

6 Steps to translate and localise your website



Comtec

Your translation partner

The purpose of this guide

The digital revolution made new markets accessible overnight, but it's translation that enabled organisations to speak to customers in new geographies and new languages. Together they are the perfect duo for reaching customers across the globe. However, not all translations are created equal and some markets require a little extra expertise. It's important to make sure you're getting the most out of your website translations to ensure you reach customers with the right message at the right time.

As the world becomes ever more connected, the opportunities available continue to grow. Emerging markets, new customers and increased demand can all be targeted effectively with the right localisation. So how do you make sure your multilingual website connects with international customers? By making the visitor feel understood. Simply sharing the global face of your company won't engage diverse, multinational customers.

A localised approach is now required to clearly communicate your brand, generate leads and build long-lasting relationships in each target market. Translation and localisation will make sure you share your brand message online in a way that is engaging and authentic - regardless of language.

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Introduction: Why you shouldn't put off translating your website

Translating a website is a complex task. We know, we do it all the time. It needs thought, careful planning and a strong team in place from the start. This includes having the right website developers and translation partner on board.

When faced with a project so big, it can be daunting. But, putting off translating and localising your website just means delaying time that could have been spent getting in front of the right customers.

If you know you need to translate your website, but are finding yourself procrastinating, here's some research that might spur you on.

Customer and business buying behaviours are changing

A global survey carried out by the Common Sense Advisory found that of 3,000 B2C consumers across 10 countries, 60% would rarely or never buy from English-only websites.

Meanwhile, 84% of B2B consumers said they're more likely to purchase products when content is presented in their own language.

These are significant statistics, which underline the importance of investing in localising your organisation's website.

With the right strategy, processes and translation partner, you can streamline the translation process, hitting deadlines and staying within budget without compromising on quality. In doing so you'll deliver a great ROI and opportunities for your organisation.

Challenges facing marketers in managing international websites



These are the common challenges marketers have when it comes to managing international websites:

- **Complication** – managing an English only website is challenging, translation adds complexity.
- **Quality** – as a website is customer-facing, we need confidence that the content is accurate.
- **Speed** – to react to changing customer needs, we need translated content to be live quickly.
- **Flexibility** – as we get more innovative with our content we need translations to keep up.
- **Costs and ROI** – we need to demonstrate that by having translated websites we are providing a tangible return.

Do these challenges sound familiar?
This guide will tackle those challenges and leave you feeling confident about your international marketing in six steps.

Step 1

Developing your website translation and localisation strategy

A translation and localisation strategy is great because it can be replicated across your target markets, with only a few tweaks along the way. This allows you to keep the organisation's overall ambition in sight, even if you are only focussing your marketing efforts on a couple of regions at a time.

To help you develop your strategy, let's first distinguish between translation and localisation.

Translation is replacing words in your starting language with words in your target language. Such as 'welcome' with 'bienvenue' in French, and ensuring the content means the same thing.

Localisation on the other hand looks at the whole of your website to make sure that it really works effectively in the target market. It takes into account cultural preferences such as style and tone, imagery, graphics and colour. It also looks at which information is included and prioritised, tailoring the content for the target market.

When developing your translation and localisation strategy, here are some key things to think about.

What's your business objective for translating and localising your website?

Which of the following are you aiming to do?

- Increase visibility in international search engine listings
- Reduce website bounce rates among non-English speaking website visitors
- Increase international traffic
- Convert more international site visitors
- All of the above

It's important to establish your objectives

so that those involved in helping you translate and localise your website understand the business goals. That way you can set the key performance indicators by which you're defining your success in international markets.

Does your existing content management system (CMS) support multilingual websites?

Some don't. You may need to invest in upgrading your CMS to handle and store your translated content. Your CMS must be able to deal with the various design requirements and languages that use non-standard characters, such as Chinese or Russian. See step 2 for more suggestions on this.

Do you have a team to execute your localisation strategy?

