The Importance of In-Country Review (ICR)

Professional localization processes should incorporate a validation step whenever possible and should be performed by an in-country representative on the customer side. The in-country review enables the end customer to provide input on company-specific terminology, target audience, technical specifications of products in the target market, ensuring compliance with local regulations, as well as to share their profound product knowledge. An ICR step provides translators with information from 'behind the scenes' which helps them to produce a tailor-made translation.

Setting the stage

The biggest pitfalls of the ICR step happen when its objectives are not clear. Some reviewers develop resentment to the work performed by the localization service provider as they were not given the opportunity to localize the product themselves. Such behavior is human; however, a biased review may produce results that can substantially hinder the success of the project. Gain the reviewer's buy-in early, and clearly define each person's involvement in the process. The goal is to have the translators and reviewers work as a team, helping each other to produce the best quality product.

Translators are, by definition, hired to accurately translate the source materials into their language. They usually do not adapt the content to suit the target market. For instance, the US market often uses quite flowery language, such as "Thank you very much for being a valued customer. We appreciate the continued patronage." In some cultures, this may sound insincere, where more appropriate wording might simply be "Thank you for being our customer." The translator will not and should not make this distinction, but instead either the source English should be adapted prior to translation, or the reviewer should adapt the language post-translation. Ensuring that the reviewers understand this distinction between translation and copy writing is crucial for a successful localization process.

No one knows your product or service as well as your in-country employees. They have invaluable insight not only into the correct tone of voice and style but also terminology for copy that is being translated. Engaging them as a reviewer at the beginning of the project will allow them to set expectations and guidelines for the translators and will help minimize the amount of changes needed later in the project. Such involvement gives the reviewer buy-in to the final localized product. Reviewers should, nonetheless, remember that language is subjective. There are many ways of expressing a concept, and being open to differing styles and vocabulary choices is crucial – why hire a professional translator if the reviewer is going to rewrite everything in a preferential manner?

It is rare for an end customer to have the budget to hire someone whose sole job is to review translated content. More often, existing employees are selected to perform the ICR, in addition to their full-time duties. Typically, a reviewer can process about 2,000 words an hour. So depending upon the size of the project, the reviewer may need to allocate significant portions of the day to work through the content and meet the scheduled project milestones.

Selecting Reviewers

The best candidate for the ICR role is an internal professional reviewer who has a translation background, experience in your industry and experience with your specific product or service. When this option is not available, qualified resources can be found in the form of an experienced distributor, product manager, customer service representative, marketing professional or another representative familiar with the local

product. Candidates should have a practical knowledge of the product from a technical perspective. Such familiarity with the product and experience in its marketing yields an optimally translated deliverable.

Qualities of good in-country review candidates

- ➢ Buy-in to source materials - accepts the source materials to be translated and ensures that it meets the requirements of his or her local environment. This buy-in reduces the amount of copy-writing needed after translation has been completed.
- ➢ Fluent in both source and target languages – has native understanding of the original language of the source content as well as the target language translation.
- ➢ Familiar with terminology – subject matter experts in the existing terminology for the target locale.
- ➢ Technically capable – able to use glossary and review tools.
- ➢ Available – able to include and prioritize localization review in their workload.
- ➢ Familiar with localization process – understands the role of the reviewer versus translation team.
- ➢ Answerable – able to be consistent with quality standards and specified direction from customer localization manager.

The optimal solution is to identify a single candidate who meets each of the qualifications listed above. However, there are times when multiple resources must be assigned to meet internal needs. To avoid contradictory feedback, the reviewers' duties should be compartmentalized. For example, one reviewer may be placed in charge of technical accuracy while another confirms adherence to linguistic style guides. A cautionary note — while the use of multiple reviewers per language can often expedite the process, it can also have the opposite effect creating discourse amongst reviewers over the use of local language nuances.

If internal resources are not available, another option would be to include a third-party review step through another localization vendor. They can provide objective feedback and serve as a final quality assurance step for your deliverable. Make sure that they are provided with any glossaries or style guides which have been created for your project.

Pre-translation reviewer involvement

Glossaries and Style Guides

Glossaries and style guides are important tools for improving quality and consistency of translation. A glossary identifies key terms, product names, and special treatment of terminology in the source language and the associated translation. A style guide lists preferred conventions for voice, numerical notation, measurement units, etc. The in-country reviewer should be involved in developing these tools or, at a minimum, have final approval of the assets before translation is started.

Sample Translation

For large translation projects or newly created translation teams, it is more efficient to provide feedback on translation quality early in the process, thereby avoiding significant rework at the end of the project. A recommended approach is to provide in-country reviewers with a sample of the translation at the beginning of the project. A representative sample of the material should be prioritized for translation and

review. Feedback on the sample should be specific with the goal of training the translation team to work in accordance with the appropriate voice to represent the company.

Defining Review Scope

The objectives of in-country validation can be compromised or even negated if expectations are not clearly conveyed. It is crucial that the reviewer's task be defined precisely. The assigned reviewers must understand that linguists are required to remain faithful to the meaning of the source document and not re-write. While the translation should not be a word-for-word rendition, it should convey the intended meaning of the source material and not contain adaption of the source copy.

Review instructions

- ➢ Review should focus on verifying compliance with established conventions.
- ➢ Verify adherence to glossary and linguistic style guide.
- ➢ Note translation errors if encountered but do not perform an edit of the translation.
- ➢ Review target copy against the source language for translation accuracy.
- ➢ Restrict changes to identified scope, do not modify UI or glossary terms that have previously been approved.
- ➢ Avoid non-critical preferential changes.
- ➢ Consider impact of changes, e.g., preferential changes to UI strings in a released product will have a far-reaching impact.

Materials for reviewer

Reviewers should receive the same reference material as used by the translation team to ensure consistency throughout the teams including:

- ➢ Related documentation.
- ➢ Any queries designated during translation and their responses.
- ➢ Existing product glossaries, standard glossaries such as Microsoft glossaries.
- ➢ Language style guides to define preferred voice.
- ➢ Previous translations and/or translation memories.

Feedback from reviewers

Reviewer feedback should meet specific criteria in order to constructively add value.

- ➢ Consistency with glossary, style guide, and previous translations.
- ➢ Traceable feedback, such as annotated PDFs or Word files with tracked changes.
- ➢ Clear and specific instructions, e.g., "Term does not comply with glossary, change to:" rather than "Incorrect" or "Revise translation".
- ➢ Written in a common language (usually English) for review by project managers, etc.