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Evolution of Localization Tools

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Avoid Getting Lost in Translation

LION:
Free Translation Management Systems

January 2008 FEATURE

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I10n hot topic

Thou shall have Transparent and Free Translation Management Systems

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According to research performed by Common Sense Advisory and published in Multilingual Magazine in January of 2007, only 14% of 236 surveyed language service providers (LSPs) claim that many or some of their clients use TMS. Later in 2007, Ben Sargent of Common Sense Advisory stated that “the market is developing faster than we predicted”. Ben added “if they [LSPs] expect to be competitive in 2010, we recommend that they invest in process automation technology within the next twelve months.” TMS is new but rapidly growing.

Indeed! Throughout 2007, many LSPs awakened to the need of Translation Management Systems (TMS) to improve their efficiency, quality and service. While some are still scrambling to figure out what TMS is and how to acquire or use it, others have adapted and applied it successfully improving their workflow, translation assets management and communications.

TMS enables process automation. Tasks such as project initiation, staffing, file sharing, terminology sharing, status updates and query management can be facilitated with TMS, improving communications between the LSP, its partners and clients. If you are involved in simultaneous releases of a localized product, you can no longer afford not to work within a TMS environment.

STREAMLINE THE WORKFLOW

With TMS, projects can be initiated online and files posted on the system. A workflow can be setup to define the project's tasks, schedules, staffing and file sharing. With all these steps entered and updated online, clients can monitor and track the status of their projects with a web browser, 24/7.



The screenshot shows the gvProject web interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'gvConfig', 'gvProject', 'gvTerm', and 'Profile'. Below this is a table with columns: Name, Status, Approval, Due, PM, AM, Amount, and PO#. The table lists four items: 'Online Help' (Started), 'Training Manual' (In Translation), 'User Guide' (In Review), and 'Software GUI' (Delivered). Below the table are tabs for 'Summary', 'Notes', and 'Status Log'. The 'Status Log' is expanded to show a 'Project Status Logs' table with columns 'Status' and 'Date Started'. The log shows various status changes for the 'Software GUI' project, such as 'Delivered', 'To Be Delivered', 'Client Proof', 'In DTP', 'In Review', 'In Translation', and 'Started', with corresponding timestamps.

Name	Status	Approval	Due	PM	AM	Amount	PO#
<input type="checkbox"/> Online Help	Started	05 Sep 07	21 Sep 07	JL	BK	\$10,000.00	PO800345S
<input type="checkbox"/> Training Manual	In Translation	06 Sep 07	28 Sep 07	JL	BK	\$5,333.33	PO800343S
<input type="checkbox"/> User Guide	In Review	05 Sep 07	01 Oct 07	JL	BK	\$5,000.00	PO800345S
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Software GUI	Delivered	06 Sep 07	17 Sep 07	JL	BK	\$1,200.00	PO800345S

Status	Date Started
Delivered	9/13/2007 2:56:46 PM
To Be Delivered	9/13/2007 2:56:34 PM
Client Proof	9/12/2007 1:26:12 PM
In DTP	9/11/2007 9:17:51 AM
In Review	9/10/2007 9:01:47 AM
In Translation	9/6/2007 11:45:15 AM
Started	9/6/2007 11:45:06 AM

Figure 1 gvProject allows monitoring and tracking of projects 24/7

To some, TMS may seem to be overkill. In a previous Client Side article an LSP executive argued that his clients don't need to have regular access to their project status online via a TMS. He had based his opinion on a survey he conducted with his clients where one client stated that they “don't care as long as the project is delivered when I expect it”.

This may be the case for clients that are not involved with localization projects requiring multilingual simultaneous releases. In our experience, when clients are in the midst of a major product release, they want full and immediate access to the latest status on their projects and project assets and for a good reason.

In the real world, product release schedules slip, source files change, and deadlines shift to accommodate urgent features, enhancements and bug fixes. Experienced consumers of localization services reject the black-box approach and demand constant visibility into the entire localization schedule and process so they can make educated last minute decisions involving releases or change orders.

Full transparency in this process is essential for them to integrate localization activities with development, facilitating task and file hand-off.

