

## Do-it-yourself machine translation

Taking statistical machine translation to the next level

## What constitutes a healthy localization department?

Building a strong core of happy and confident staff

## Technical communication and social media

How Twitter, Facebook & Co change our work environment



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tcworld GmbH  
 in collaboration with tekomp,  
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 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



**From the editor**

In April 2012 Google announced changes to the underlying algorithm used to rank its search engine results. This so called Penguin release was intended to decrease the rankings of websites that had been trying to pump themselves up with what has been known as black-hat SEO: unethical techniques such as keyword stuffing or linking content across the net to artificially increase rankings. With the new algorithm Google places increased emphasis on social media: Pages that receive a high amount of *likes, shares, tweets, follows, comments* and *views*, etc. now rank higher on Google's search results than previously. Google seems to suggest that the more hype your content creates on social media channels, the more relevant it must be. This shift of relevance has sent shock waves through the world of web administrators and particularly SEO experts – some of which have

famously declared that their area of expertise is now obsolete. On a smaller scale Google's change of the game affects all of us who create content that is somehow published on the Net – regardless of format, output device or language. It is up to us to create relevant content that benefits those who search. Many technical writers have already thought up innovative and inspiring ways to include social media in their technical documentation and create a conversation around their content. With its *Dragon Slayer* game Atlassian has developed a brilliantly creative way to include Twitter into their documentation. And, as Sarah Maddox explains, this isn't nearly the end of Twitter's potential for technical writers (page 11). tcworld also spoke with Ellis Pratt, one of the most influential bloggers on technical communication in Europe, about how technical writers can make further use of social media channels (page 15). On a different note, Uwe Muegge sheds light on a new class of statistical machine translation systems: Web-based systems that allow users to customize their MT engines with their own translation memories and cost only a fraction of traditional MT systems (page 20). Martin Brueggemann explains how their technical communication team successfully introduced the SCRUM method to master the tricky challenge of thorough project planning while remaining flexible (page 24). Sameer Kulkarni explains how you create relevant and well-structured web content using a content strategy (page 17). Meanwhile, Shirley Yeng takes a look at how we can strengthen the inner core of a department by encouraging the

confidence and happiness of our staff (page 28). tekomp/tcworld recently set off on a journey through six countries to meet with technical writers from across Europe. Read the full details of this first tcworld Roadshow on page 32. Another important event on the tekomp/tcworld calendar was the foundation of the Country Group Belgium (page 31).

We hope you enjoy this issue of the tcworld magazine!

Corinna Melville



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## Technical communication and social media

Social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube offer a wealth of opportunities to get in touch with our customers or readers. In addition they provide an entertaining way of keeping up with a worldwide community of professionals. So how exactly can technical communicators make use of these channels?

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## Do-it-yourself machine translation

Web-based statistical machine translation systems allow users to customize their MT engines with their own translation memories - and they cost only a fraction of traditional MT systems.

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## What constitutes a healthy localization department?

Building a strong core of happy and confident staff for your localization department.

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# Market for outsourced translation services and technology continues to grow

The global market for outsourced language services and technology will surpass US\$34.7 billion in 2013, according to a study by independent market research firm Common Sense Advisory. In its annual industry research report, *Language Services Market: 2013*, the firm details the findings of its comprehensive study, identifying over 27,600 unique suppliers of translation and interpreting services across 154 countries. The firm, which has published market size estimates and global rankings for the past eight years, found that the demand for language services continues, and is growing at an annual rate of 5.13 percent. Global trade, international business, and content growth are three critical drivers for the language services industry. As part of the study, the firm surveyed more than 1,000 language service providers to collect actual reported revenue for 2011, 2012, and expected revenue for 2013.

"Language service providers in most regions of the world reported steady growth during the fiscal year 2012, and their projected growth rates for 2013 are even stronger," explained Don DePalma, Common Sense Advisory's founder and Chief Strategy Officer. "The widespread availability of online machine translation has not decreased the demand for high-quality human translation. If anything, translation technologies appear to be acting as a catalyst to generate more demand."

