The 7 Musts of Globalizing eLearning

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Global companies now need their eLearning in five, ten or even 30 languages – and they face three big challenges that prevent effective translation on a global scale.

First, the global market uses multiple devices, multiple operating systems and multiple browsers. iOS and Android are locked in a dead heat for overall tablet and smartphone market share. And PCs aren't going away any time soon so going global also means supporting ten-year-old IE8 browsers.

Next, the translation process can be time-consuming and error-prone. Despite minor steps forward, it is still labor intensive, expertise-driven and fraught with error. Content is exported and sent to a translator. After translation, it gets reloaded and tested. The whole process is then repeated multiple times. There are many opportunities for errors: copy and paste errors, document formatting errors, mis-numbering, incorrect associations between blocks of text and misnamed media files – just to name a few.

Finally, maintenance and support of content is difficult. There are usually separate courses for each language multiplied by the number of device types you support. A developer or programmer is often required to make the updates.

The good news is globalizing and maintaining eLearning doesn't have to be so difficult. eLearning anytime, anywhere, on any device across the globe can be developed efficiently.

Here are the seven "musts" of globalizing eLearning.

one — Learning MUST work on any device from a single version.

It's a multi-device world. To deliver on the promise of "anytime, anywhere," global eLearning must first work on any device.

If that is not the case, you'll be creating multiple course versions for each and every language. If your eLearning tool uses Flash to support old browsers and HTML5 for everything else, you have two course versions. That means potentially exporting, translating, importing, publishing and completing QA twice for every language.

The key is that the eLearning must work on all of your target devices. Use an approach that adapts the eLearning layout and interactivity to the specific device type (PC, tablet, smartphone) from a single course version.

two — Learning MUST support all languages in one single course version.

Many eLearning tools create a different course version for each language. Take three courses that need one English version and one Spanish version. That's six discrete courses; cumbersome, but manageable.

Now take 200 courses and five languages… or 10 courses and 31 languages. Not feasible.

But if you have all the translations contained in a single course – one course version, one URL and one course report – regardless of the number of languages, it becomes infinitely more manageable. This is especially true as the volume of your eLearning increases.

Ultimately, put the first two "MUSTS" together. The best practice is any language on any device – still only one course.

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three
Learning MUST keep content "translation friendly".

Almost everyone knows the basics. Do not use contractions. Do not use idioms. Use humor carefully. But what about the detail in the media? Are there portions of the image or video that are irrelevant or even offensive to a culture or people group?

Instead of using a "one-image-fits-all" approach, you must be able to easily insert alternate imagery or media for any language or culture. If you can safely re-use video, include the option to open-caption the video through tagged text technology to save on additional production costs.

four
Learning MUST support the ability to translate remotely.

Translation partners all use "in country" translators; you should too. Remote translation means in-country translators who will contextualize the content to the local culture. This localization greatly enhances the learner's context (and interest) while making the content culturally relevant.

But it can also mean your proprietary content is floating around the globe in various forms, to various people – unprotected.

To maintain security, use a form-based translation capability in the cloud. Only those with the correct security rights can sign in – from anywhere in the world – and complete their translation without losing, destroying or altering the original code or source translation documents, which means you retain full control of the content.

five
Learning MUST automate placement of the translated content back in the code.

Remember the original translation process? Export, translate, import, QA and repeat. The process is fraught with error.

To avoid all that risk, use a cloud-based translation tool that automatically associates the translated content to the correct place in the course - no errors and no programming required. In some medical and legally sensitive situations, this is now a requirement.

six
Learning MUST provide real-time preview for translators.

It's a real shortcoming when translators can't see the translated course in real time. Traditionally, translators need programmers to import the content and republish the course to see the content. Then the QA process requires multiple cycles.

Instead, provide a real-time preview of the translated course so the translator can immediately review the course exactly as the learners will see it. The translator can then continue to make immediate changes using the cloud-based interface. This saves time, eliminates errors and allows for the "art" of great translation.

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seven

Learning MUST have enough space on ANY device for translations.

In the past, eLearning was developed for a fixed screen size. But the world is no longer "one screen fits all." In 2013, there were 232 different screen sizes for PCs, tablets and smartphones.

Global eLearning needs to be designed to scroll and size elegantly for content that is displayed on multiple devices with multiple screen sizes. Sizing elegantly means more than stretching, shrinking or stacking your content. It means ensuring that your eLearning layout is carefully designed so that it elegantly adapts to every device.

Whether you need eLearning in three or 30 languages, keep these seven musts in mind to accomplish effective - and efficient - translation on a global scale. Your brand is worth it.

To learn more about BIWORLDWIDE and how we can help, visit: BIWORLDWIDE.com or email info@BIWORLDWIDE.com.

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