OPEN TERMINOLOGY

Another key area of TMS is terminology sharing and maintenance. **Sharing terminology is a critical task often neglected by localization consumers.** Most companies maintain company-approved glossaries (also referred to as terminology or lexicons) in authoring tools. They are usually hidden to most internal groups and partners. These glossaries are industry and company specific terms intended for use throughout the company's products.

The Tech Pubs group is usually responsible for the task of building and maintaining these glossaries in English (or whatever the source language may be). They typically do a good job of remaining consistent with it while undertaking the authoring of product manuals and help.

But rarely is their effort effectively used by other groups throughout the company. Local and off-shore software development groups seldom coordinate the use of common terminology in their code. Also, marketing professionals, usually busy with their daily tasks, are often unaware of the terminology decisions taken by other groups.

With localization, there is the added responsibility to maintain terminology in all the languages the product is localized into. The complexity of the task increases proportionally with the number of languages supported, and geometrically when simultaneous international product releases are planned.

The more open your terminology is, the better your communications with your clients and your brand image will be. With a TMS solution, you can have your terminology posted securely online for all allowed parties to search, review, edit, correct, add or improve. This can be not only for just your source language, but also for all your target (localized) languages.

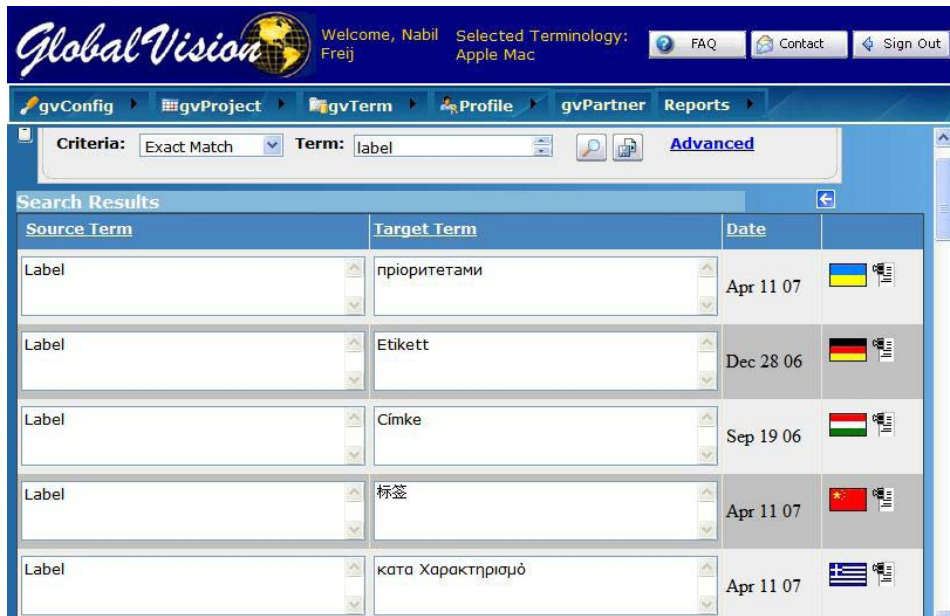


Figure 2 gvTerm securely manages terminology online

Your goal should be to allow all parties involved in the development of the product, literature, web or other company assets, have secure access to your terminology online. In addition, third party partners can be given access to your terminology when they integrate their products into yours. This leads to a more consistent and accurate integration. Lastly, your translators and localization vendors should have full access to your terminology to remain consistent to it in all your supported languages.

Kara Warburton, head of terminology management at IBM once said: Terminology is the DNA of knowledge. Terminology management enabled TMS will provide an environment to help manage that DNA very effectively.

AUTOMATE QUERY MANAGEMENT

With project initiation, file sharing, staffing and terminology management out of the way, the translators are now enabled to fully understand the content and accurately translate it.

While performing their tasks, translators often become the best editors of the source text. This is why we often get queries from them about our clients' source context.

Also, when the terminology is not fully available to them or is inconsistent in the Translation Memory (TM), they are empowered to send queries about it. To avoid the current method of shuffling emails or documents between translators, project managers and clients, TMS can permit an online medium that handles these queries in an efficient manner and permits storing the queries in a client-specific knowledge base to be reused by other translators during future projects.

Translators can enter their queries online and search for answers in the knowledge base or the terminology database (TD). A correct implementation of TMS will perform these tasks automatically, as translators enter their queries.