The five highest-ranked companies on the list of the largest 100 language services companies, listed according to 2012 revenues, are: Lionbridge Technologies, Hewlett-Packard's Application and Content Globalization group, TransPerfect, SDL, and LanguageLine Solutions. Included within the report are:

- Current market size estimates for the language services industry along with a detailed description of the research methodology

- Projected growth rates for the industry through 2016, including region-specific breakdowns
- Rankings of the largest 100 global industry leaders
- Critical benchmarks for LSP financial performance, including average revenue per employee, average revenue per salesperson, and average revenue per project manager, including differences by company size and geography
- Regional rankings of the largest translation and interpreting companies in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe, and Oceania
- Reporting on the fastest-growing services in the industry, such as translation, transcreation, multimedia localization, telephone interpreting, and other offerings
- Breakdown of the market revealing market size estimates for on-site interpreting, translation technology, machine translation post-editing, video interpreting, multimedia localization, and other services

Adds Vijayalaxmi Hegde, Director of Research Operations at Common Sense Advisory and report analyst, "The market for outsourced language services and supporting technology is immensely important to the organizations and individuals that produce or consume information. We predict that increasing demand will push the market to US\$43 billion by 2016."



Image: © Gracia Victoria/ 123rf.com

The full list of the largest language services providers based on revenue for 2012 is available at:

[www.common senseadvisory.com/AbstractView.aspx?ArticleID=5505](http://www.common senseadvisory.com/AbstractView.aspx?ArticleID=5505)



Image: Illia Uriadnikov/ 123rf.com

# Study predicts growth for machine translation market

International research firm Research and Markets has announced the addition of its *Global Machine Translation Market 2012-2016* report.

Analysts forecast the global machine translation market to grow at a CAGR of 18.05 percent over the period 2012-2016. One of the key factors contributing to this market growth is the rapidly increasing content volume. The global machine translation market has also been witnessing the transition from rule-based to statistics-based technique. However, the dominance of human translation could pose a challenge to the growth of this market.

*Global Machine Translation Market Report - Forecast to 2016*, has been prepared based on an in-depth market analysis with inputs from industry experts. The report covers the Americas, and the EMEA and APAC regions; it also covers the global machine translation market landscape and its

growth prospects in the coming years. The report also includes a discussion of the key vendors operating in this market.

Customers can request one free hour of analyst time when purchasing this report.

**Key questions answered in the report include:**

- What will the market size be in 2016 and what will the growth rate be?
- What are the key market trends?
- What is driving this market?
- What are the challenges to market growth?
- Who are the key vendors in this market space?
- What are the market opportunities and threats faced by the key vendors?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the key vendors?

**Companies mentioned in the report include:**

- Asia Online Pte. Ltd
- Cloudwords Inc
- IBM Corp
- Lighthouse IP Group
- Lingotek Inc
- Lionbridge Technologies Inc
- Moravia IT
- MyGengo Inc
- SDL International plc
- Welocalize Inc

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# Only few enterprises have a true information strategy

Less than ten percent of today's enterprises have a true information strategy, according to Gartner, Inc.. Recent research has found that management thinking at an "information as strategy" level is still evolving.

"The social Internet, inexpensive sensors, the Internet of things and other trends will cause an explosion in the types of information that are available. In this way, competition will increasingly be defined by differential access, control and value recognition and timely exploitation of information," said Partha Iyengar, country manager for Research, India at Gartner.

As business leaders reconfigure and re-skill their organizations in order to take advantage of these opportunities, Gartner has identified four key focal points for organizational development:

1. How will new kinds of information drive value? Who will be creative with that? How will they explore their ideas? What support is in place for information-led innovation?

2. As information improves in its granularity, precision or resolution, who will notice when key thresholds have passed and new things become possible that were not realistic before?
3. How will the organization search, discover, conjoin and secure the new datasets and information streams that are becoming available?
4. How will they engineer the social and legal permissions needed to use information without it seeming like spying, privacy invasion or unfairness?

Leveraging the above effectively requires overlapping human, professional and organizational competencies. Sharpening each of them will be key to competitive success.

In order to break through to higher levels of corporate enlightenment on information centrality, Gartner recommends three simple methods:

## Method 1 – Visualize

To shift the culture of the business leadership of the firm to become more information strategy centric Gartner recommends to visualize what organizations already have. Computers today are able to render complex graphical representations cheaply and easily, and creativity in visualization will become a key part of the competitive landscape in the second half of the information age. Companies that find better ways to represent complex information will win in better internal decision making capability and in better service products to their customers.

## Method 2 – Vision and Breakpoint

Method two for creating breakthrough thinking among senior leaders is to create a visionary scenario for the use of some new kind of information and then plot its future. People are often much more willing to entertain big, challenging ideas if they seem to be a way off into the future — because they seem less threatening.

