



BayStateDocumentation

We Make your **Products Speak**

**Ten Simple Steps
to Saving 50% on
Translation and Localization**

www.BayStateDocs.com

Introduction

For companies doing business globally, availability of properly translated and localized documentation is critical for success. But translation and localization process can be expensive, time consuming and cumbersome. Unable to cope with the localization costs, companies often limit localization efforts or skip them altogether. (From here on in this white paper, we will use “translation” to represent both translation and localization.)

With proper planning, localization costs can be significantly reduced. However, this requires more than extracting the best deal from your localization vendor. It requires proper planning at the time of content creation. Our experience (and that of many other experts in the field) has shown that the following steps can cut your localization cost by 50% or more without diluting the effectiveness of your content.

Top 10 Ways to Save on Localization Costs

1. Use Fewer Screenshots

Screenshots effectively communicate the user interface and workings of a product. For this reason, they are popular with users at all levels. But screenshots wreak havoc during translation. This problem occurs because:

- The screenshots need to be retaken for the localized software. This requires setting up the application properly with databases with relevant data etc – once for every screenshot in every language. This is cumbersome, expensive and time consuming.
- Very frequently, the task of generating the new screenshots falls with the QA group, who may not be qualified to review screenshots in a foreign language.
- And there is another scenario that is just as bad. Many small companies decide to localize the documentation but not the actual application. So you may end up with your documentation in the translated language but with the screenshots in English.

With limited or no screenshots, these problems can be minimized.

2. Keep Word Count as Low as Possible

Translation costs are calculated on the number of words – so this one is fairly obvious. But this has to be planned early on – it is much easier to write succinct material than to reduce words at the time of translation. And fewer words also make material simpler to understand and easier to translate. Lower word count pays dividends for all documents, for all languages, and for all future revisions.

3. Separate Graphics from Text

Graphics, if done right, can be a great communication tool. Being a universal language, they do not have to be translated. However, if graphics include text, they can become a nightmare. Any text embedded in the graphics must also be translated. Often, this requires a complete recreation of the graphic. For this reason, avoid the use of text in graphics.

And, in the same vain, avoid mixing callouts with screenshots. Text in the callouts has to be redone for every language – an expensive proposition.

4. Do Not Include Slang and Local Jargon

This is important for several reasons:

- This slang may not have the desired meaning or context in the target language.
- The translators may sometimes not understand the slang well enough to translate accurately.
- And finally, translating slang is expensive. The time and effort required to understand the slang will end up costing more money.

The same applies to any religious and political references.

5. Allow for Text Expansion

Translating to other languages typically results in text expansion. For example, translation to German results in text expansion by around 25%. It is much easier to just format the target document, rather than worrying about where and how to fit within a cramped space. It is always better to think about text expansion at the time of technical writing.

6. Develop a Glossary

Glossaries help translators understand your product and terms. The more they understand, the fewer mistakes they make. Also, the glossary should include all of the acronyms. This will help in keeping track of what is not to be translated.

7. Use Repetitive Language

If the same content is repeated many times, it has to be translated only once. So wherever possible, write the same content in the same way, every time. Although this may appear uncreative, it reduces the translation effort and cost. For example, if you write “Push the button” the first time, do not write “Press the button” the next time. This may cause confusion in the translated document and will increase the cost of translation.

8. Use XML

Use of XML in technical documentation has received much attention lately. This is not the place to deliberate about all pros and cons of XML, but XML can lead to significant savings in translation of technical documents.

For example, XML documents include metadata – that is information about the content. Prior to translation, metadata could be added to describe which content is not to be translated – leading to substantial savings. For new releases, metadata could be added to the updated content, to indicate which content has to be translated.

9. Use a Simple Language

Although this is a best practice to write any technical document, it is doubly important for the ones that have to be translated. For example, if the word “consider” will suffice, avoid using “take into consideration”.

10. Avoid Screenshots

Yes we mentioned this one above. But this is such an important one that it is worth repeating.



"We Make your **Products Speak**"

Bay State Documentation

45 Coventry Lane

North Andover, MA 01845

Phone: 978-852-7019

Send comments to comments@BayStateDocs.com

www.BayStateDocs.com