If the search finds a similar query, it will bring it to the attention of the translator via a search pop-up window that will display answers from the knowledge base or the TD.

his clients were asked in the survey “Does the need exist within your organization to use multiple translation services suppliers?” they answered: Yes 33.4%, Maybe 29% and No 37.6%. In other words, two-thirds of his clients are either already using or are considering using a second source to his service. This helped him draw the conclusion that charging the client a fee for the use of his to-be-developed TMS is justified.

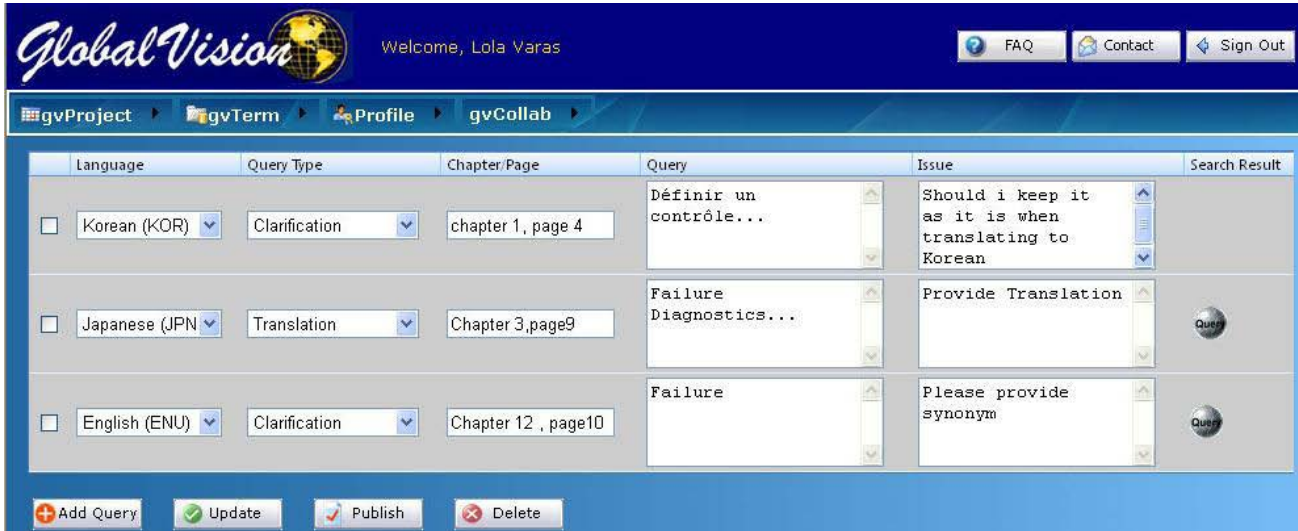


Figure 3 gvCollab permits online search and submission of queries

If no similar query is found, the translator can publish the query for the project manager to moderate or automatically dispatch to the expert on the client’s side to answer.

Before TMS, managing queries took much time and involvement from many parties: the translators, project manager, client-side coordinator, client’s proof readers and reviewers. TMS allowed automating the communications. By delivering information on demand to the people that need it or to the ones that should reply to it, TMS both facilitates and expedites the querying process.

Granted not all translation clients have a need for TMS; but, make no mistake, it is clients with advanced requirements that drive the need for further automation and dictate the evolution of the localization industry.

WHAT WILL TMS COST?

In that previous Client Side issue, the same executive stated that when

In our experience, clients want uninhibited and free access to their information, assets and intellectual property, regardless of which vendor is involved. They are fed up with vendors who take their translation memories hostage and withhold key information about the processes or tasks applied to their files and assets.

LSPs SHOULD BE COMMITTED TO A FREE AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS.

If you want to see with your own eyes, we recently announced the availability of a free webinar that demonstrates the benefits of the portal. Register online and schedule a one-on-one 30-min session at your convenience on <http://www.gvAccess.com>.



About the Author:

Nabil Freij is the president, founder and owner of GlobalVision International, Inc. (www.globalvis.com), a Software Localization and Translation specialist. He is trilingual and holds an MSEE from Brown University and an MBA from Bryant University. Freij has worked for 20 years in the hardware, software, and localization industries. He has traveled the world and lived in five countries. He is frequently published and quoted. Nabil can be reached at nabil@globalvis.com