## Method 3 – External Exposure

One way to get an organization to think about itself and its opportunities is to get others to comment. Organizations often listen to "outsiders" — peers, competitors, press, stakeholders, consultants etc. as much as to insiders. Many government information thought leaders are moving down this track. They believe that datasets buried in their own systems could be of far wider value and that, if exposed, they are more likely to be linked together in new and innovative combinations that might create more value.



Image: © Buchachon Petthanya/ 123rf.com

# TAUS released translation quality evaluation best practices

TAUS, the translation innovation think tank and platform for industry-shared services, has released its *Translation Quality Evaluation Best Practices*.

The guidelines provide three different approaches to translation quality evaluation: adequacy, fluency and error typology. The guidelines have been made available through the TAUS website for everyone in the global translation and localization services industry to use and to refer to. They give buyers and vendors a common reference and a common language to talk and agree about quality evaluation.

The Best Practices Guidelines for adequacy, fluency and error typology quality evaluation form one of the deliverables from the TAUS Dynamic Quality Framework (DQF). The TAUS DQF project is a collaborative industry project that started in January 2011 with the aim of raising the credibility and effectiveness of translation quality evaluation. The translation and localization industry is largely operated on a static "one translation quality fits all purposes and content types" principle. Measurement has typically been through the linguistic error typology approach. The Dynamic Quality Framework now

offers a knowledge base describing seven different approaches to translation quality evaluation, a content profiling wizard as well as online tools to evaluate machine translation output in an objective and neutral environment.

"In working with our members we have learned that quality evaluation very often forms a bottleneck, causing disputes and delays in translation and localization processes", says Jaap van der Meer, director of TAUS. "The pressure to overcome the subjectivity is increasing with the variety of content types and the trend to start relying more on automated translation. The TAUS Dynamic Quality Framework is a long-term commitment from TAUS and its members to all stakeholders in the global translation industry to bring common sense and efficiency to translation QE in an ever more dynamic environment."

In the coming months TAUS will release more Best Practices Guidelines for quality evaluation for free access on the TAUS website. The DQF tools, content profiling and benchmarking are available to TAUS members.

<http://translationautomation.com>



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# Technical communication and social media

How Twitter, Facebook & Co change our work environment



# Twitter and technical communication

Twitter is a communication tool extraordinaire. It is one of the principal tools people use to share information. They send and read tweets on the Web, on Facebook, via email as well as on smart phones, tablets and desktop computers. Anywhere, anytime. So how can we use Twitter in technical communication?

By Sarah Maddox

As technical communicators, we can take advantage of Twitter in two ways:

- We can use tweets in and around our documentation, as a way of leading our customers to our guides and engaging them in the documentation.
- Twitter offers us a way to keep up with the wider world of technical communication. We can use it to share information, find out what's happening, and keep in touch with our peers.



Figure 1: A tweet from STC Atlanta

Before we tackle the above two points, let's introduce Twitter and its language.

## Introduction to Twitter

First, let's have a look at what Twitter is and some of its linguistic conventions. This will teach you how to write and send your own tweet, letting people know you are reading this article.

### Twitter in a nutshell

Twitter is a web service that you can use to send short messages to anyone who is interested in reading them.

- Sign up for a free account at twitter.com.
- Type your message where Twitter asks "What's happening?"
- Choose "Tweet". That's it: you've tweeted.

To keep up with what people are saying, you can "follow" the people you are interested in. Twitter will send you the tweets of the people you are following.

You can also search for and browse tweets, without following anyone.

For technical communicators, Twitter provides these advantages:

- A tweet can reach people wherever they are, and whenever they are ready to communicate. One of the most useful aspects of Twitter is that people do not have to go to the Twitter website to send or read tweets. They access Twitter via email, via desktop widgets and apps, on their phones, and so on.
- Tweets are short and topical. People will read and absorb short, punchy messages.
- Swapping tweets is fun, both for technical communicators and for our target audience.

### Twitter linguistics and conventions

Each tweet is limited to 140 characters. That is not a lot of text. To pack as much information as possible into a tweet, people use codified language.

These are some of the conventions:

- Use the "@" symbol to speak directly to another person. This is called an "@mention". For example,

to direct a tweet to the author of this article, use "@sarahmaddox".

- The "#" symbol denotes a piece of metadata, referring to a particular topic. This is called a "hashtag". If your tweet is about technical communication, include "#techcomm" in the text.
- "RT" means "re-tweet". You are repeating someone else's tweet because you like it or support it.