Website localisation is a team effort. Having a quality translation partner is an essential piece of the puzzle. They are your right-hand person. But you'll also want to think about internal team members, and external suppliers.

Here are some of the key players you may need.

- **Project managers:** looking after the day to day, keeping budgets in order and making sure you meet deadlines. They will also be the point of contact for your website developers and translation partner.
- **Web developers:** The tech savvy team who design and build your website. This is often an external agency or creative team. Need help finding one? Ask us and we can share some recommendations.
- **In-market reviewers:** colleagues based in the region you are targeting who can proof language and cultural nuances.
- **Translation partner (the team):** your translation partner will select the right team of linguists and approach to translation based on the content. They can also help with the technical set-up of translations and liaise between yourself and the other suppliers.

Your translation partner can help you to make sure everyone is briefed in correctly and knows their roles. Having the right people in play, with time to invest in your localisation project, will ensure all the pieces come together.

Do you have a multilingual SEO plan?

SEO is often overlooked in website translation and localisation. If you want to rank local websites in international search engines, do your keyword research. You need to know which keywords to target and optimise your websites for. SEMRush, for example, is a good tool to use.

Have you got a language style guide and glossary for each market?

Effective localisation involves knowing how to communicate with your target customers and the best words to use. A language style guide will reflect cultural preferences and trends in your target markets. A glossary will collate all the approved, industry-specific and culturally relevant terminology for each market. This would usually be developed by the translation partner and then approved by the client and their colleagues in the local market.

Can you handle enquiries from international customers?

Your website is all set, translated and localised to perfection. An international customer visits the site, sends an email enquiry or calls the office, but who's handling those enquiries?

Will you use international call centre services? Will you hire native speakers in-house to handle calls and respond to emails? If you're an ecommerce business, can you process sales? Equally, can you handle the demand of increased orders?

How will you manage workflows of new content or updates to each website?

Ensuring that websites are up-to-date and contain fresh content is very important. Will updates and new content be handled by local teams, a translation partner or centralised?

How will you measure Return on Investment?

By understanding what results you want to see from your global website, you can set up ways of measuring this during development. Increases in conversion rate, bounce rate and location of page views can all be tracked and measured to show how a translated site is impacting your business objectives.

Creating a strategy will help you to manage your website translation and localisation project and scale up as your business grows. It's good practice to continually develop your strategy to ensure that future translation and localisation projects are even more streamlined.



Step 2

Choosing the right CMS for your multilingual website

The content management system (CMS) you use for your global website will determine how you manage the workflow of your site translation project. Some have multilingual capabilities out of the box, others allow for plugins. These are extensions to your website that enable an application to perform additional functions. Some plugins will help you to create multilingual sites.

Here's what we recommend you look for when selecting the right CMS:

Plan for the future, not just today

It's important that you consider localisation of your site early on. You may only plan to localise your website for one or two languages initially, but it's worthwhile thinking and planning ahead.

Ask yourself, how do you think your website will evolve and grow? Is it likely you'll want to add more languages? It's good to take future plans into consideration.

Site architecture designed for localisation and globalisation

It should be easy to navigate and generate new local websites and manage the parts of your site (templates, pages and media) that will be translated and localised.

Full Unicode support

Want to translate your site into Japanese, Arabic or Russian? These languages use characters, not the Latin alphabet like English. Unicode support will allow your website content to be translated using the full range of linguistic characters. This includes accents and umlauts, non-Roman scripts such as Asian and Arabic languages, and right to left languages.

Uncomplicated import/export of text

Want to avoid the process of exporting and importing text? Depending on the CMS selected, it's possible to export content from your CMS or even integrate it with your translation partner's TMS. This allows for a smooth transfer of content for translation and publishing.

Translation workflow tools

To ease the complexity of website translation projects, use tools that will help the process run smoothly. You will also want a way to manage the workflow for translating and publishing new or refreshing old content.

Multi-language capacity

It is easy to forget that while much of your local website will need to be translated from English to the target language, some content may already exist in that language. Can your CMS handle this? For example,

if your local team wants to publish a blog post or news item they've written?

