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February 2013

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Contact: Ms Priyanka Kalvit
p.kalvit@tekom.de

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publisher
tcworld GmbH
in collaboration with tekom, Europe's largest association for technical communication
CEO
Dr. Michael Fritz
Rotebühlstraße 64
70178 Stuttgart
ph: +49(0)711-6 57 04-0
fax: +49(0)711-6 57 04-99
www.tekom.de
info@tekom.de

advertising
tcworld GmbH
Sales Team
Rotebühlstraße 64
70178 Stuttgart
ph: +49(0)711-6 57 04-55
fax: +49(0)711-6 57 04-99
www.tekom.de
sales@tekom.de

layout
Irmi Hobmaier
Ringstraße 9
83209 Prien am Chiemsee
irmi@hobmaier.com

editor
Corinna Melville
www.tcworld.info
editor@tcworld.info

printing
Druckerei Mack GmbH
Print·Media·Services
Siemensstraße 15
71101 Schönaich
Tel: +49 (0) 70 31/7 55 90-0
Fax: +49 (0) 70 31/7 55 90-10
www.druckerei-mack.de
info@druckerei-mack.de

tcworld
magazine for international information management

From the editor

India has the ability to inspire, frustrate, thrill and puzzle us – all at the same time. In times of global business, many international organizations have come to realize that they cannot overlook this colorful nation with its dazzling manpower and its seemingly endless sales potential.

Most first-time visitors to India find themselves fighting exasperating battles against bureaucracy, having their sanity frayed over the simplest tasks, while experiencing the unbreakable, motivating Indian spirit that stirs their soul like nowhere else.

Not long ago, the tekom technical communication association set off for a first dialogue and encounter with their Indian sister community. This engagement has led to a productive business relationship between the two associations, a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and objectives as well as many promising individual business partnerships.

The upcoming third tcworld India conference – which will be held in Bangalore from February 21 to 22 – provides a platform to celebrate and strengthen the ties between the TWIN (Technical Writers of India) and tekom communities. You can read more about the tcworld India conference on pages 32/33.

In this issue of the tcworld magazine we focus on Indian-Western business relationships.

Having managed a number of global projects for various organizations, Arnold Burian summarizes his experience with a particular emphasis on projects involving Indian team members (page 11).

I had the pleasure to interview Monika V. Kronbuegel, an intercultural expert, who has lived and worked in many places around the world, including India. In the interview she focuses on fruitful German-Indian business relationships (page 12).

Shedding light on the other side of German-Indian business relationships, tekom staff member Priyanka Kalvit shares her experience of living and working in Germany (page 29).

Anupama A. summarizes the lively debate during the Executive Conference India held on November 16, 2012. The panel discussion highlighted challenges faced by people who run large documentation departments (page 17).

Val Swisher explains why a global content strategy is important for technical communicators (page 14).

Augmented Reality revolutionizes the way we look at technical communication. Juergen Lumera explains this technology and its impact on the technical writing community (page 20).

Nicky Bleiel looks at how to get your content ready for mobile applications (page 23) while Jack Welde outlines the method of agile localization (page 26).

We hope you enjoy our magazine and wish you a wonderful and inspiring conference in Bangalore!

Corinna Melville

Managing projects effectively in India

For many Western project heads, India is still a mysterious nation with an enthusiastic and motivated - yet aloof - workforce.
A set of techniques and best practices for working with Indian team members will help you deliver your international projects successfully .

page 10

Is Augmented Reality the future of technical communication?

Augmented Reality (AR) revolutionizes the way we look at technical documentation. In an AR world you don't explain - you show. AR enables information to be available at the time and place of need. But what does this mean for technical communicators?

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HTML5

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has published the complete definition of the HTML5 and Canvas 2D specifications. Though not yet W3C standards, these specifications are now feature complete, meaning businesses and developers have a stable target for implementation and planning. HTML5 is the cornerstone of the Open Web Platform, a full programming environment for cross-platform applications with access to device capabilities; video and animations; graphics; style, typography, and other tools for digital publishing; extensive network capabilities; and more.

www.w3.org

DYNAMIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK TOOLS

TAUS has worked with its membership of experienced users to design the Dynamic Quality Framework Tools. This neutral and independent environment helps ensure members apply best practices for their MT evaluations, whether selecting a translation engine, measuring productivity or evaluating the final quality of translations. Members benefit from automated reporting and contribute to a platform for benchmarking of industry average performance.

www.tauslabs.com

CLOUD PREDICTIONS

Widespread enterprise use of cloud computing has arrived. According to the latest Forrsights surveys conducted by Forrester, nearly half of all enterprises in North America and Europe will set aside budget for private cloud investments in 2013 and nearly as many software development managers are planning to deploy applications to the cloud. "As we get real about cloud, we will institute some substantial changes in our cultures and approaches to cloud investments," blogs Forrester analyst James Staten.

www.forrester.com

One hundred languages with the web's highest purchasing power

Translating a web site into ten languages can unlock 80 percent of global purchasing power, but only three languages are needed to reach 50 percent.

Translated S.r.l., a multi-language service provider, has updated its T-Index study with new data and projections through 2016. The statistical T-Index combines the Internet population of each country and its estimated GDP per person, thereby determining the market share of each market and each language on the Internet.

The first three languages alone (English, Chinese and Spanish) exceed 50 percent of global purchasing power. The top ten languages (English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, German, French, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic and Italian) reach over 80 percent, while a web site has to be translated into 15 different languages in order to reach 90 percent. The T-Index study is not based on a country's per capita income but on the per capita income of its Internet population; the result is an estimate of the purchasing power of each language on the Internet.

T-Index represents the potential and not the value obtained by simply translating content. Countries such as China appear to offer enormous potential, but only for those whose products or services can be adapted to the local market and are not affected by Internet censorship. The countries where Internet use is subject to severe restrictions are clearly indicated by the study.

The full study, including predictions for 2016, is available here:

www.translated.net/en/languages-that-matter

Image: © Paulus Rusyanto/ 123rf.com

Image: © Tatiana Popova/ 123rf.com

High-quality product content improves the impression of a product or brand

Interactive, contextually-aware, multimedia product information is a must-have in any customer engagement strategy. A recent survey report published by SDL, a Global Information Management solutions provider, uncovers new findings about the importance of product content in customer experience management (CXM).

Product information – whether that's user manuals, how-to guides, or installation and troubleshooting guides – has always been considered a staple component in any customer purchasing experience. Yet little research has been done to analyze exactly how users access and leverage product information, and how it influences their perception of a product or brand.

The survey, which was conducted online among 1,000 adult consumers in the United States, demonstrates the impact that high-quality product information can have on the customer experience. The majority of respondents agreed that high-quality product content is essential to good customer service (82 percent), makes it easier to solve service problems on their own (87 percent), and improves their impression of a product or brand (79 percent). The survey also reveals:

- How product information is being used: Most respondents stated they use product information to learn more about a new product before they use it, while others use it to troubleshoot. The remaining group use product information to discover new functions and features.
- How consumers access product content: When searching for product information, respondents stated that they most frequently turn to the manufacturer's website or a search engine, such as Google or Bing, to find content.
- How consumers feel about user-generated content: When it comes to younger consumers (aged 18 – 24), content found on forums, news groups and wiki sites is a significant source of trusted product information. This group was most likely to turn to user-generated content for product information, compared to a mere five percent among people aged 55-64.

SDL conducted the survey in August 2012 to uncover important trends about the ways customers use product information, and the role that product content plays in the customer experience. To qualify, respondents had to indicate they use product information both at work and at home.

Additional findings are available in the full survey report, titled "Measuring the Importance of Product Content in Customer Experience Management".

www.sdl.com/cxm-survey

Businesses start monetizing their information assets

The financial demands of storing and managing big data will lead 30 percent of businesses to directly or indirectly monetize their information assets by trading, bartering or outright selling them by 2016, according to Gartner, Inc. Many enterprises are starting to appreciate the real market value that their harvested information assets have within their own industries or beyond. However, the lack of expertise in handling big data and developing information products will create an opportunity for the growth of specialist intermediaries, acting as information brokers or resellers.

"The need to justify the expense of accumulating and managing huge volumes of data has led many organizations to consider monetizing or productizing their information assets," said Doug Laney, research vice president at Gartner. "For example, several retailers are already generating millions of dollars per year in incremental revenue by placing online their point-of-sale and other data for business partners to subscribe to.

Image: © trebuchet/ 123rf.com

Other individuals have launched ventures packaging and reselling publicly available data, or using it to launch new information-based products — such as in the insurance and financial markets."

Since many businesses are ill-equipped to develop and introduce information-based products, "information resellers" will arise to help organizations develop and execute information asset monetization strategies. Gartner anticipates the appearance of "information product managers" to lead these efforts internally.

The new opportunities for significant information-borne income will lead makers of web-connected products to ensure their offerings collect as much usage, location and system data as possible. To assist in these efforts, Gartner, as part of its "infonomics" research, has developed valuation models that help organizations gauge the potential and realized economic value of their information assets.

"Consumers and businesses must recognize that their personal usage, location, profile and activity data has a tangible market value. They should guard it and ensure that when they do share it they receive ample services, products or cash for it," said Mr. Laney. "Businesses monetizing information assets need to be sensitive to the reputational risk of public backlash against such practices, that may in turn lead to a tighter regulatory environment." Recently, for example, the Federal Trade Commission issued subpoenas to major information brokers to disclose how they collect, use and protect personal information.