The number of conventions is growing, as the "Twitterverse" grows. For a good list of conventions, see *The complete guide to Twitter's language and acronyms*, on The Next Web ([thenextweb.com/twitter/2012/09/15/a-list-tweeters-language](http://thenextweb.com/twitter/2012/09/15/a-list-tweeters-language)).

Twitter clients (the applications you use to access Twitter) will recognize these conventions and do something sensible with them. For example, some clients offer a separate column for tweets that contain an @mention of your name.

To help keep tweets short, Twitter clients will shorten the URLs you include in your tweet. When someone clicks the link, they will be redirected to the right destination.



Figure 2: Making full use of Twitter conventions

**Try it now**

If you are online, you can tweet a message right now:

1. Open your web browser and go to [twitter.com](http://twitter.com). (Or, if you already have a Twitter client on your phone or another device, open it now.)
2. Sign up for a Twitter username if you don't already have one. It is free. You will need to supply an email address, but no-one else will see it.
3. Sign in to Twitter.
4. Choose the option to compose a new tweet. In the standard interface, the option is at the top right of the window, with an icon of a quill in a blue square box, like this:



5. Type in this message: "I'm reading about Twitter and #techcomm in the #tcworldTwitter guide".
6. Choose "Tweet" to broadcast your message.

Now try searching for tweets from other people who are reading this article. Type this URL into your browser's address bar:

<http://twitter.com/search?q=tcworldtwitter>

Alternatively, try a generic "techcomm" search: <http://twitter.com/search?q=techcomm>

## Why use Twitter in your documentation?

Organizations, companies and customers are becoming more social. Marketing studies show that engaged customers buy more, are more

satisfied with the product, and are more likely to help each other. Similarly, I would like to propose that engaged readers are more likely to keep coming back to the documentation, are more satisfied with the documentation, and will use the documentation as a tool to help each other.

People are already discussing us and our documentation via Twitter and other social media. Let's join the conversation, see what people are saying, and show them that we care. In this way, we can benefit from the social phenomenon, instead of letting it pass us by and perhaps having all the disadvantages but none of the advantages of "social".

### Social as a tool for SEO

"Google is in the process of making the SEO industry obsolete, SEO will be dead in two years." This quote from the SEO consultant Adam Torkildson, was used by Ken Krogue in an article on [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com): *The Death Of SEO: The Rise of Social, PR, And Real Content*.

SEO means "Search Engine Optimization". It is the art of designing your content so that it ranks near the top in search engine results, and people can therefore find it quickly.

The gist of the Forbes post is that Google is changing the algorithm used to rank pages in search results. Google now gives a higher ranking to links that come in via social media. These include the "shares" that people post on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and so on. If someone "likes" your content on Facebook, or adds a +1 on Google+, that will improve the ranking of your page.

In other words, Google recognizes content as valuable and relevant if people share it via social media.

How does this affect us as technical communicators? We must make sure people find our content and share it via social media, so that other people find it and share it via social media, so that other people... That's called "going viral" and it is a good thing!

## Using Twitter in your documentation

In the next four sections, we will look at inventive ways of getting people to talk about and share your documents.

### Twitter as a medium for release notes

Our team at Atlassian has experimented with sending out a series of tweets for each major release of our products. This is an excellent way of getting customers to talk about the release. By including a URL, we encourage people to visit the documentation where they will find the full release notes.

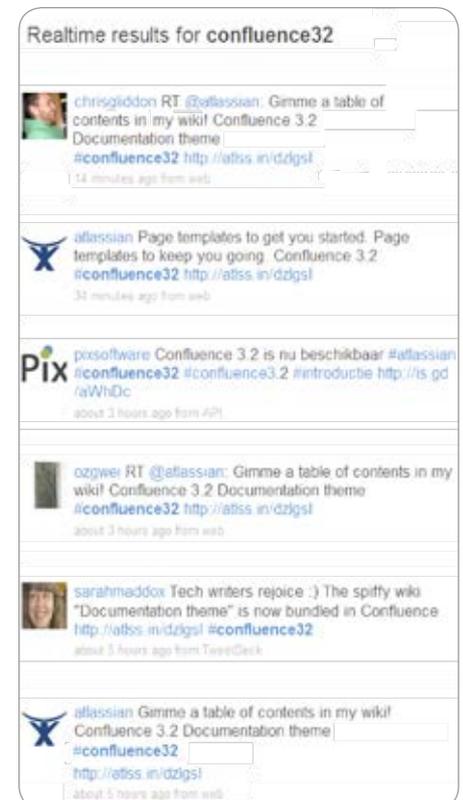


Figure 3: Release notes on Twitter



Image: © Anatolii Babii/ 123rf.com

Each tweet:

- Reflects a major point in the release notes.
- Links to the full release notes in the documentation.
- Contains a hashtag to tie the tweets together.