Localised media galleries

Website localisation projects often involve replacing the images on your source site with more culturally relevant and appropriate images on each local site. Can the CMS manage different media galleries?

Mobile-friendly

Worldwide, 1.2 billion people access the internet from their smartphones (that's four times the population of the USA!). Meanwhile, a mobile-friendly site makes it 67% more likely that a customer will buy a product or service online. Also, Google will penalise you if you don't make your site mobile-friendly.

Multiple payment options

Ecommerce business? Your CMS must support multiple payment methods and currencies. Cross-border trade is made complex if you can't process different payment types.

Multilingual SEO

You'll need a CMS that makes it easy to set up your local websites for multilingual search engine optimisation (SEO).

Your CMS is the foundation on which your entire translation and localisation project is built. It needs to be user-friendly for those working on your project and up to the task of driving increased web traffic from target markets.

Step 3

Choosing the right localisation service for your website

Every organisation's website is unique, therefore one size doesn't fit all when it comes to translation.

Localisation is the art of adapting content to suit local cultures and geographical contexts. There are different degrees of localisation depending on the emotional impact you want to generate. This is illustrated in the Localisation Spectrum below.

If you've been frustrated by poor quality or slow translations, or your content has failed to achieve the results you anticipated, it could be that you need to localise your content more.

If your message is intended to be highly emotive, you'll need to spend more time localising the content to make it relevant and compelling for each region. This means adjusting cultural references, humour and language contained within the copy, so each reader will feel like it's been written for them. If your copy is purely factual, a straightforward translation, with limited localisation will effectively communicate the message.

Fortunately, there is a model to help you choose the right level of localisation for your communications.

LOW  CREATIVITY/EMOTIONAL IMPACT  HIGH

Machine Translation with post-editing

Source content is translated using machine translation and then post-edited by a translator.

—
Lower cost, faster turnaround, reduced accuracy

When to use?

Suitable for large volumes of content, including product descriptions, user reviews and certain internal documents.

Light Translation

A professional native-speaking linguist with sector-specific expertise translates the source content. Proofreading is not included.

—
Lower cost, reduced accuracy

When to use?

For basic translations of content when reduced accuracy is acceptable or regional colleagues can proofread.

Pro Translation

The team includes both a translator and proofreader, each with sector-specific expertise, working together to ensure the highest level of fluency and appropriate cultural fit for the content. This approach is also suitable for technical content with specialist terminology.

—
Popular approach, highly localised

When to use?

Suitable for key communications such as website content, emails, newsletters, brochures and 'Town Hall' presentations.

Transcreation

A creative translator and proofreader fully adapt, revise and edit, moving away from the source text where needed to create a fully localised piece.

—
More creative, higher cost

When to use?

For content that needs to be motivational and highly targeted, such as slogans and taglines.

Copywriting

When copywriting doesn't translate effectively even with transcreation, a native-speaking copywriter is given a brief to write original content.

—
Most creative

When to use?

Suitable for source content that is highly targeted at the original region, which does not translate effectively in the new region.

Step 4

Preparing your content for website translation

Although a good translation partner will be as flexible as possible, being aware of translation requirements during website development will save time and money.

Whilst humour and idioms might be a great way to engage English speakers, it's a 'can of worms' when it comes to translation and localisation. The same goes for graphics and images with text on them, such as banners or buttons. If this text is embedded and hardcoded (making it non-editable) it takes extra time (and costs) to adapt for a new language.

Here are some things to keep in mind to help optimise your source content.

Think about technology: In our experience the most streamlined localisation projects are the ones where a CMS, with multilingual capability, is in place off the bat. Whilst you may only have one other language in mind for now, by putting this in place at the start, you'll save yourself complications later down the line.

Adopt a localisation mindset: The more creative the content is, the more involved the localisation process will be. Ask your copywriter to review their copy and ensure any emotive text or cultural references are necessary and appropriate. Ask them to flag up content which will need to be adapted.