One issue arising from the trend toward monetizing information assets is that traditional database management system and business intelligence products and implementations are not well-suited to sharing data in a subscription-based manner. The implication is that new forms of the technology are emerging — focusing on cloud-based implementations that enable subscriber-based access and restricted access to segments of data. "A nascent crop of shared information hosting services already complements established syndicated data providers, and most vendors have taken steps to cloud-enable their technologies," concluded Mr. Laney.

www.gartner.com

Ensuring compliance with EU medical device directive regulations on e-labeling

Merrill Brink International, a global provider of language solutions for global companies and law firms, has announced that it has published a new white paper, "Best Practices to Ensure Compliance with EU Medical Device Directive Regulations on e-Labeling."

The EU Directive No 207/2012 on electronic labeling for Instructions for Use (IFUs) for certain medical devices has been adopted effective March 9, 2012. The regulation provides an allowance for medical device manufacturers to choose electronic labeling or e-labeling of IFUs for these devices. Companies that choose this option need to be prepared to comply by March 1, 2013. The regulation puts the onus on manufacturers to determine which of their products are good candidates for e-labeling. Manufacturers should perform a detailed, documented risk assessment to identify any areas of potential risk and any additional investment required to achieve compliance. The white paper addresses the following questions:

- When in the development process do you initiate the information for usage?
- How and where is product content stored and updated? Is it centralized on one platform?
- How are updates to content currently managed? Will this methodology work efficiently for EU requirements?
- Do you have a workflow in place that can be scaled to accommodate 23 languages?

Companies that take steps now to understand the EU's e-labeling requirements will be best positioned to capture market share. You can download the report from the Merrill Brink website and find out the plan of action to ensure compliance with EU medical device directive regulations on e-Labeling.

www.merrillbrink.com

GLOBAL LANGUAGE SERVICES STUDY

Independent market research firm Common Sense Advisory has issued a call for participation in its annual global language services market survey. The survey will be open until April 30, 2013. Participants will receive a complimentary copy of Common Sense Advisory's report "The Language Services Market: 2012" via e-mail within two weeks after completing the survey.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/GMSGWT

LANGUAGE LINE SERVICES ACQUIRES PACIFIC INTERPRETERS

Language Line Services, Inc., a provider of interpreting and translation services, has acquired Pacific Interpreters, a provider of language services to the health care industry. The combination of these two organizations, with a total annual revenue approaching $300 million, will form one of the largest interpretation providers for hospitals, medical practice groups, clinics and emergency rooms in the U.S..

www.languageline.com

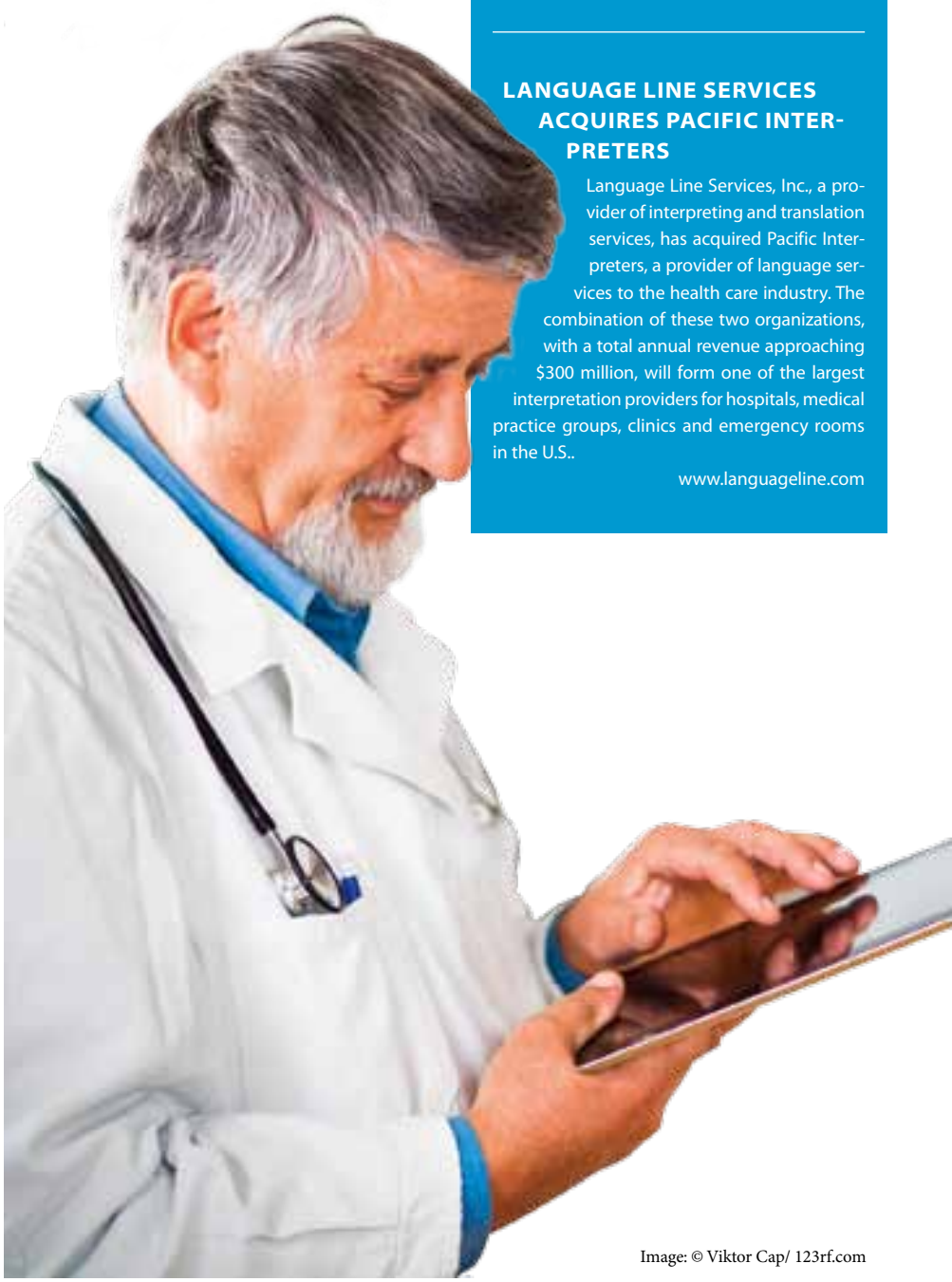

Image: © Viktor Cap/ 123rf.com

Recipes for successful business relationships

Spicing up your business with Indian flavors

Image: © Oleg Kozhemyakin/123rf.com

Managing projects effectively in India

Managing project teams can be a juggling act even within one locale, but of course, the issues become even more complex when dealing with team members across the globe. Arnold Burian shares some of the techniques he has used to deliver projects successfully, particularly involving team members in India.

By Arnold Burian

Over the last ten years, I managed a number of concurrent enterprise-level global projects for various organizations. While each project offered a unique set of challenges, they all came with the same benefit – the opportunity to work with a diverse group of individuals from around the world. In my case, most of the members on my team resided in India. We supported numerous products intended for use primarily in the enterprise legal software industry, including document management systems, enterprise search, and electronic discovery. Every release of every product required a full suite of documentation and training materials intended for system architects, deployment teams, administrators, end users, and support personnel. Although the projects were as unique as the individuals on the project teams, a common set of best practices began to emerge over the years. In sharing these, I hope they help you work more effectively with your team members in India.

Start your offshore team with a strong manager

A few years ago, I was interviewed for a management position at an organization that was simultaneously attempting to staff the team. I asked them to hire me first, and then let me use my expertise to build the team appropriately. They did, and everything worked out well. This becomes even more important when building an offshore team - the "remote" manager will embody and project the values of your organization in tangible ways. And yes, I placed remote in quotation marks for a reason…

Treat the offshore team as an extension of the local team

Eliminate the concept of us versus them, or local versus remote. The easiest way to do this is through vocabulary. Get spectacular with your vernacular! Use language to unify, and avoid creating a divide between teams through what you say or type. All team members are part of the same team, whether they reside in India or anywhere else.

Centralize information

Knowledge is power, and each member of the team should have equal access to knowledge. Hallway conversations may be easy and convenient, but consider the impact on members of the team that are not around to participate. For several years, I worked in the same office as a development team that was supported by several members of my team in Bangalore. These developers in Chicago communicated amongst themselves with little regard for who was not participating in the conversations. I tried to make them change their ways, but eventually settled on gathering as much information as I could, emailing it to the team in India on a daily basis, and archiving it in a content management system. In retrospect, a wiki would have been very useful here.

Distribute the pain

Collaboration opportunities are sometimes only available at inconvenient times. The interesting thing about global projects is that they are sometimes global in nature (surprising!). I had to learn that the world does not revolve around me, the office where I worked, or my time zone.

If you need to schedule a call or meeting that is very early or very late for someone in India, schedule the next one at a time that is convenient for them and less convenient for others on the team.

Everyone gets to work on cool stuff

As offshoring became increasingly more popular, I saw a disturbing trend. There was a separation in the types of work assigned based solely upon geography. Many organizations delegated development of new features, functionality, and products to the local office and maintenance work to remote teams in India. This trend has shifted – we now see products developed and managed entirely in India. Still, avoid falling into this trap.

Maintenance work, software updates, and ongoing product support will remain important and needed functions in any organization, but ensure you avoid any form of geographic discrimination when distributing development responsibilities.

There is an inherent sense of satisfaction in contributing to new revenue streams, and everyone wants to contribute.