The hashtag reflects the product name and release number. In the screenshot above, the hashtag is "#Confluence32", for version 3.2 of the Confluence product. People can click the hashtag to see a collection of tweets that include the same tag.

Also in the above screenshot, you will notice that people have re-tweeted our tweet. Other people have added extra tweets using our hashtag – one in Dutch!

Here is a section of the same Twitter stream on an iPhone:

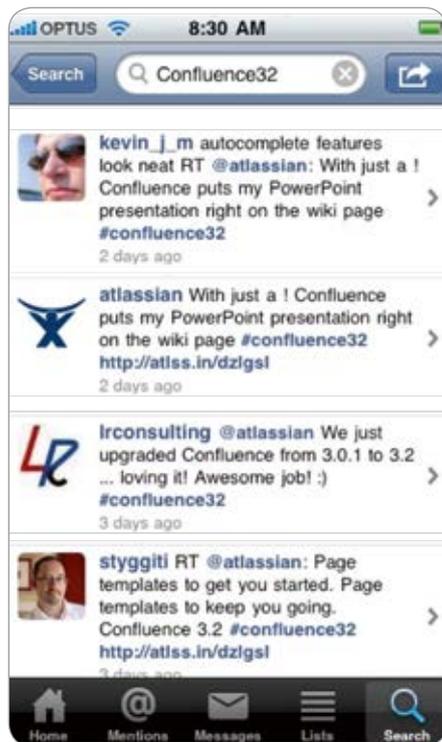


Figure 4: Release notes as tweets on an iPhone

Is there a chance people will add unfavorable information to our stream? Yes, but that is what "social" is all about. It is up to us to respond, and keep the conversation going.

In summary, tweets are small chunks of information that are:

- Easy to digest.
- Shareable.
- Interactive and conversational.
- Useful for drawing people to the documentation.

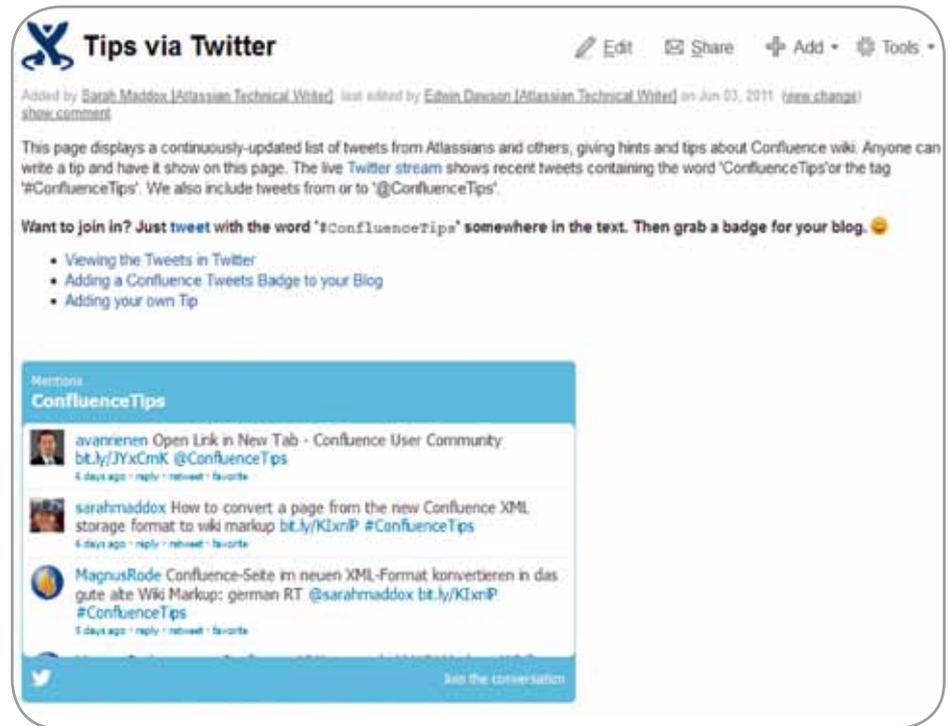


Figure 5: A stream of Twitter tips on a documentation page

### Tweeting hints and tips

We encourage readers to submit tips about our products via Twitter. Customers tweet about a technique they have discovered when using our products. Sometimes people write a blog post about the technique, and then tweet about their blog post.