Use clear English: Use clear, concise sentences to make translation easier. Standard English should be used, where possible.

Be consistent: By being consistent in the use of terminology and common phrases, translation will be faster, more consistent and more transparent.

Check their copy: Eliminate the unnecessary use of location-specific symbols, numerals and text (e.g. £ signs, dates, times and English words).

Leave white space: Translated text can often be significantly longer than the original. Allow enough white space in their designs to accommodate text expansion after translation.

Keep things separate: Separate text layers in the source file rather than embedding text into graphics.

Remember to replace location-specific imagery: Jointly decide if you're going to restrict the use of location-specific imagery. Using more generic 'global' versions will keep design costs down, speed up production and reduce the risk of an inappropriate image slipping through the net.

Plan for the future: You might be starting with a small-scale translation and localisation project with a view to upscaling in the future. Don't plan with today's project in mind, constantly be forward-thinking. Your first project will be a steep learning curve and translation and localisation is always evolving.

You always need to be planning ahead so that you can streamline your process. This will ensure that new content, updates and your new local websites are translated quickly and smoothly every time.



If you are interested in finding out more about creating effective global marketing campaigns then download our full marketing guide [here](#).

Step 5

How to share your content with your translation partner

Now that your content is ‘global-ready’, you’re all set to share it with your translation partner.

How you share it depends on a few factors and your requirements. It’s important to work as a team with your website developers and translation partner to establish the best process.

A good start is to set up kick-off calls with your web team and translation partner. Use these sessions to clearly define:

- the technical process for handling the content
- what content needs to be translated on your website
- any testing necessary before translation starts

Your translation partner will likely be a dab hand at website translations, so lean on them as your partner to help guide you in the process.

Word of advice, before you transfer your content, break it into chunks. Remember, not all of your content may need translating and localisation, so take it out of the equation. Equally, there will be content that exists in several places that will only need translating once.

There will be no need to translate everything on each page. For example, let’s say you have a graphic, a table or disclaimer on several pages across your site. To save time and money, this can be translated once and reused.

When your content is broken down into manageable chunks, it’s easier to transfer. Here are a few sharing options for you:

Transferring content for translation with file transfer

This process involves a bit of work from your side. You will need to export your content as an XML, CSV or HTML file and send it to your translation team, via email or cloud sharing.

Your translation partner will then localise the content and return it to you in the same format to be imported into the local website. Most CMS have import / export functionality, but occasionally they don’t. In which case, you may have to resort to copying and pasting strings of code and sending these to your translation company as a Word or Excel file.

Each CMS has their own characteristics and it is important to understand how your CMS approaches localisation.

The file transfer option may be necessary if your main website doesn’t support other languages, and CMS integration and translation proxy cannot be used; or if you have a small website that can be handled easily in this way.

Automated approaches require some additional investment. This might make

them less cost-effective for a one-off or low volume translation project.

Drawbacks of this approach include human error and time. Plus, there’s a lot of work in it for everyone, especially when factoring in the review process, involving multiple files being sent and stored between all parties.

Translation proxy

A translation proxy site is a mirror version of your main website, which exists in the cloud. It will suit your translation project if you want to create a standardised multilingual website, where each site mirrors each other, apart from the language.

Using translation proxy server software, your translation partner will pull strings of text and XML/HTML page code from your main site. This is queued for translation and localisation using their Translation Management Software (TMS).

Your translation team then translates and localises the content and caches these localised files on the translation proxy server. This is an option often used when multilingual websites are required quickly, as there are fewer web design and development considerations to manage.

One drawback is that local websites cannot be easily customised; changes have to be made to the main site. However, it is a great option if your CMS doesn’t support multilingual sites, and if your main site is regularly updated with non-dynamic content.

Website translations with CMS integration

Hugely beneficial for medium to large website translation projects and if you need several multilingual websites. Sharing content using CMS integration streamlines the workflow. It's also useful if there are many people involved in your translation project.

