in Asian languages where there is no such distinction.

### **Content Challenges:**

The content you have created for your website might have to be not only translated, but modified for the different locales. Some parts of your content might have a global relevance, some others only a local value. They can certainly coexist on the same page if the design of it is such that allows local contributors to input news or information that only pertains to them, giving it global and local relevance and making it perfect for all audiences.

### **Multilingual Search Engine Optimization Challenges:**

A perfectly translated site is worth nothing if search engines cannot find it and users searching for it can get to see it.

- Simply translating English keywords might not get the attention your site requires to be successful. Keywords need to be created and optimized by linguists who are experts in this kind of work to make sure all language and cultural nuances are respected.
- If you rely on paid searches and PPC ads, they also must be translated respecting certain rules and taking into account the cultural differences that will attract users.
- Know your market place and audience in each country, how they think, and how they are likely to perform a search. Demographics are likely to not be exactly the same as in the US, everywhere else in the world.
- There are also other tricks and tips that need to be applied to optimize your site for searches from users of different language and from different countries, only an MSEO expert can guide you though this difficult path.

### **Conclusion**

Translation is definitely a necessary part of having your website ready for the world, but preparing it for other cultures while designing is a much more important step, and starting while you are still in the storyboard phase is paramount for a successful project. Having an experienced globalization partner that can assist you from conception to final publication will ensure the success of your globalization effort.