

6 Helpful Tips

for Successful Software Localisation

Effective software localisation is the key factor in achieving user satisfaction. Users nowadays don't just expect to be able to use software that is in their own language. It is at least as important that the local and geographical features of their country have been taken into consideration and the software has been tailored accordingly. To sum up: they expect their software to be properly "localised".

However, a common misconception is that software localisation starts with its translation. There are a number of important factors that must be taken into account during the creation phase, to ensure your software is a success in its target market.

We've put together a list of six tips for localising software successfully.

- 1. Design your software so that it is easy to localise**

Design the source code and the structure of the source text so that localisation errors can be avoided. To do this, test your software by running it through a dummy localisation ("dummy translation") process! Contact your localisation partner about this. This will help you resolve potential sources of errors, such as layout problems caused by special characters, or string lengths, in advance.

- 2. Use UTF-8 coding**

UTF-8 is the most commonly used Unicode format. It is supported by the vast majority of modern technologies and is a requirement for XML, Java, JavaScript etc. This coding ensures texts can be easily and, most importantly, correctly translated into any language, in particular Asian languages.

- 3. Keep the texts brief**

Languages are complicated: they use different sentence structures, follow different rules and use more or fewer words to express an idea. By producing source texts that are short and well-expressed, you can reduce problems of understanding that often arise due to long, overly complicated sentences or by the use of synonyms to describe the same concept.

- 4. Build-in extra space**

Although English has the most extensive vocabulary, its sentences are really quite short. In contrast, French uses not quite so many words, but its written sentences are much longer. The target text might end up being between 30 and 35% longer, depending on which source and target languages are involved. If you build this extra space into your initial design, you can prevent unpleasant surprises at a later stage.

5. Don't get carried away by icons

Icons are often used to save space and reduce the amount of text to be translated. But do remember that not all icons are universally applicable. For example, you should avoid using images of hands, feet or animals because these might have an unintended (negative) significance in a different culture.

6. Ask the experts!

Language service providers have many years of experience in localising software and are aware of the challenges. Get some advice before starting your localisation project so that you can optimise the processes and save both time and money.

We're here to help.

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