

## Customer Documentation and Training Concerns in a Global Business

---



Are you considering the expansion of your business outside of the United States? *“Being a global business is an impressive accomplishment, but not every business is cut out for the challenge.”*<sup>1</sup>

If you want to expand your business to other countries, there are many things you need to consider before you expand on a global level. For instance:

- Do global customers exist for my product?
- What are the language barriers?
- What are the cultural barriers?
- Who or what is my competition in that global market?
- Can my product be patented in that global market? <sup>2</sup>
- What are the legal issues?
- Are there any political issues to take into consideration?

These are all very important considerations when a business wants to expand globally. My area of expertise is associated with documentation, training, and translation requirements when a business is multinational.

## **Global Documentation and Training Concerns**

Most large multinational corporations require the internal service and customer support personnel to speak English. Therefore, all of the documentation and training targeted to those internal audiences is written in English. That is acceptable to those populations and to the countries where they operate.

Where consumers are concerned, however, the policies are different. Customer-facing documentation and training must be localized (i.e. translated) into the languages and measurements (English versus metric measurements, °F versus °C, and so on) of the target country in order to meet legal requirements.

There are many countries that legally require that equipment and product labels (particularly safety labels), packaging, documentation, and training must be available in the native speakers' languages prior to a product or service being introduced or launched in that country. *"Since 1993, CE Marking has been required to sell certain products, devices and machines in the European Union. To qualify for CE Marking, certain documents must be translated into the target countries' designated languages."*<sup>3</sup> Depending on the country, translations may be required in more than one language. For instance, Belgium requires French, Dutch and German translations.

European countries are not the only places that legally require translations of customer-facing deliverables into the native speakers' languages. Canada also requires the customer-based deliverables to be delivered in English and French in order for a product or service to be launched. Once you determine the countries where you want to expand your business, it's best to check their legal and safety requirements in order to comply.

## Writing for Translation

*“Translating isn’t always as simple as rewriting text into a new language; you need to consider the culture of your new audience” . . . “take into account industry-specific technical terms” . . . “and even the formatting and style that meet expectations for such documents in your target country.”<sup>4</sup>*

You should establish a consistent process and terminology for all writers involved in the documentation development process in order to facilitate effective translations. Many multinational companies use a customized dictionary of words and phrases that their technical communicators refer to in order to ensure their writing will translate accurately into other languages. There are other techniques used as well, such as avoiding the use of contractions and avoiding the use of colloquialisms in the documentation.

If you would like to learn more about writing for translation in order to launch your products or services in other countries, please contact me at Projects Accomplished!

### About the Author

Sandra Glanton is the owner and managing consultant of Projects Accomplished! She spent 10 years writing technical documentation for a local multinational corporation. She also was a cross-services project manager for an organization that specialized in documentation and translation services. She can be reached at [sg@projectsaccomplished.biz](mailto:sg@projectsaccomplished.biz) or (585) 230-0649.

1 Saige Driver, “Going Global: How to Expand Your Business Internationally,” last modified September 7, 2017, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8211-expand-business-internationally.html>

2 Dave Bassett, “How to Obtain a Patent Internationally,” last modified May 8, 2018, <https://www.eastmanbusinesspark.com/blog/how-to-obtain-a-patent-internationally>

3 Language Scientific, “CE Marking Translation Services,” <http://www.languagescientific.com/ce-marking-translation-services/#CE-marking-product-categories>

4 Morningside Translations, “A Beginner’s Guide to Documentation Translation Services,” last modified June 29, 2016, <https://www.morningtrans.com/a-beginners-guide-to-documentation-translation-services/>