CMS integration uses a plugin, or connector software, to allow for files to be sent to your translation partner's TMS from your CMS. Translated and localised files are then sent back to your CMS for publishing on the local website.

Most off-the-shelf CMS have multilingual website integrations, but some custom-built systems do not.

One of the key advantages over the translation proxy option is that your local websites can have more custom features. This might include news sections or additional pages. This makes the user experience much more targeted.

As part of the content sharing process, in-market reviews are useful. Your website content is analysed in context using a staging server, which will review the layout of your content as it will appear on the website. This is great for checking how text expansion, non-Roman characters and left-to-right text behaves as part of a new website layout.



Step 6 Handling reviews and quality in website translations

Working with a translation partner will give you quality control and access to specialist proofreading services. This will help to ensure that your project is delivered to the highest standards. However, the final sign-off has to come from you. So, you will need a team of reviewers – people who will forensically check your content in situ before it goes live. No-one knows your business and your customers better than your local team so we'd suggest using them. Your translation partner will help you to brief in your reviewers to make their feedback as valuable as possible.

Who should review your website translations?

In-country reviewers! There's no substitute for having colleagues on your team that speak the native language of your target market and have a good grasp of English. They can review the English language version of your site and advise on what content works in their country and what needs changing.

If you have a large amount of content that needs reviewing, over a period of time, it's worth forming a team of reviewers who have the capacity to take on your project.

Delays during the review process can cause inconsistencies. This can result in revised terminology or tone being missed in final production. This can then have a knock-on effect on the entire project.

Skills and experience to look for

Use reviewers that have experience of working on or managing marketing translation projects. They'll have a solid understanding of the objectives and process involved in completing translation work successfully.

Yet, experience is not a must-have because your translation partner will guide your reviewers through the process. They'll take you through briefing translators and developing glossaries, to reviewing translated content.

Your translation partner can advise on who to include in the review team based

on their experience of managing projects for other clients.

What to watch out for

Translation can be subjective. A reviewer's style and preferences can be problematic, particularly during large-scale projects. It's important to set boundaries and guidelines to ensure that your project stays on track.

Reviewers should be well-briefed on the objectives, know what to look for when reviewing content and how to measure quality and success.

Your translation partner will have put together brand, style and tone guidelines, make sure you share these with reviewers. This is a good starting point for your review team. So is your glossary of terms, created to identify the approved industry and company terms and phrases used throughout the project. This not only gives them a good understanding as to what their role is, but it helps to ensure consistency and void unnecessary personal bias.

However, a word of caution. While your aim is to create a high-quality translated and localised website, the process of reviewing content, requesting revisions, making those amends and reviewing again, can be lengthy.

Debating the pros and cons of one translation over another equally accurate translation can delay the project, and that may mean delaying your website launch.

By working with your translation partner, guidelines can be drawn up for reviewing content, setting parameters and ensuring that all parties understand what quality means.

Quality assurance and your translation partner

There are a few processes you can put in place to help ensure quality is high across your website. We suggest using local style guides, glossaries of terminology and review guidelines to achieve consistency across your content. A good translation partner will help set these up with you at the start of your project.

The review process can be better streamlined when you work with a certified translation service provider. Choose a provider with ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 17100:2015 quality certifications so that your website translation project is in safe hands.

Your translation partner will have quality assurance controls in place to ensure accurate and high-quality translations. This will involve proofreading and reviewing localised content in-house, and sometimes moderation from a third-party native-speaking translator, depending on the size and scope of the project.

Your provider will also collaborate with your in-country reviewers to help them handle the review process with as few friction points as possible, making their job as easy as possible.

Top tips for the review process

- **Choose in-country reviewers who understand the market, objectives for the website and have the time to devote to the project.**
- **Provide guidelines and resources such as brand voice, style and tone, and a glossary of agreed terminology.**
- **Provide examples of successful translated content for both the translation team and reviewers, so they have something to benchmark the translations against.**
- **Ensure that the source content is high-quality; while your translation team can work magic, they need something to start with.**
- **Review content in context on a proxy server or staging server. Judging the quality of a translation in a Word document is not the same as seeing it on a website.**
- **Build a long-term relationship with your translation service provider. Quality will increase and review cycles reduce when your translation partner really understands your company and business objectives.**

Case study

Achilles

The client

Achilles is a supply chain risk and performance management company that connects suppliers with leading buyer organisations in 11 industry sectors globally.