"Be authentic and align expectations from the start"

Monika V. Kronbuegel is the CEO of Global DiVision, an international consulting company that focuses on organizational development and human resource development in multinational companies. A German national, Monika V. Kronbuegel has lived and worked in numerous countries including India, Japan, the United States, Latin America, and many European nations. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis, which focuses on intercultural competences in international marketing and the role of intercultural training in international organizations. tcworld magazine spoke to her about her experience with Indian clients and business partners.

info@global-division.com
www.global-division.com

Interview: Corinna Melville

Which personal experience has shaped your image of German-Indian business relationships?

In 1996, I stayed in New Delhi for nine months to establish an affiliate for my employer at that time. I had an appointment with one of our new cooperation partners for a business lunch. In preparation of this meeting and dealing with the Indian culture, I had learnt that Indian people prefer to start a business conversation with small talk – especially when combined with lunch. I had told myself to not talk about business before the meal was finished.
So I chatted away about family and other things, while – curiously enough – my conversation partner regularly tried to talk business. I gave him quick answers and then went back to small talk. After a while the atmosphere became uncomfortable; we were undoubtedly following different objectives. Even though I did not really know the person, I dared to point out the obvious – seeking clarification: "Excuse me, perhaps I am totally wrong, but I have learnt that it is impolite in the Indian culture to move straight to business topics during a lunch. Is that wrong?" My conversation partner started to laugh and explained that he had also done his homework: By moving straight on to business topics, he wanted to be particularly respectful of the German culture. As you can imagine, the ice was broken and we had a very fruitful business relationship afterwards.

What can we learn from this story?

Be brave and honest in everything you do. Apart from showing respect for the other culture, one of the most important tasks in an international context is being authentic. This never happened to me again, because today I avoid these kinds of unpleasant situations by asking to align expectations right from the start.

Is it possible that we sometimes over-adapt in order to show respect for cultural differences? How much adaption do Indians expect of us?

The Sanscrit verse "Attithi devo bhava" – meaning "A guest to your home is God" – is a value that most Indians are brought up with. Hence, in a business relationship it is very important that both parties feel comfortable with each other before any business is discussed. Indians make very good business partners if they trust you, so you need to spend time not only on business, but also discussing family and other personal things. Indians will go out of their way to make you feel comfortable, by offering to take you sightseeing and inviting you to meals. If you show interest and are open to what they offer you, the barrier can be broken and trust is built.

What makes a fruitful German-Indian business relationship? How can we best align our strengths and wisdom?

Indians like Germans are very skilled and educated in chosen lines of business. Hence, collaboration can be very fruitful. One thing that you need to consider is time management: Indians often over-commit in order to please you, and thus, might not be able to deliver on time. Make sure that both sides clearly state their expectations. A clearly outlined business objective along with timelines is a good idea for an Indo-German business relationship.

What do we need to consider when attending a conference and trade fair in India?

Indians like bright colors and stylish designs. I recommend having a booth with a counter using attractive colors. Try to give it an Indian look and feel by, for example, using Indian light lamps lit with fire or putting up a 'welcome'-sign in Hindi. Make it stylish, but not loud and cheap. Free gifts at the counter might attract lots of visitors. When demonstrating your products, consider that Indians like to touch, not just to see.

No other Indian city has been transformed by globalization as much as Bangalore. Have Western influences displaced the Indian business culture here?

I think that the lifestyle of metropolitan India has changed very much, however, the basic culture and values are still the same. In earlier days, you would struggle to find North Indians in Bangalore or anywhere else in South India. This has changed today. The lifestyle has changed as well. Many young families no longer live with their parents or in-laws, but have their own home. Similarly, most marriages used to be arranged. Today, many middle-class professionals choose their partners independently.

Regarding the business culture, Westernization has certainly helped to improve the work ethics, making collaboration with Indians easier. The skillset and business aptitude are very good and Indians have a good understanding of project management. Areas that might cause some issues are quality expectations and time management.

Over-communicate

We all know how fundamental communication is to successful project delivery. In the United States, there has been a strong shift in many projects towards self-direction and autonomy. The uptick in agile development has resulted in an explosion of self-managed teams. We want to be pleasantly surprised by a creative solution from an empowered team member that would otherwise have been stifled. Unfortunately, I have found this approach to be less effective when working with team members in India. Project ambiguity frequently results in a misalignment of deliverables, even when project objectives are clear. I'm not sure why this occurs - perhaps there are some unaccounted cultural differences I failed to consider. Regardless, an increased level of interaction and communication helped me mitigate these issues. Avoid general micro-management – instead, consider adding additional checkpoints or milestones to confirm everyone is in alignment.

Manage scope carefully

I found the enthusiasm of team members in India to be refreshing. They possess exuberance and a willingness to take on and overcome any challenge that can be very inspiring. With the seemingly endless ability to absorb an extraordinary amount of work, team members in India may become overwhelmed from carrying an excessive load or trying to maintain an exhaustive pace. This puts additional responsibility on the project manager to ensure that commitments are realistic and attainable, and that coworkers in India are working at a reasonable pace. I initially misinterpreted their enthusiasm for accepting new assignments as an endless bucket of capacity, which caused a visible strain on the team. Clear, open, and honest communication will help everyone understand what is really achievable for any release.

Assign local representatives to support remote team members

Without proper planning, geography can quickly become a barrier to success. Collaboration technologies like Skype, WebEx, GoToMeeting, and instant messaging are important and necessary tools when working with globally distributed teams. I recommend going one step further – designate at least one individual in each office that provides inputs or outputs to team members in India to serve as their local representative. A physical presence in an office serving as an extension of the remote team can be much more effective than any collection of software tools. It's easy for someone to dismiss an email, but a tap on the shoulder will always get an immediate response.

Be "all in"

You have to believe in the system, and you have to be willing to do what it takes to see the project succeed. I have seen project team members not fully support their teammates in India, and then turn around and complain when issues arise. Stop blaming geography, time zones, or cultural differences, and start focusing on solutions. Do not let inefficiencies linger. Create a culture of collaborative process improvement where team members have a vested interest in helping each other succeed, and your projects will follow.

To conclude

I personally had a tremendously positive experience working with project team members in India. We started with a strong, confident manager. He built an aggressive and energetic team. We worked together to reduce geographic barriers, we functioned as a single global team, and we delivered many complex projects on time and with high quality. We were a true global project team success story. In a recent interview, Ugur Akinci, the owner of the Technical Communication Centre, asked me about my views regarding globalization and outsourcing. My answer: Globalization exposes you to different cultures, expands your network, forces you to use new techniques in time management, project coordination, and communication, and may even allow you to see the world. It did all that for me, and I hope it does the same for you.

contact

Arnold Burian has ten years of experience managing teams that delivered documentation and training materials for various enterprise hardware and software developers. Currently he manages global deployment projects for Deloitte. He is also the founder of Technical Writing World, the social network for technical communicators.

arnoldburian@gmail.com
www.technicalwritingworld.com

Why you need a global content strategy

You need a global content strategy. You might look at this statement and think, "I'm a technical communicator. Why on earth would I need a global content strategy? All I care about is the documentation suite and online Help system for this product line."

Image: © Oleksiy Mark/123rf.com

By Val Swisher

Many technical communicators I work with think this way. They are fabulous content developers who write detailed, intricate instructions on how to use the most complicated products. They are very smart and very articulate. However, when it comes to understanding how the technical piece of content creation fits in with the worldwide corporate content strategy, they fall short.

Sure, there are many technical communications departments that have a well-planned strategy for their content. Many are using structured authoring tools in an XML environment. Many take advantage of content reuse opportunities. Many even understand how content reuse impacts the cost, time, and quality of translation. But they don't see how their content interacts with, or lives side-by-side with, the content being created by other departments in their company.

Even the best content strategy in a silo is a losing proposition. When multiple departments have multiple, independent ways of creating, storing, tagging, and publishing content, things inevitably fall apart. Disjointed content strategies are, well, disjointed. They are confusing to customers, infuriating to people looking for product support, and extremely costly to your company.

It's bad enough to have siloed content strategies for in-country, single-language content. When your content is going to be distributed to other parts of the world, the need for a unified global strategy is even more crucial because of the following reasons:

- Often, other locales are not aware of the content that technical communicators are producing and translating. That means they cannot help you with the translations (and you need their help for in-country reviews).
- Other departments are translating similar content as yours. And if they have already translated some or all of it, there are going to be lots of opportunities for reuse and fuzzy-matching. This will save a lot of money.
- Other departments will want to use your translations and the information stored in your translation memories when they translate their content. That way, they can take advantage of reuse opportunities and fuzzy-matches. It will save them money, too.
- Have you ever looked at a website that clearly had content written by different departments? You can tell there were multiple silos creating the content because nothing matches. Well, if you translate all of those mismatched web pages, you end up with a real mess.

What is a global content strategy?

A global content strategy is a structure for managing all of your content that is consumed by people in languages other than the source.

That's a rather long sentence, so let's break it down into its pieces:

A STRUCTURE

According to Google, structure is defined as follows:

- The arrangement of and relations between the parts or elements of something complex.
- The quality of being organized.

FOR MANAGING ALL OF YOUR CONTENT

Wikipedia uses the following definition for content management:

Content management is the set of processes and technologies that support the collection, managing, and publishing of information in any form or medium. In recent times this information is typically referred to as content or, to be precise, digital content.

CONSUMED IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN THE SOURCE

Merriam Webster defines a source language as:

A language which is to be translated into another language.

In other words, the source language is the language that you used to create the content. For example, English is the source language of this article.

Global content strategy is a very comprehensive topic. Think of it as taking the topics of unified content strategy and web content strategy, and putting them into a global blender. Puree on high, then add those cumbersome items such as tracking the number of languages, the number of translation vendors, the content created in other countries, and more.

Why do you care about having a global content strategy?