The hashtag is the key. We encourage people to use a special hashtag, to tie all the tweets together. For our product called JIRA, the hashtag is #JIRATips. For Confluence, it is #ConfluenceTips. Taking this initiative a step further, we have embedded the Twitter stream into a documentation page. So, not only can people see the hints and tips from everyone via Twitter, they can also see their own names (Twitter IDs) appearing in our documentation.

### Interactivity in the documentation – approaching gamification

We have a series of documents that make up a complex configuration guide. Because the set of procedures is long and complex, they can be tiresome to complete. We decided to turn the guide into a challenge, in the form of a game called "Here be Dragons".

The hero of the game, Sir Charlie, starts out with very little clothing or other accouterments. As

the reader works through the steps, Charlie acquires armor and weapons. Pretty pictures show his progress towards the final stage, where he meets the dragon.

The readers send out a tweet at the end of each stage in the process, telling the world how far they have got in the quest to conquer the dragon. This gives people a sense of achievement, in conquering the dragon, and a sense of community with others doing the quest at the same time.

Although the guide has aspects of gaming, it is formatted carefully so that people can find the technical information quickly. They can ignore the humorous and gaming aspects, which are at the top and bottom of each page. In between is solid, well-tested "how to" information.

The interactivity takes two forms:

- A link that prompts people to tweet their status directly from the page. We offer prepopulated tweets, which people can change at will. The suggested tweets are funny, in context, and a call to action.
- A real-time display of tweets on the page, so people can see how far other dragon slayers have got.

The dragon slayer documentation is very popular. People love a game.

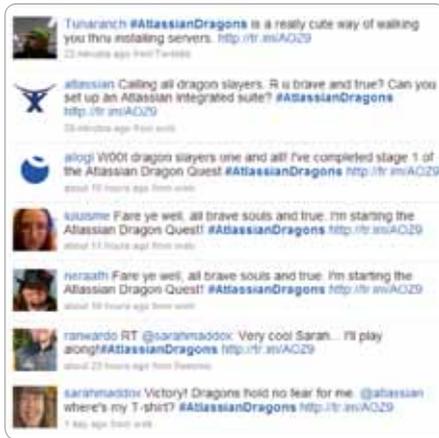


Figure 6: Twitter for gamification of a configuration guide

### Gathering feedback on the documentation

Use Twitter as a public forum for gathering feedback on your documentation. This is a new idea, as yet untried. It could be very interesting and rewarding. It is certainly innovative.

We could put prepopulated tweets in the footer of each page, offering the reader various options for tweeting their feedback. For example:

- This documentation <<page-URL>> #myKeyWord needs X.
- Found a useful page <<page-URL>> #myKeyWord. It helped me X.
- Impressed with the awesome documentation <<page-URL>> #myKeyWord.

### contact

#### Sarah Maddox

has worked in technical communication for 14 years, and has lived in South Africa, the UK, Netherlands

and Australia. She keeps a blog at ffeathers (<http://ffeathers.wordpress.com>) and lives in a house on a hill near Sydney. In the course of her career Sarah has been active in different professions ranging from software developer, book indexer and author, to technical writer.

[www.atlassian.com](http://www.atlassian.com)



We would prepopulate the page URL and the key word, and ask the reader to supply the text for “X”. We can collate the feedback by gathering all tweets containing the key word “#myKeyWord”. What’s more, anyone else can gather that feedback too. This would be an excellent way to build community spirit, as well as getting useful feedback.

## Twitter and your career

Many technical communicators are active on Twitter, sharing tips about our profession. Twitter is also a good place to gather information about conferences, webinars, and jobs.



Figure 7: A job vacancy shared by the STC on Twitter

### Organizations to follow on Twitter:

- @tekomm  
Die Gesellschaft für Technische Kommunikation
- @stc\_org  
Society for Technical Communication
- @TCUK\_conf  
Technical Communication UK conference
- @LavaCon  
LavaCon Conference on Digital Media and Content Strategies

### Technical writers on Twitter:

- @techwriterkai  
Kai Weber, technical writer and speaker
- @tomjohnson  
Tom Johnson, technical writer, blogger, and podcaster
- @ellispratt  
Ellis Pratt, director at Cherryleaf
- @sarahokeefe  
Sarah O’Keefe, principal at Scriptorium
- @maxwellhoffmann  
Maxwell Hoffman, Adobe product evangelist
- @sarahmaddox  
Sarah Maddox, author of this article

There are many more technical communicators on Twitter. For some examples, refer to the list of *2013 Top 100 Influencers in #Techcomm*, from Mindtouch.