The challenge

Following a rebrand, the company needed to migrate its website to a new CMS. We were asked to translate and localise the new website, initially into Spanish, Norwegian and Portuguese.

With a project deadline of just three months, which included web development, copywriting, and full localisation, this was no small task. We would need to rely on our expert team to deliver a streamlined process.

How we did it

We worked closely with Achilles' digital marketing team, their local market teams and their web agency to help them successfully launch their new multilingual website in these three markets. After this initial success we then closely followed with Germany, Sweden and Italy.

As part of the rebranding exercise, content on the existing website was rewritten to reflect a new tone of voice and then localised for each market. We worked closely with Achilles' stakeholders and content creators to make sure translations were not only engaging for each market audience, but reflected the new brand.

Whilst words are our speciality, we also help guide the technical process for website translations. The Achilles team migrated the website to WordPress and invested in the WPML plugin – a great tool for simplifying multilingual content management. As WPML partners, we were able to streamline translation workflows; quickly and effectively translating content as it was made available.

The results

The team at Achilles saw an improvement in website performance after our translations and localisation project. These included:

- 18% increase in the number of visitors to the website across all languages
- 23% improvement in global page views
- 36% rise in the number of pages viewed per visitor
- 3.8% decrease in the overall visitors leaving the website on the first page
- 8% increase in total time on page

“We couldn’t have done it without Comtec! From my perspective, having a really solid, reliable system of support, with people I knew could get on with it and do it well, was crucial. That’s what I had with Comtec, which is why the project came together so well.”

Rebecca Duvall, Senior Digital Marketing Manager at Achilles

Final thoughts

Launching your localised website in a new market is an exciting pathway to fresh opportunities and potential growth. To make sure that journey is as smooth as possible, a clear strategy and the right translation partner are essential. Think of them as your compass and navigator. Together you'll keep costs in control, save your team time and remove stress from the process. They'll also be a sounding board to ensure that your ideas and vision 'translate' to what you have in mind.

Why Comtec?

For almost 40 years Comtec has enabled international businesses to streamline their translation process and get better results from their global comms – in over 200 languages.

When it comes to website translations we know first-hand how complex these projects can be. That's what inspired us to make this guide and share our tried and tested methods.

We are linguaphiles at heart, but we also provide guidance on the technical aspects of website translations. Having supported clients with many website translations over the years, we can share advice on the best tools and practices, as well as collaborating with your developers, to provide a holistic translation and localisation service. Great teams produce the best work. That's why we align our language expertise, with the skills of your team, to create a partnership that delivers quality results.

Our mission

We work with a wide range of innovative organisations, from high-growth start-ups through to established FTSE companies, to help them deliver their message worldwide. Wherever you need multilingual content to engage, inform and inspire, we've got you covered. However large or complex your project, we ensure your message is strong, compelling and ready to resonate in every region – from websites and social media posts to elearning programmes and training videos.

Our people

Our people have a passion for languages, expertise in translation and a real desire to make a difference for our clients. Clients value the focus we place on delivering the highest possible quality, building a partnership with them to share our experience and providing a service they can truly rely on.

Our commitment to you

We're not just a translation company – we're a translation partner. No matter the scale or complexity of a project, we ensure all communication materials are fully localised to resonate in every region and culture. That's why we're trusted by leading global organisations, together with their communication teams and creative partners, to localise content, for every market, in every industry and in every language.

Looking to find out more?



This is James, he is here to answer any questions you might have.

Drop James an email on jbrown@comtectranslations.com or book a 10-minute discovery call [here](#) to see how we can support you in getting the best results from your website translation and localisation plans.





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