There are four reasons to care about having a global content strategy:

1. You care about the money you spend localizing and translating content.
2. You care about the quality of your content in all languages.
3. You care about the time it takes to localize and translate content.
4. Someone told you that you'd better figure this mess out (probably because of reasons 1-3).

Global content audit

A global content audit is the first important step towards creating a global content strategy. Here are some of the things that you need to do when you audit global content:

Locate the content that you are responsible for.

Know the scope of your content! What content goes to localization and translation? Where does it reside? Who created it?

Create a catalog.

A catalog is where you track all of the content. Some content management systems include robust tools for tracking and managing content. Some people use an Excel spreadsheet for this purpose. Use whatever tool is most convenient for you and that will be easiest to update.

In addition to the customary tracking criteria (filename, URL, etc.), global content has additional tracking needs:

- Has this content been localized? Translated? Transcreated? Some combination?
- If so, into which languages?
- Who is the translation vendor? (It could be more than one, so make sure you check).
- Who is responsible for reviewing each translation?

Know who all of your translation vendors are and what content each is responsible for.

I have customers who engage three, four, five, even six different translation vendors. They all have their reasons, and I'm sure at the time they brought

on vendor number five it made some sense. Personally, I think having more than two vendors is difficult to track and manage.
You may have specific translators for specific languages. For example, your local French, Italian, German and Spanish vendor may not be able to handle Kanuri, Songhay, or Nubian. Regardless of how many vendors you have, make sure that you know what content is being translated by each. You'd be surprised at how difficult this might turn out to be.

Locate, identify and have possession of your translation memories.
I cannot state this point emphatically enough: You MUST own your translation memories (TMs). They are yours. You pay for them. They are the golden nuggets that make all of your translated content highly valuable.
Beware of translation vendors who won't give you the TMs or who tell you that you don't need them. If you only have a single translation vendor, you don't risk much by not owning your TMs. However, if you have two or more translation vendors, and you do not have a single TM in a single repository, each translation vendor will create its own TM. The different TMs will contain different source and target language pairs, different translations for the same segments, and unique entries that would be considered "matches" if all of the language pairs were in a single database.

Identify content that is being translated by other groups in your company.
You would be amazed at the renegade translation activity that takes place all over a company. I have customers who have no idea that other content, created by other groups, is being translated into other languages.

Even if you're only responsible for technical content, it is really important to get to know other groups in your company that are translating. In an ideal world, your entire company corpus (EVERYTHING) is translated using the same TMs and the same couple of translation vendors. By collaborating with other groups, you will:

- Find considerably more opportunities for fuzzy matching and reuse
- Spend significantly less money because of fuzzy matching and reuse
- Enjoy more consistent and better quality translations
- Cut the amount of time it takes to have your content translated.

Summary

So, let's summarize the important things to keep in mind.

- Know where all of your content is
- There are three different ways that content can be created and translated
  1) By your team, managing your translation vendors
  2) By other teams, managing potentially different translation vendors
  3) By people in each locale, writing in their native language
- After you find all of your content, catalog it
- Include all of the localization and translation information you need to track
- Own and manage your translation memories

Once you locate all of your content, you will be able to:

- Better manage the content
- Save money on translation
- Guarantee adherence to corporate brand and style
- Improve the quality and consistency of content in all languages
- Have happier customers
- Sell more on foreign markets
- Save yourself a lot of headaches

contact

Val Swisher
is a well-known expert on the entire global content life-cycle. She founded Content Rules in 1994, recognizing that even the largest companies often do not have the technology, people, and expertise to create content that is global-ready. Under her leadership the company has grown to encompass 20 full-time employees, 200+ customers, and an extensive network of contractors.

vals@contentrules.com
www.contentrules.com

Documentation directors reveal their formula for success

What are the challenges faced by people who run large documentation departments and how do they handle them? This was the lively debated issue at the panel discussion during the Executive Conference India hosted by tcworld in Bangalore on November 16, 2012.

Image: © Samantha Craddock/123rf.com

By Anupama A

To add authenticity to the discussion, the panel comprised five people who averaged 18 years of industry experience, and who all head documentation teams in their organizations.

The panel consisted of Sugandha Joshi (Director of the Information Development Competence Center at Alcatel-Lucent, India); Sai Kavitha (Information Development Director at Dell India R&R); Ravi Kiran (Director Knowledge Management at SAP Labs India); Ram Venkatraman (Director for Information Development and Delivery at Vestas Turbines R&D); and Jagan (Head of Product Assurance and Technical Publications at EMC2 IIG division).

I had the pleasure of facilitating this discussion, and I have to admit that I had a great time with such accomplished panelists, and a very participative audience. We tried to cover a broad range of topics, but running project teams is such a complex issue, that the allotted hour whizzed past us before we noticed. The audience was clearly thirsty for more!

Innovation

We jumped right into this hot topic and I asked the panelists if they ran innovation programs in their respective organizations. The idea was to check if technical writers could be innovators, and to see to what degree a department head is willing to back such initiatives.

The responses were pretty heartening. Everyone agreed that innovation was critical, and some described programs in their respective organizations. This revelation in turn led to discussions about patents, and the possibility of writers filing patent applications. It soon became obvious that many

folks had not thought about this possibility. The result was that some of the attendees developed a gleam in their eye when the possibilities regarding innovations and patents finally hit home!
Sai Kavitha shared: "India is well positioned at a high maturity level for technical documentation, and global organizations have the opportunity to leverage this pool of talent. Innovation is the key to success in the technical documentation domain. We need to explore various formats such as video, audio, or scenario-based documentation for enterprise products. New ideas or methods of content delivery are critical for the success of products. We have created internal task teams to address various requirements. The key to innovation is the awareness that one size does not fit all product lines. So we need to think creatively to solve specific problems. Innovation is not just about creating patents, it is more about how well you are able to enhance customer experience through content. As a leader, I believe it is important to build innovation in the DNA of the ecosystem. My simple mantra is to empower individuals to do their best and watch the results."

Technology awareness

This is like the famous chicken and egg question. Which came first: the chicken or the egg? Similarly, what is more important: writing skills or technical skills? I suppose there is no perfect answer to this question. However, the industry definitely seems to be moving towards a more technically skilled writer. The overall tone of the discussion, and what the panelists had to say, re-emphasized this notion.
With products becoming more and more sophisticated, it becomes the writer's duty to convey complex configuration and deployment information to the audiences in a simple and easily consumable manner.
Therefore, the "technical" in technical writer is constantly gaining importance.
Explaining why technical writers are expected to be technical, Jagan disclosed: "There is an expectation that technical writers act as a bridge between technical and business user domains. Hence, they are expected to understand, interpret, and provide technical information in an easy-to-understand format. They should have a reasonable to basic understanding of technical concepts. They must be hands-on with the software, think like a user, and be able to synthesize data. In today's world, the one common theme emerging when you meet and talk to customers is that increasingly technical accuracy of information is becoming more important than perfect grammar. Technical writers can also be instrumental in advocating best practices."

Demonstrating value (read as ROI)

Now this topic is a favorite with technical writers. When a few technical writers get together, the talk is often about how they are undervalued and how no one appreciates the work they do.
I asked the panelists if they had to fight similar battles. At their level, they must be faced with daunting battles involving their entire department. It often becomes a matter of existential crisis!
Of course, they face these questions all the time. Questions such as "Do we really need a senior writer for this position?", "What is the ratio of developers to writers and can we bring it down?" keep cropping up all the time.
So how do department heads justify the need for writers?
This is what Ram Venkatraman had to say about the value proposition: "One of the challenges of leadership is growing the organization. When we talk of 'growth', we think of numbers. Management is always suspicious when we ask for a budget for more employee headcounts. What I have learned as a leader is that we need to move away from 'numbers' to 'value'. For me, it is always about the value I deliver to the organization. So, if I can deliver a certain value with the headcount, it needs to be demonstrated. When we reach the optimum level, we need to add more people if more value is to be generated. I have often seen that managers do not always talk of value. Again, be careful how you use the word 'value'. It is not just quantity; value can be both short-term and long-term. Each manager has to understand what value the team brings and what it means for the organization."

Getting and retaining the right writer

Hiring is one of the many challenges faced by heads of documentation departments, especially in India. How do they hire good talent, how do they retain it, and in order to mitigate risks, how do they ensure a steady pipeline of writers?
Tips to entice good writers included:

- Tapping into colleges for budding writers. This would also ensure a good pipeline for future hiring.
- Building the brand image of the writing team to ensure that other writers clamor to get in.

Tips to retain existing writers included:

- Creating an atmosphere of fun at work
- Providing and nurturing a sense of pride and ownership about the work we do.

Regarding hiring best practices Sugandha Joshi explained: "Staffing up at the right time is definitely important from a project perspective, but getting the right person is crucial. What we need is a good balance of technical and language skills, and above all, the right attitude towards work and team play. It is not always easy to find this. A well-designed job description and a good interview process are tools that help in identifying the right candidate, but your experience in interviewing and understanding people also plays an important role.
Another point to keep in mind is to not have a short-term view of just your current requirements. Given the dynamic environment in which we operate, requirements can change. So, it is also good to consider if you need a person who is flexible and talented to adapt to the changes that are possible in your organization."