### Useful hashtags to search for:

- #techcomm
- #RoboHelp
- #AdobeTCS
- #FrameMaker
- #chocolate

## References and further reading

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# “If you’re not telling your story, someone else will do it for you”

Ellis Pratt is Director and Strategist at Cherryleaf, a technical writing services and training company based near London. He has over fifteen years experience working in the field of documentation, has a BA in Business Studies, and is an Associate of the Institution of Engineering and Technology. Ranked the most influential blogger on technical communication in Europe, Ellis is also the author and editor of two books: *How to Write Instructions* and *Trends in Technical Communication*. tcworld spoke with him about what social media means for technical communicators.



Interview: Corinna Melville

## Social media is typically part of a company’s marketing strategy. Why should it concern technical writers?

If we look at learning models such as Bloom’s Taxonomy and Kirkpatrick’s Learning Evaluation Model, we see there’s an ultimate goal to master a subject – to be more than just functionally capable. People want to evaluate and analyze, and work out the best and most efficient way to meet that goal. This mastery leads users to gain more control and autonomy over their lives.

Where technology becomes a greater part of our day-to-day lives and people become more capable in using technology, there will be a greater percentage of our audience wanting to master a product. This type of higher-level learning tends to be conducted through asking questions, debating potential solutions and experimentation.

Paul Ford, a well-known content strategist, argues that the fundamental question of the Web is: “Why wasn’t I consulted?” What he means is people want to share their opinions. As a result, the Internet is becoming much more conversational in nature. Social media is one of the key ways in which people have conversations on the Web. If technical communicators want end users to read their content, rather than any unofficial content that might be out there, writers need to be engaged and involved in their customers’ online conversations.

## Who should be in charge of a social media campaign? Will these developments possibly create a new career path to bridge the gap between technical writing and marketing?

I agree with Rahel Bailie, who said in her book *Content Strategy*:

“In a knowledge economy, content becomes an important corporate asset.

Potential customers see, and judge, your content assets before they ever see your physical assets. They search to compare product specifications or service offerings. They look through your documentation to see how a product works.”

This changes the traditional marketing funnel. It’s a buying process of

1. Know
2. Like
3. Trust
4. Try
5. Buy

Chinese readers will recognise this as 关系 (GuanXi), which is a central idea in Chinese society. The technical content that’s important to the prospect is at the beginning of the customer journey, not the end. According to Google’s Zero Moment of Truth website, 88% of consumers research before they buy, consulting an average of 10.4 sources. This means the technical content – the details on how the product will solve a person’s problem – becomes strategically more important for the organization.

So yes, it may mean there is a new career path that combines marketing and technical communication. In our advanced technical writing course we train technical communicators about writing in a more conversational style. In some ways, it’s breaking traditional rules of technical writing, but delegates tend to pick it up very quickly.

Unfortunately, there may be another scenario – a “land grab” by the marketing or content strategy departments to take control and responsibility for this content, with technical writers reporting to them.

Someone needs to be responsible for the organization’s content strategy, and its social media activities should be a way of implementing this strategy. To retain the trust of its customers, the organization needs to have a single, consistent voice.

## Do technical communication service providers need to include social media strategies in their service portfolio?

Where there are significant risk, safety, compliance or regulatory concerns, we’re likely to still use traditional communication channels.

Outside of that caveat, and particularly where you have users who want to master a subject, the answer is yes.

To their credit, the software vendors are adding these type of capabilities to their products already. For example, Adobe has its AirHelp technology and MadCap Software has MadCap Pulse. Atlassian's Confluence application also has social media capabilities built in.

### Which social media channels are most useful for technical communication?

It depends on your definition of social media. As the Web is becoming more social, lots of sites could be described as social media channels. YouTube is probably the most useful one, providing walkthroughs, details on how to master a particular topic and overviews. Walkthroughs of computer game levels – videos generated by users – are hugely popular with teenagers today.

As they move into the workplace, that generation may look for answers on YouTube before they look anywhere else.

