



WHAT IS LOCALIZATION ENGINEERING?

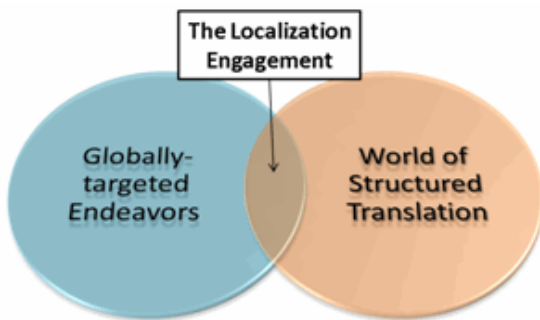
For some, the term “localization engineering” evokes certain expectations based on traditional software engineering. And, in the context of a software localization project, one may understandably ask, “My product has already been engineered, why do I need localization engineering? Don’t I just need translation?”

This FAQ is designed to help clarify the role of localization engineering and help you obtain the maximum benefit from this function.

The Localization Engagement

The professional translation industry is in many ways a world unto itself, comprised of its own unique characters, history, practices, pricing paradigms, expectations, and idiosyncrasies. In a word, it has a culture. When a company developing a globally-targeted product engages in business with the translation world, it brings to the table its own culture, and more often than not, unique requirements.

Localization services (like those provided by Lionbridge) focus on this intersecting space between a company’s language needs and the services provided by the translation world—an area that we call the “localization engagement.” The primary mission of the localization engagement is to make sure the company’s requirements for language-related services are satisfied.

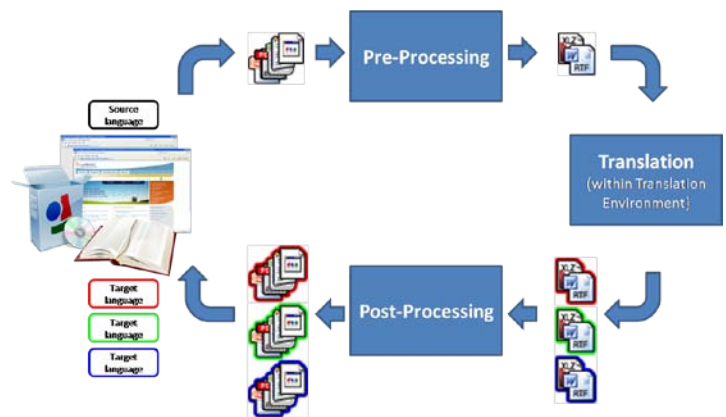


Like snowflakes, localization engagements are unique — coming in as many different shapes and sizes as there are different kinds of customers. From a technical standpoint, each localization engagement can bring with it a unique set of logistics that must be successfully managed. This is where Localization Engineering kicks in.

Logistics, Logistics, Logistics

There are some logistics that are common to most localization engagements:

1. Content that is targeted for translation must make it into the hands of translators. The content needs to be in a format they can use to do their work using Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tools, such as translation memory and online glossaries (a process typically called “pre-processing”).
2. After translation, said content must be converted, in translated form, back into the format from which it originated (this is typically called “post-processing”).



Here’s an example: Let’s say that we have a single English html file that needs to be translated into French and Japanese. That file would be converted into a format that works with the translation tool we’ll be using across the project — let’s say XLIFF. The process of conversion involves a parsing step that chunks up the file into categories of content, most importantly translatable content and non-translatable content (such as the html code itself).

The XLIFF file is distributed to French and Japanese translators who return the XLIFF in bilingual format. The bilingual files are then rendered back into their native html format, but with all English UI now in French and Japanese.

Sounds simple enough, but with the huge variety of software types, publishing formats, and other forms of content — each with different syntax rules, content length restrictions, levels of support for encoding, techniques for storing translatable text, etc. — there are actually lots of details to address.

Now, multiply these logistical considerations with those that originate on the translation side: different character sets, behavior of translation tools, translator operating environments, linguistic rules, etc. and things can start to get complex, even on a "straightforward translation project."

Add the additional activities of synchronizing updates, testing localized content, and modifying formatting to accommodate the inevitable text expansion, and the oversight of an expert becomes important. The Localization Engineer is that expert. It is that person's job to take care of these logistics.

If you've engaged in localization before and have NEVER experienced corrupted text, broken code, untranslated content, the manifestation of post-translation functional issues, or a user interface that just doesn't seem to make sense anymore, that's great! It means the Localization Engineering function was performing as intended.

Invoking the Innovator

While managing technical logistics at the project level is important and necessary, the true power of the Localization Engineering function is realized when it is applied at a higher level. That is, the more you can involve such an expert in your overall plans and give them visibility into the processes and requirements within the "blue circle" of your global endeavors, the more that person will be able to develop the most streamlined, cost-effective, and risk-proof engagement strategy possible for you. Involve them early, and hold them accountable for constant improvements: that's what engineers do best!

Lionbridge has the good fortune of having many of the best and most experienced Localization Engineers in the industry. If you want to put their expertise to work for you, please contact us.

About Lionbridge

Lionbridge (Nasdaq: LIOX) is the leading provider of translation, localization, and testing services. Organizations in all industries rely on Lionbridge language and testing services to increase international market share, speed adoption of products and content, and ensure the integrity of their global brands. Based in Waltham, Mass., Lionbridge operates across 26 countries, and provides services under the Lionbridge and VeriTest® brands.

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