Documentation strategy in a global organization

For lack of time, this all-important topic didn't really get its due. We did manage to have a brief discussion around who defines the strategy in a global organization, and what role local leaders play in the overall strategy.
Pretty much everyone said that the strategy and vision for the documentation function was largely driven by the overall organizational strategy.
We have to align with the larger company goals. Having said that, we also need to look at how best to stay focused on common goals such as operational efficiency, customer focus, maximum ROI, and so on.
Ravi Kiran's take on this topic was: "Global organizations typically engage centralized teams to formulate the overall strategy for documentation that aligns with their long-term vision and the corresponding organizational goals. It is essential that local teams play a vital role in bringing in the cultural and regional business contexts. The representation from various regions ensures that the strategy is well executed in a collaborative environment with distributed ownership and

accountability across regions. During the strategy execution, the local representative becomes the evangelist for adopting the changes, and transition to new frameworks/processes becomes smoother."

The takeaways

Attendees had several takeaways. They realized that they were not alone, and that there is a support group that they can reach out to at any time. Several problems that managers grapple with regularly were addressed with seemingly easy solutions that others had adopted. Just being able to talk with like-minded people about situations faced on a daily basis was a huge catharsis for most attendees.

As the facilitator I came to the conclusion that the Indian technical writing scene is definitely more mature now. Writers and managers understand the core drivers of this profession and are constantly looking for ways and means to add value to their products. It is inspiring and motivating to be part of this profession during these exciting times of change.

The complete agenda is available at http://conferences.tekom.de/tcworldin13/executive-conference/program/

contact

Anupama A has built and managed documentation departments in various companies, and she is well-known in the community. She has moderated discussions at tcworld India conferences, including 2010, where she was part of a panel that discussed rule-based writing and standards. She has also presented management topics at tcworld India and other conferences. At tcworld 2012, she moderated the panel discussion titled Direction from Directors.

anupama.aa@gmail.com

Is Augmented Reality the future of technical documentation?

A few years ago, Alan Brandon asked the following question in an article about an Augmented Reality research project (AMAR) at the Columbia University: Is Augmented Reality the future of technical documentation? He did not really answer the question, but he described the huge potential of this technology. The research project did not change the technical documentation world at that time. This article will describe what has changed since then and why the answer to his question is now a definitive YES – this technology is changing the technical documentation world and we need to be prepared.

By Juergen Lumera

Before we start discussing in greater detail the possibilities of Augmented Reality in the context of technical documentation, it is necessary to define what Augmented Reality is exactly, what the requirements are, and how it is already used for technical documentation.

What is Augmented Reality?

Wikipedia defines Augmented Reality in the following way: "Augmented Reality (AR) is a live, direct or indirect, view of a physical, real-world environment whose elements are augmented by computer-generated sensory input such as sound, video, graphics or GPS data. …"
In other words Augmented Reality

- combines real and virtual content
- is interactive in real time
- registers in 3D

Samples of Augmented Reality can be found in our daily life – but very often we are not even aware that it is Augmented Reality. Everyone has seen those overlaid lines in a televised football game to indicate the position of a player relative to the ball. A more advanced usage of Augmented Reality can be found in Smartphone Applications like Wikitude or Layar, which show search results through the view of the camera. For technical documentation, applications like Junaio augment cartridge exchange information on a printer.

What is required to use Augmented Reality?

The major components of an Augmented Reality solution are:

- a sensor to capture reality (typically a camera)
- 3D data about the content to be recognized
- display to show captured and overlaid (augmented) content, such as a smartphone, tablet, goggles, or head-mounted display.
- component(s) to interact with AR application – touch screen or microphone
- the augmented content (3D data, 2D data, text, audio)
- application to feed content to AR client application

How can Augmented Reality be used for technical documentation?

The above mentioned AMAR project at the Columbia University had implemented a prototype to allow a service technician to execute a repair guided by augmented information. The technician sees the real world and additional content through his goggles. This additional content helps him to find the right position, to use the correct tools and to execute the necessary steps in the right order without being distracted by consuming and interpreting "classical" technical documentation. Many variations with other display devices have been built but they all follow more or less the same basic concept.

Image: AR Owner guide – overlay video of a printer with information about changing the cartridge *Source: Metaio GmbH*

Image: Repair information – overlay live video of an engine compartment with parts, tools and steps

Image: R vs VR vs AR – what are the differences? *Source: Re-flekt GmbH*

Image: Wire harness – overlay live video of a vehicle with wire harness

Advantages of Augmented Reality

Using Augmented Reality eliminates the need to transfer written content to the location where it needs to be applied. In a classical environment a technician or owner typically flips through pages (paper or Web) to identify the relevant information. This information then needs to be transferred to the place where the task (repair, operation, etc.) has to be executed. This requires the technician to interpret the written content and align existing graphics with the physical object.

In an Augmented Reality world this transformation (and search) step is not necessary because the information is already displayed at the place where it is needed. It is information at the point and place of need. It can even adjust to the current context: a technician can start by himself and request support from an Augmented Reality application when he cannot continue based on his own knowledge.

What does this mean for technical authors?

The most important part of an Augmented Reality solution, beside the software component, is the content used for augmentation. This content is what a technical author has to produce in the future. He needs to work in a 3D view of the main object and place the content for augmentation. The textual part will to a fair degree be replaced by 3D objects showing activities, tools, parts, etc. New authoring tools for those tasks are needed and require a different skillset – graphic-oriented thinking, focused on "real" task execution instead of abstract descriptions, aiming to minimize/eliminate the non-graphical information.

It is not enough to use a new tool; it requires us to change the mental approach of how to "interact" with the consumers of technical documentation: in an Augmented Reality world you don't explain, you SHOW.

What is required to produce AR content?

Similar to the traditional authoring approach, an author requires an authoring tool allowing management of the augmented content (e.g. parts, tools, navigation) and, in addition, a model of the actual real world part (e.g. vehicle, printer). Currently the market for these authoring tools is limited (e.g. Metaio Creator from Metaio GmbH or D'Fusion Studio from Total Immersion) and the tools are in their early stages in relation to technical documentation authoring. For this reason, most AR content developers use repurposed tools from other business areas, for example CAD or design tools. Irrespective of the tool an author is using, there is always the need to deal with the same set of input data (mainly engineering models) to produce the augmented content.

Currently there is only limited training offered around AR content creation. At present the recommended approach for AR use cases is to develop expertise 'on-the-job' using support from a technology supplier. This enables authoring tools to be developed for the specific user cases while building up skills and expertise.

What has changed since the original question has been asked?

During the last three years the technology to enable Augmented Reality has changed dramatically. All modern smartphones have the required sensors and display capabilitiy already built-in. Tablets offer the same set of functionality and provide a larger area for interaction. Voice recognition has tremendously improved and can be used in industrial solutions. Inexpensive goggles to display augmented content are ready for the mass market.

But not only the technology has changed. The massive use of Augmented Reality in marketing as well as extensions to existing applications and media types (navigation systems, catalogues, search engines, and so on) have paved the street for this technology.

We have reached a state where it is no longer a question if it will happen because it is already there. Now it is rather a question of how quickly we can set up a complete process and structure to support Augmented Reality in the same way as we are doing it for the existing technical documentation.

To get back to the original question: YES, Augmented Reality is the future of technical documentation because the market has the tools and will demand the content for it.

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Juergen Lumera has more than 15 years experience in XML authoring and delivery solutions. In his current role as Director TIS Product Management and Innovation, he is defining the next generation of technical documentation system. He is especially interested in new trends and technologies for technical documentation.

juergen.lumera@bosch.com
www.bosch.com

Mobilizing your content

Content is used to getting a workout – for years, we've been single-sourcing content to multiple desktop Help outputs, browser-based Help and manuals. Our goal is to get the right content, well designed, to the right places. But so long these multiple outputs traveled to only two places – the desktop and the printer. Now content needs to live and look good on many more devices and in more formats. Luckily, we can still single-source content for delivery on mobile devices. There are just a few caveats to keep in mind.

Image: © SV Luma/123rf.com

By Nicky Bleiel

Today the "right place" for content is almost anywhere. Content formerly delivered only on the desktop or in print can now be published continuously where it can easily be found and used – on mobile devices.

Mobile options

Help authoring tools can be used to single-source to three outputs that will work on mobile devices: mobile Help, browser-based Help, and EPUB. You can access all three on phones, tablets, and eReaders.

You only need to "mobilize" content for mobile Help – EPUB (for the most part) and browser-based Help are fine as-is. Standard Help authoring tool (HAT) features make it easy. Mobile Help that takes advantage of jQuery and jQuery Mobile makes it possible to create mobile Help that is browser- and device-independent.

And we can still simultaneously deliver manuals and other types of Help when necessary. In fact, some of the changes made for mobile can improve those outputs also.

The mobile persona

There are a few generic traits of those accessing content on mobile devices. These traits should be factored into our audience analysis, and to the specific scenarios that content will be used in. Mobile customers are:

- often distracted
- using one hand
- "fat finger" the device (hit unintended keys/links)
- use their device(s) in varying situations
- impatient; want fast load times
- prone to quit and move on to something else if they think something is broken

Your scenario may be that users (for example, service technicians) need the information, and will wait for it, but you can improve load times and unintended "fat fingers" by following a few best practices.

Tips and best practices

Following are some single-sourcing tips and best practices for making your content work in a mobile Help format.

IMAGES

Avoid large graphics, because users may have to "swipe" to view/read them. To solve this issue, you can use conditions to designate one version of a graphic for desktop Help; and another smaller, or more targeted version for mobile. You may even want to eliminate some graphics in your mobile outputs altogether because they take longer to load than text.

Single-source strategy:

- Create two versions of images: one for mobile, one for everything else.
- Use conditional text features to tag graphics. Tag some images to appear only in desktop Help.

