

# Internationalizing Your Content: Authoring with Localization in Mind

## Step One: Start with the Words

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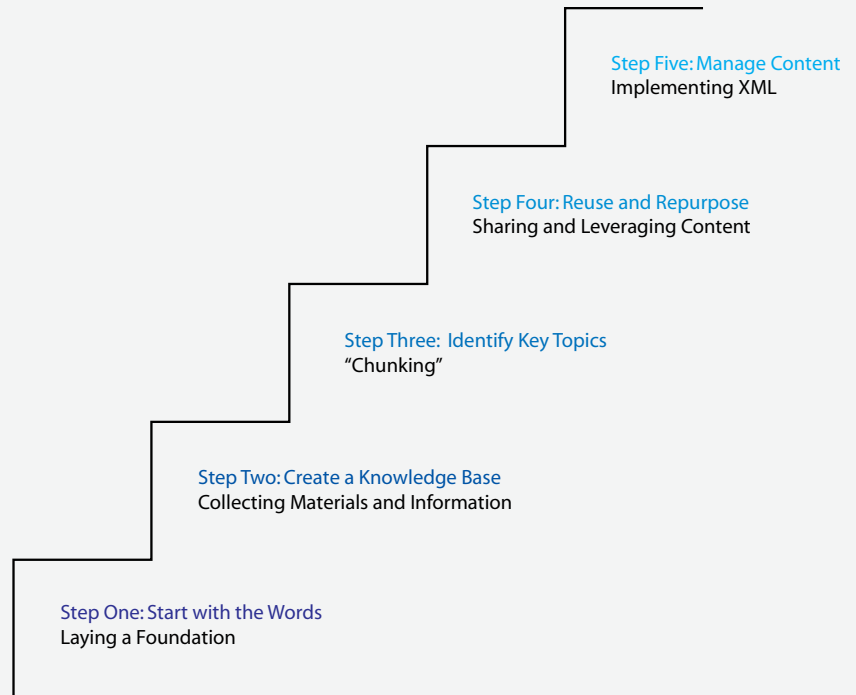
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**In this five-part series, we will discuss best practices for authoring content destined for localization.**

The five steps not only represent best practices for authoring in general, but also offer significant benefits during localization efforts. Writing with localization in mind saves time and money while improving overall quality for both your source and localized content. Whether you're just starting a new project or organizing legacy content, these steps will help you plan your writing tasks and prepare your content for the international market.



## INTERNATIONALIZATION COMES FIRST

Localization is the process of adapting a product or service to a particular language and culture. Internationalization is the precursor to localization and involves the process of planning, designing and implementing a culturally and technically neutral product which can easily be localized.

Internationalization helps decrease translation cost and speeds time-to-market by addressing crucial technical, aesthetic, cultural, and linguistic issues at project start-up. It also has the unique advantage of streamlining not only the localization of your content but authoring in general. True localization renders the translation of content completely transparent, making it appear as if the content was originally created in the target language. Taking the steps to properly internationalize your content before translation even enters the picture will bring you closer to transparency.

## GETTING STARTED

It's a familiar scenario: your company has a product slated for international distribution. Accompanying your product is a complete documentation set that needs to be written:

- Labels
- Datasheets
- Installer Guide
- User Guide
- Quick Start Guide
- Training documentation
- E-Learning
- Website content

Once all of this content is written, it needs to be translated into several languages. The question is: how can your team write effectively in a short time frame, allow for simultaneous shipment across all regions, and keep the cost down as much as possible?

## INVOLVE YOUR LANGUAGE SERVICE PROVIDER EARLY IN THE PROCESS

The first step you can take is to involve your LSP (Language Service Provider) from the beginning of your project. Your LSP will be able to offer you valuable advice about images, wording, and layout so that you don't have to change these things when there's no time or budget left to do so.

At Language Intelligence, we assist writing teams with solutions to fit their needs. Internationalization consultation services include everything from text layout to file migration into XML. You can start small or you can go big—easy yet significant adjustments within a writing team, or a full-blown enterprise-level solution. Either way, you can start saving time and money while improving overall consistency and quality right away.

## STEP ONE: START WITH THE WORDS

Making sure that your audience will understand how to use the product correctly is a key element in that product's success. Once your content goes to translation, your first audience is made up of translators. They need to fully understand not only the product but also your words so that they can accurately convey your descriptions, procedures, warnings, etc. in their own languages.

There are three important things to keep in mind when you sit down to write: Simplicity, Consistency, and Clarity.

### SIMPLICITY

- **Use simple sentence structure.** That doesn't necessarily mean "short." It means keeping the structure predictable and organized, making it easier for a new user to understand and easier for the translator to communicate.
- **Use self-contained sentences and phrases.** Avoid sentence fragments and open clauses, especially before lists. Word order often differs from language to language. Because of this, lists of partial sentences often cannot be replicated.
- **Avoid using too many modifiers.** Word order becomes confusing during translation and the modifiers may end up far removed from the noun they are describing.
- **Avoid idioms and slang.** This is especially valid when the words are not obviously idiomatic.

## CONSISTENCY

- **Ensure that single term = single use.** Be mindful of words that can be read as both nouns and verbs, for example.
- **Keep word choice consistent.** Avoid unnecessary synonyms or words with like meanings in the same context. This is especially important for terminology consistency and taking full advantage of translation memory technology.

## CLARITY

- **Avoid nominative pronouns.** Restate objects for clarity.
- **Do not write negative words to represent a positive idea.** Avoid instructions such as, “don’t add water if the light isn’t on,” for example. Instead, write “only add water when the light is on.”
- **Use words in the context of their most common definition.**
- **Be open to using a symbol or image.** Work with your LSP to determine if an image is appropriate and clear for all target locales.

Following these rules will make your job easier, facilitate sharing writing tasks with fellow team members and significantly improve your content’s preparedness for localization. If the writing is clear, it will take less time to translate, cost less and make the translation more transparent. Essentially, you are laying a foundation for your content.

## WORK WITH LANGUAGE INTELLIGENCE TO INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR CONTENT

For more than 20 years, Language Intelligence has always 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 Two: Create a Knowledge Base

Consider this: everything that you need to know in order to author content is also information translators will need to translate successfully and accurately. The next installment of this five-part series will discuss the topic of creating a knowledge base in detail: from compiling and organizing information, to sharing and collaborating with other content stakeholders, to maintaining and updating information efficiently.

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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.