Image: Mobile output and its browser-based counterpart

TABLES

Avoid tables that are large, with dense text, because users will have to "swipe" to view/read them. Swiping to read across and down a table makes the information less usable, because the context is lost. One way to handle this for mobile Help is to remove the table and reconfigure the information using collapsible text. That is a great option in browser-based Help and other Help outputs. You could also leave the table in the browser-based version and manuals and use conditional text to display the collapsible text version only in mobile.

Single-source strategy:

- Remove tables and reconfigure information to using collapsible text features.
- Use conditional text to mark tables only for browser-based Help and manuals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS/HIERARCHY

It is best to keep the table of contents to no more than two levels, so customers can find information in two taps. Since they can't view all the TOC levels at one time (as they can in desktop Help), this makes information more findable.

The topic names in the table of contents should be short, so the entire topic name has a better chance of appearing on the screen. (This will vary by device, so there is no standard length limit.)

Single-source strategy:

- Create output-specific TOCs for mobile that are only two levels deep (or restructure the TOC for all outputs)
- Shorten the names of the topics in the TOC, or create shorter names for mobile and mark them with conditional text as mobile.

TERMINOLOGY

Standard software terminology – for example "click" – does not apply to mobile. You will want to use "tap" instead. When single-sourcing, you can handle this with variables (reusable chunks of text). You may find this "touch gestures reference guide" useful for learning mobile terminology: www.lukew.com/ff/entry.asp?1071

Single-source strategy:

- Manage device-specific terminology with variables
- Avoid using device-specific terminology when possible.

WRITING STYLE

Writing concisely is a good best practice for all outputs. Concise writing also improves usability and cuts down on translation costs. Make topics easy-to-scan and keep information short and to the point.

Concise writing is often referred to as minimalism, but these aren't interchangeable terms. Minimalism in the "Nurnberg Funnel" mold aims to:

- Minimalize the obstructiveness to the learner of the material itself.
- Allow learners to start immediately on meaningfully realistic tasks.
- Reduce the amount of reading and other passive activity.

(From The *Nurnberg Funnel: Designing Minimalist Instruction for Practical Computer Skill,* by John M. Carroll)

Although these goals are consistent with good information design and should be embraced, they are not the same as a concise writing style. For more information about writing concisely, see Ginny Redish's *Letting Go of the Words,* Elsevier, Inc., 2012.

Single-source strategy:

- Review and revise content to make it more concise.
- If there is content that is useful, but not necessary for mobile Help, you can mark this content with conditions so that it only appears in desktop Help and print manuals.
- Variables can be used to display targeted content to different outputs.

Formatting

Collapsible text (which also adds to the usability of desktop Help) is a great way to make information more readable in mobile outputs, because it can be used to "chunk" content logically and users have control over which details they'd like to display. Bulleted and ed lists may take up valuable real estate in mobile outputs; experiment with using conditions to create lists without bullets and numbering and see if they are more readable in mobile outputs.

When creating links within topics, make sure none are placed too close together, because users could touch more than one link at a time. You may want to move all links to the bottom of each topic, and/or convert the links to buttons for mobile.

Single-source strategy:

- Incorporate collapsible text for longer topics.
- Consider using conditions to remove bullets/numbering from mobile Help.
- Move links to the bottom of each topic, or make sure that links aren't placed too close together.
- Links that need more prominence can be displayed as buttons.

Video

Approximately one billion YouTube videos are streamed on mobile devices every day, so you may want to consider adding additional videos for mobile outputs. Using more video and less text may be the optimum mix for your mobile outputs, and videos are also valuable in desktop Help.

Indexes

Indexes are not necessarily needed in mobile Help (because using Search is preferable in this environment); if you've created an index for desktop Help and manuals, you may choose to hide it in mobile outputs.

Single-source strategy:

- HAT should provide ability to hide the index in mobile Help.

Testing

Testing mobile Help on devices is optimal, but with over 200 on the market, you will probably need to use emulators instead.

See www.mobilexweb.com/emulators and Joe Welinske's book: *Developing User Assistance for Mobile Apps.* Another site that is good for a quick test of your Mobile Help in different size windows is *Resize My Browser*: www.resizemybrowser.com/ (Since *Resize my browser* uses the browser on your machine, it doesn't provide an exact picture of how your content will render.)

Go mobile

Mobile Help can be accessed almost anywhere – and can be created as part of your single-sourcing strategy. Just consider the environment and constraints, and follow a few best practices. And some of the changes made for mobile can improve other outputs at the same time. Remember our aim to get the right content, well designed, to the right places. Enjoy going mobile.

Further reading and references

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contact

Nicky Bleiel is the Lead Information Developer for Doc-To-Help. She has 18 years of experience in technical communication; writing and designing information for software products in the documentation, media, industrial automation, simulation, and pharmaceutical industries. She is the Vice President of the Society for Technical Communication.

nickyb@componentone.com
www.doctohelp.com

From Babylon to the age of agile translation

Ever since the Tower of Babel, people have sought to overcome language barriers. In those days, news were shared via word-of-mouth at the pace of the swiftest runner. Fast-forward a few thousand years, and information travels around the world at the speed of light via the cloud, consumed by users on the Web and mobile devices.

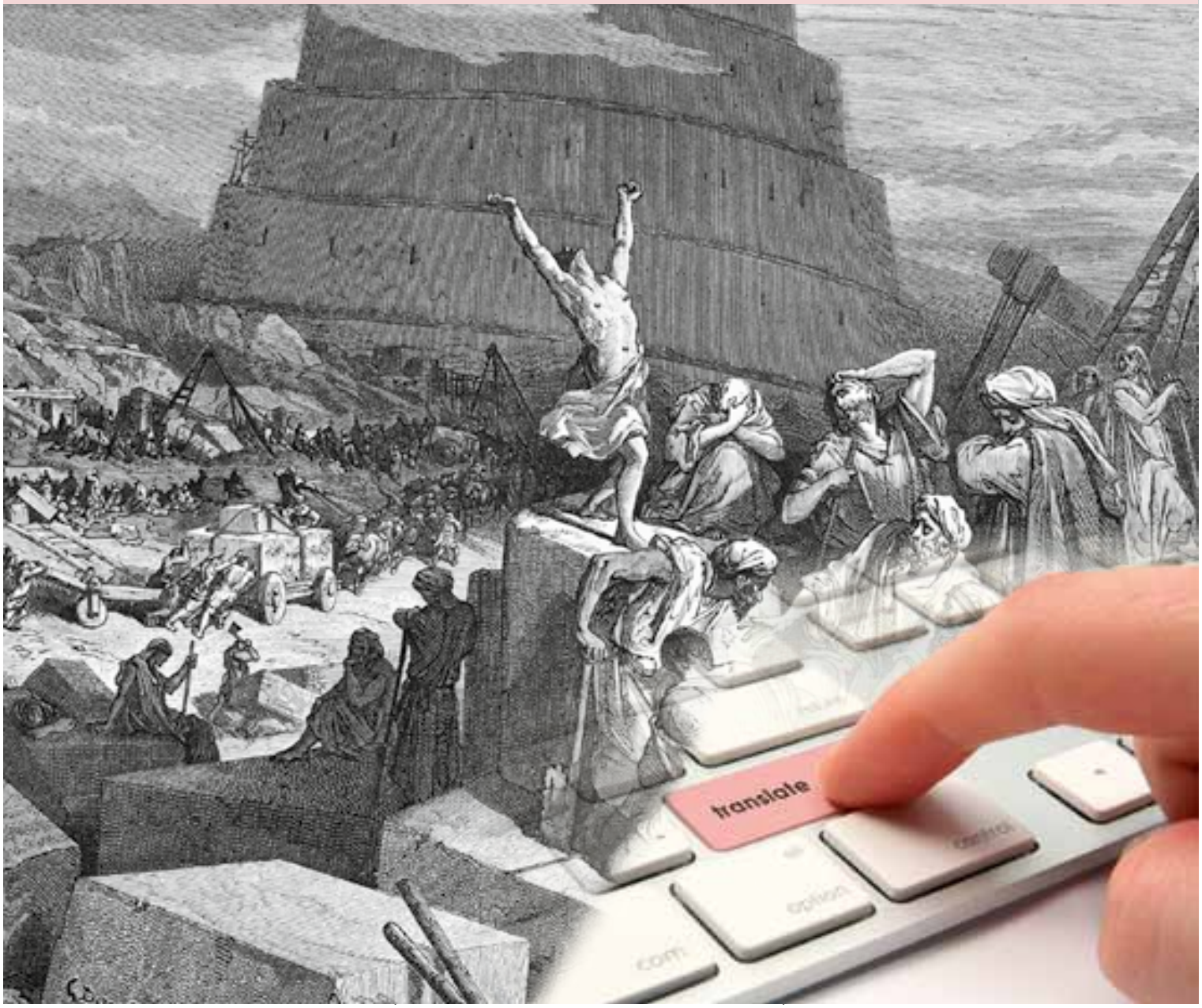

Image 1: The Confusion of Tongues

Image 2: © Jirsak/istockphoto

By Jack Welde

We live in the age of the dynamic Web, where pages are updated with every click. However, the translation industry has not evolved quite as quickly. The age-old problem still remains: how does translation keep up with the lightning-fast rate of content change?

Take Apple for instance. The company tops Forbes' list of the world's most powerful brands and has an international presence across 126 regional sites (www.apple.com/choose-your-country/). Any time the company updates its website, content needs to be translated for each region. Imagine the task of managing translation for each site every time a new product is launched. Beyond just literal translation, the task involves a whole slew of localization issues associated with different currencies, standards for date and address formats, cultural nuances, etc. Most companies do not face quite the Herculean task, but as companies expand abroad, the demands of an agile world have deemed traditional translation obsolete.

Modern business demands smaller sets of content updated more frequently and with super-fast turnarounds. To be considered global, companies need to have their content available in about 20 languages across the Web, mobile apps and documents. Also, operating in an agile world means managing multiple resources, such as translation agencies, freelance translators and crowd-sourced translations. Beyond external resources, many stakeholders must be taken into account, including internal departments, local partners as well as power users.

How can translation keep pace in an agile world?

To keep pace, we need to enter the age of agile translation. As the name suggests, it's like a cheetah – swift, nimble and alert. In the software realm, agile development is now the status quo. It's an iterative, incremental method for building software that allows rapid and flexible response to change. How does it work? The agile development method is fast and efficient, thanks to a framework that maps out the development cycle and promotes foreseen interactions, adaptive planning and collaboration of cross-functional teams.

This same agile model can be replicated for translation. Rather than reinventing the wheel each time something needs to be translated, companies can automate the process using a framework that's trusted and proven to work. The holy grail of translation is a triumvirate of high quality, affordability and rapid turnaround.

The way to obtain this is agile translation, which can be simplified into five steps.

Agile translation in practice: A 5-step process

1. **Process content via APIs.** This means automating the process of extracting your content and preparing it for translation. APIs (Application Programming Interface) can do this for documents (Word, Excel, InDesign, etc.), localization files (GetText, Java Properties, YAML, Android XML), and structured content (HTML, XML, JSON, XLIFF).
2. **Use customizable but structured translation workflows.** Any task is done better when there is a disciplined approach in place, especially with multiple parties involved. Then everyone is "on the same page" with the project and can collaborate more effectively. A shared workflow that can engage multiple resources – translators, editors, internal reviewers (legal, marketing, bilinguals), local partners and power users – allows for everyone to work simultaneously, and in sync, and also tracks progress. In addition, workflows can be automatically assigned based on whatever is the driving strategy, be it translator preferences, costs or turnaround times.
3. **Contextualize your content using modern web-based tools.** These tools exist, so why not apply them to the translation process? Software tools allow for actual in-context translation, showing any changes as they would appear on the webpage or in the app. This allows whoever is working on the project to see the big picture, and thus work smarter. Understanding how that piece of information fits in means fewer mistakes and development cycles. Agile translation includes providing translators with detailed instructions, placeholder hints that help signal what needs to be filled in, string-level feedback, or actual context (i.e., see the content on the webpage).
4. **Translate using best practices.** Something as simple as a glossary of frequently used terms will ensure correct use of any important organizational or industry-related vocabulary. A style guide helps to maintain corporate standards for a consistent voice and look and feel. Validation tools check spelling, punctuation, html tags and special characters to make sure they are correct the first time. And, using an up-to-date translation memory, allows you to tap into an organization's existing teminology prior translations, saving time and money.
5. **Automatically deploy completed translations.** Now that all the work is done, there's no reason to wait to deploy the beautifully translated content. In agile translation, deployments happen through a Content Management System (CMS) and the Web, and can be tracked through API callback. All of the work is saved in a source code repository and the translation memory is updated, so that it can be re-purposed if needed.

Agile translation: A quantum leap forward

Since the advent of the Web, the way information is shared and business is transacted has changed dramatically. Entire industries have been transformed. For example, when was the last time you bought software on a shrink-wrapped CD? Instead, software can be downloaded and instantly installed, or has been replaced altogether by a web-based service. Do you remember the last time you went to a travel agent to book a flight, or got a paper ticket in the mail? How about banking? Most transactions can be done online or through a mobile app.

We take most of these conveniences for granted, and expect companies to be up-to-speed regarding technology. However, the

translation industry has been stuck in a time warp. The process hasn't changed much in the last ten years. Content that needs to be translated is captured in static documents, which are passed back and forth. Let's say a simple website translation was needed. The text of an entire site would be put into a Word document – with no context, no way to include notations or any means for collaboration.

This source document would go to a translation agency, which would do its best to find a qualified translator for a particular language or region. This could take a few days or weeks. Once the translator is hired, the document would go to that person, who would then take a few weeks to complete the task. Because the translator is working in a vacuum and, even worse, must communicate through the agency instead of directly with the client, mistakes are bound to happen. Communication gets filtered and things are literally lost in translation. Then, the translator may not get client feedback for another few weeks. Pretty soon six weeks have passed and the content is still being passed around internally at the client company or to other stakeholders. When the document is finally delivered back for round two, the translator starts again from square one and repeats the process for another few rounds. When that text is finally placed in the context of a webpage with images, navigation elements and other assets, you may find that the content simply doesn't fit, and so another round of edits is required. This legacy system is very linear, slow and expensive.

Not only do companies need to translate static documents, but now content is constantly changing on multiple formats – the Web, the mobile Web and in mobile apps – and the challenge is to keep all languages in sync across all platforms.

The traditional translation model needs to migrate from file-based translation to the cloud, where things can happen in real-time and each step of the process can be managed automatically through workflows and APIs. The manual way of managing a project on a spreadsheet must be replaced with web-based tools. Contextual editing allows for smarter, more informed translation, which bypasses simple mistakes and eliminates the need for several redos. Using translation memory, companies can reuse translations that have already been approved.

Image: © Yang MingQi / 123rf.com

The old-fashioned agency-brokered approach also requires expensive translators who charge by the word and are not motivated to work quickly. The new agile approach allows companies to use a hybrid of talent depending on the degree of difficulty. Professional translation, crowd-sourced or even machine translation can be used, or any combination of these resources, as the goal of agile translation is to get the job done in the most effective and efficient way.

Agile translation in action

Regarding the technical aspect, legacy translation systems often deploy the translated content in phases, but an agile system can enable global delivery. Translation does not have to be a long, drawn-out process. Rather than performing batch translations that are done weekly or monthly, updates to content can be translated on the fly and deployed in a matter of hours. This is the future of translation, and it is available now. The key is getting the industry on board, shaking up the status quo and shifting to a model that maximizes cloud-based tools and best practices. To stay competitive in today's global marketplace, we need to get translation to speak the same language as development. Rather than assuming that translation can't possibly keep up with agile release cycles, it's time to move into the age of agile translation. In an ideal world, agile translation and agile development are living in perfect harmony. And the old way of translation will go the way of the dinosaurs.

contact

Jack Welde,
CEO of Smartling, is the pilot of his company team's voyage. Literally. He's a true renaissance man: a technology early-adopter, serial entrepreneur, software patent-holder, product evangelist and combat-decorated Air Force pilot.

www.smartling.com

Of language barriers and strict deadlines: Tackling the German challenge

German-Indian business relationships have long been a topic of discussion. Many German companies have been successful on the Indian market for quite some time already. Recent success stories include the Volkswagen Group, who is now operating a manufacturing unit in Chakan, Pune. Other well-known companies such as Bosch, Siemens, and Henkel have also established thriving businesses in India. So what has been the mantra for success for these German companies? And, which attributes will help Indian companies to succeed in the German market?

Image: © phildate/ istockphoto.com

By Priyanka Kalvit

There are many Indian companies, who have been successful in Germany, but their presence is not as dominant as the presence of the German companies on the Indian market. This raises the immediate question: Why is that so?

Communication barriers

There are many reasons for communication barriers. The most important reason is language. The German language is one of the major factors that hinder the entry as well as the growth of non-German companies. There are many non-German companies in Germany but they all have successfully tackled this problem by adopting the local language. Previously, when I worked as a business development assistant, my job was to assist Indian companies who were interested in expanding into Germany but lacked the language know-how and intercultural finesse. These issues have often led Indian companies to postpone or even cancel their plans of expanding into Germany. Therefore, once the language barrier is overcome, the entry into as well as the survival on the German market is much easier for companies of any size.

Deadlines and commitments

Another major issue faced by Indian and other foreign companies are deadlines. Completing a task or project on a set deadline is sometimes an issue for Indian companies. In Germany it is common practice to work on a project by adhering strictly to the scheduled plan. Punctuality is taken very seriously. If you expect to be delayed, call immediately and offer an explanation. It is extremely rude to cancel a meeting at the last minute and it could even jeopardize your business relationship.

In the German work culture it goes without saying that deadlines are met and Germans expect the same from their Indian counterparts. If the task cannot be completed on a certain date it should be discussed early on and not just before the deadline. Germans do not like surprises when it comes to business-related issues. Not finishing a task in a given timeframe can be an unpleasant surprise for them and might cause disappointment. To avoid these issues it is very important to stick to the defined commitments and complete the tasks on time. Punctuality is not a choice, it is a necessity in the German work culture.

Boss or a team member?

Germans like working in teams and collaborate quite well across hierarchical lines. The communication within a team is generally quite collegial, albeit somewhat direct and blunt. Role allocation within the team is generally clearly defined and people will take greater responsibility for their specific task than for the group as a whole. Indians on the other hand like to work according to hierarchy. In a team, there is a team member, a team leader, a project assistant, and a project manager. In this hierarchical structure, communication often goes through many channels and takes a longer time. A flat work structure is preferred in Germany as it makes communication easier and less complicated.

Being direct

Being direct is what Germans appreciate and what many Indians misunderstand to be rude. Especially in business relations, it is often preferred to be clear and direct rather than saying or doing things indirectly. Direct communication is valued and your German counterparts will be quite unabashed in pointing out any deficiencies they may find in your product or business plan.

Germans will also be quite comfortable saying "no" directly, when necessary, or letting you know when they cannot meet your expectations. For instance, if you do not understand a task, you can express this directly without being considered impolite or slow-witted. It has been my personal experience in Germany that whenever I have problems understanding the context, I can ask the same thing twice and still receive an answer with lots of patience. But once you have confirmed that you completely understood the context, it is assumed that you really did, and you are expected to complete the task according to the requirements. So, I personally prefer being straightforward and asking the same question twice rather than being indirect.

What I have learned during my last few years in Germany is, that a question is answered with "yes" or "no" but not with a "maybe". For a better communication printed notes are also recommended. To avoid any cross cultural miscommunication make sure your printed material is available in both English and German.

Flexibility - what does that mean?

Being flexible is a typical Indian attribute. Indians can be described as hard bones beneath a flexible soul. To be flexible in every aspect of life is very common for Indians. They try to adjust wherever possible and whenever required.

In Germany the case is quite opposite. Germans like to do things in a defined way and do not welcome changes. Particularly last-minute changes are a no-go! Flexibility is something that lacks in the German work culture as Germans like to plan everything in advance. An appointment for a meeting should be made at least one week in advance as last-minute appointments are almost impossible. Last-minute cancellations of business meetings can even have severe effects on the business relationships. Following the agenda and an established protocol is critical to building and maintaining business relationships.

Business etiquette - do not sell everywhere!

Certain business etiquettes are strictly followed in Germany. A firm handshake before and after a business meeting is very important. Making direct eye contact while speaking shows a person's confidence about what he or she is presenting, so eye contact also plays an important role during the initial stages of building trust.

Apart from these physical attributes, another business etiquette that is worth mentioning is understanding the difference between networking and selling. For instance while attending events, it is very obvious that every company wants to sell its products and services. Trying to sell as much as possible is everyone's job, but not during the networking events. Networking is completely different from selling and Germans do not like to mix the two. During a networking event, Germans basically talk beyond their company's products and do not focus on selling them. These things do affect the overall impression of a company and its employees.

Separate private from professional life

In Germany, calling business partners or even writing work-related emails on the weekends is a no-go. Germans value their personal lives and they usually dedicate their weekends to their families and friends. It is considered strange and at times annoying to receive a work-related phone call or an email on a Sunday. This is not always the case with Indians. I remember a German colleague of mine asking me: "Do Indians work on Sundays as well?" My answer was obviously – "No!" To prove me wrong, my colleague showed me an email that was sent by his Indian counterpart on a Sunday. What I noticed is, that Germans differentiate clearly between their private and professional lives. Indians on the other hand draw a very thin – almost invisible – line between their private and professional lives. This can be illustrated quite well with business meetings or events, where German colleagues are only talking about business whereas the Indian counterparts are discussing their families, the food, etc. I am not saying that one way is better or worse than the other, it's just that one has to adapt to the other culture.

Accept and adapt

After discussing a few points about the cultural and behavioral differences between Indians and Germans it can be concluded that both cultures have their unique characteristics. Just like with humans, no one culture is perfect. So the best way to deal with each other is to adapt and accept each other's culture and improvise wherever necessary. As Germany is the most potential market in Europe for Indian industries and vice versa, it will be a pleasure to see the Indo-German ties getting stronger continuously.

Priyanka Kalvit is a sales professional at tcworld GmbH and has over four years of work experience in different segments. An Indian national, Priyanka worked for a multinational company in Mumbai for two years before relocating to Bremen, Germany, to complete her MBA in International Marketing.

p.kalvit@tekom.de
www.tekom.de

tcworld India conference introduces new track on localization

Over 500 technical writers from multinational organizations from India and abroad are expected to attend the tcworld India conference 2013. The third event of its kind will be held on February 21-22 at the Mövenpick Hotel & Spa in Bangalore.

By Corinna Melville

Close to 50 presentations and workshops will reveal the latest trends and developments in cloud computing, mobile documentation, translation and localization, documentation standards, project management, authoring tools and many more fields. Topics range from basic technical writing techniques and methodologies such as HTML5 and DITA to the preparation of documents in multiple languages and for international markets.

Keynote presenters include international experts like Scott Abel, a content strategist and social media choreographer; Tom Aldous who leads the Adobe Technical Publication Business Development Managers, Product Evangelists and Adobe TechComm Consultants; Sandeep Nulkar, the Chairman and Managing Director of BITS Private Limited, BITS Connect and BITS Europe Limited; as well as Tony Self, a well-known technical communicator, trainer and DITA specialist.

Other speakers include professionals from India, the U.S., Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, the U.K, the Ukraine and Singapore.

New at this conference: The Localization and Translation Track

A new track has been added to this year's conference to meet the increasing demand for documents being produced simultaneously in multiple languages. Presentations of the Localization and Translation Track focus on topics such as the Indian localization industry and its synergy with the tech writing world, linguistic tools, quality issues in translation processes, machine translation, terminology management, and simplified technical English.

"With the internationalization of the market for technology products and technologies, the demand for localization of technical documentation is increasing," comments Melanie Siegel, professor of Information Science at the University of Darmstadt and presenter at tcworld India 2013. "Especially in the European Union the awareness increases that it is not sufficient to provide English language documentation, but that documentation needs to be translated into the native language of the users. These translations must be quickly available, upgradable, obtainable in multiple languages simultaneously, and of high-quality."

"Traditionally, technical documentation is created (initially) for the local market. But in our globalized world, products and their documentation have to be localized for many diverse markets. This has to be taken into account right when we start creating technical documents," adds Prof. Dr. Klaus-Dirk Schmitz, professor for terminology studies and language technology at the Institute for Translation and Multilingual Communication at Cologne University of Applied Sciences. A well-known expert on terminology, Prof. Schmitz will hold a workshop on the topic at tcworld India. "Terminology is the main carrier of knowledge and information in technical communication. Therefore, terminology management is an essential part of the whole information management process, in particular if multiple languages are involved. Diligent terminology does not only help to improve the experience of end-users of products and consumers of technical documentation, but also aids localization and translation experts to create information products for other local markets."

Expand your network

Breaks between conference presentations and social events provide ample opportunities to meet fellow professionals and to expand your network. A highlight of the event will be the international networking dinner and party, which will take place on the roof-top patio of the Mövenpick Hotel on Thursday.

Technical communication in India

With several Indian tc companies and subsidiaries now employing 50-100 writers, technical communication continues to be a flourishing sector on the subcontinent. Jobs range from information developer and information architect to project manager and documentation director. Akash Dubey from TWIN reports: "India has witnessed unprecedented growth in the IT and ITES sectors. This can be substantiated by the fact that the IT and ITES revenue in 2012 touched the 100 billion USD mark. Therefore, it's anybody's guess why Indian job portals have so many opportunities for technical writers."

The Technical Writers of India (TWIN) have been the driving force in creating awareness for technical communication and promoting a professional image.
"Over 95% of Indian technical writers are TWIN members," Akash continues. "We are grateful to TWIN volunteers who have been conducting technical writing workshops and training programs in several colleges across India. By partnering with tekom, TWIN has created an excellent international platform for Indian technical communicators, who are now able to network with international experts at tcworld India conferences, workshops, and round-table discussions."

Image: © komar/ 123rf.com

tcworld calendar

when	what	where
February 18 – 20	**Outsourcing World Summit** www.iaop.org	Phoenix, AZ, USA
February 21 – 22	**tcworld India conference** http://conferences.tekom.de/tcworldin13/	Bangalore, India
March 17 – 20 ①	**GALA Language of Business conference** www.gala-global.org/conference/	Miami, FL, USA
March 20 – 22 ②	**AIIM Conference** www.aiimconference.com	New Orleans, LA, USA
April 10 – 12	**Localization World Singapore** www.localizationworld.com	Singapore
April 18 – 19	**TMS Inspiration Days 2013** www.inspirationdays.eu/	Cracow, Poland
May 2 – 4	**ELIA Networking Days** www.elia-association.org index.php?id=ndmunich	Munich, Germany
June 12 – 14	**Localization World London** www.localizationworld.com	London, UK
August 26 – 28	**tcworld Japan conference** http://conferences.tekom.de	Tokyo, Japan
October 9 – 11	**Localization World Silicon Valley** www.localizationworld.com	San Jose, CA, USA
November 6 – 8	**tcworld conference/ tekom Annual Conference** http://conferences.tekom.de	Wiesbaden, Germany

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The GALA Language of Business conferences are advanced educational and networking events that bring together translation and localization industry professionals, including providers of language services, managers of global content, and technology companies. GALA 2013 will offer a welcoming and inclusive community atmosphere for industry leaders and professionals to learn, share, and network. GALA 2013 is hosted by the Globalization and Localization Association. Conference content will also be available streaming and on demand.

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We are moving from the Systems of Record era in which our focus was on high-value information assets to the Systems of Engagement era in which volume, velocity, and variety are increasing dramatically. And so, it was only a matter of time before this movement in the consumer sector extended to the enterprise. Now, the "appification" and "consumerization" of the enterprise is revolutionizing the way we think about enterprise information and IT – and the kinds of skills we need within our organizations.

The AIIM Conference 2013 is for those who are ready to think strategically about information management on a massive scale; to embrace the stewardship, optimization, and application of their enterprise information assets. The highly-interactive sessions are designed to build these skills around six revolutionary imperatives:

1. Make everything mobile: Redefine content delivery and process automation to take advantage of mobile devices and mobile workforces.
2. Digitize processes: Drive paper out of processes and automate process flows.
3. Make the business social: Integrate social technologies into processes rather than create standalone social networks.
4. Automate information governance: Acknowledge that paper-based record paradigms no longer work and focus on automating governance and disposition.
5. Mine big content: Find insights and value in massive aggregations of unstructured information.
6. Commit to the cloud: Break down monolithic "enterprise" solutions into more "app like" solutions that can be deployed quickly independent of platform and in the cloud.