Stack Exchange sites, such as Stack Overflow, are very popular question and answer sites. Stackoverflow.com is hugely popular with developers, so if your content relates to that audience, you should consider how your organization can use such platforms.

Twitter is very useful as a research tool, and the Atlassian Dragon Slayer challenge shows one way it can be used to encourage people to read user documentation.

There are a few technical authors experimenting with Pinterest, and this may have its place for graphically-rich content.

### How can technical writers use these channels?

First, I should say, we could add a social element to our own content. Leaving that aside, it's probably best to follow the advice of Anne Gentle, who in her book *Conversation and Community* recommended these steps:

1. Listen and monitor first
2. Play your part in the community
3. Share information proactively (but don't flood)
4. Measure the outcomes.

We may decide to leave it with the support department, or whoever monitors the social media networks, to participate in social communities and share information. In that situation, our role is to support them in having the right information available to send out. Social media gives technical communicators a chance to converse and engage with end users. We can use Twitter to research the issues people have, and find out what they think of the product. It's a great learning tool – it can be a quick way to find the answers to questions.

### Can you tell us about some business cases of companies or technical writing departments successfully using social media?

If we include blogs in our definition of social media, we can see technical communicators from companies such as Sage CRM and Red Gate Software writing on their company's blogs. In Red Gate's case, their blog *Simple Talk* is a technical journal and community hub, rather than a company blog. These posts discuss issues and developments relating to the user assistance

in the products. For example, what Help will be provided in the mobile app version.

Again, Atlassian's Dragon Slayer challenge is a great example of how social media can be used in the technical communication context.

A number of companies have used social media to repair their brand image, by having a team that responds to customer complaints. In this type of situation, a support department can send out links to Web pages that guide users to the answers in the user documentation. One well-known example of using Twitter to improve a company's brand image is the *Comcast Cares* account on Twitter.

Other organizations have used social media to inform and educate the public. The British Health Foundation wanted to educate people about administering the cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) technique in situations where they felt uncomfortable with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. They created a short educational video and used the Twitter hashtag #hardandfast to drive traffic to that video.

### How can I make sure that customers have accurate, up-to-date information and how can I keep track of all the conversations about my product?

There's a danger that if you're not telling your company's story, someone else will do it for you. There are difficulties managing and tracking the information, and it's likely that a single-source authoring system will make it easier to reuse the correct, up-to-date information. If the output from your authoring tool has social media capabilities built in, you may find it easier to track some of the conversations.



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# Making your content 'working content'

Your company's website is the entry gate for most customer relations: This is the place where visitors first catch a glimpse of your profile and form an impression about your organization. This first impression is often decisive of whether or not this web user will become your customer. So how can we create well-structured, catchy content to improve our web performance?



Image: © Dejan Bozic/ 123rf.com

By Sameer Suryakant Kulkarni

Content is the backbone of a company's online presence. Imagine you want to purchase a medicine online and visit the manufacturer's website. On the homepage you find information about the company, the medicines it sells, its retail stores, a map showing its store locations, etc. Your immediate mission is to find the medicine and order it. However, you cannot find a link or tab that lets you order the medicine easily and quickly. You get frustrated because you are forced to view all this information that is currently of no interest to you. You wonder how a company can be so ignorant about its content. Content is what connects organizations with their customers. It needs to be accurate and at the right place.

## What is a content strategy?

In the online world, clear, concise, and well-structured content is one of the most important layers forming the foundation of your business. Content permeates all of an organization's functions and is one of the most essential components of your marketing and sales strategy. Content sells your products and builds your brand. Working content, in simple terms, is content that works for you and helps you achieve your business goals. When content is so important, can we take the chance to not have a reliable plan for creating, presenting, and maintaining it? If your content is not working content, how is it going to bring the desired benefits? The answer is: You need a defined strategy to create, present, and maintain your content. A content strategy defines the process of planning your content so that you can achieve your business goals. A good content strategy molds your content into a formal content lifecycle framework. This helps you create and publish usable content.

## Why do you need a content strategy?

A content strategy makes your websites more searchable, easy-to-understand, and easy-to-use, which means a higher number of leads to sales. To manage content, organizations need a

foolproof strategy that will define a lifecycle for content management.

Great content also enhances brand equity. When you build your website content based on your business goals, direction and differentiators, it generates a sense of trust and professionalism among its users, thereby enhancing your brand credibility.

## Which content does it apply to?

Although a content strategy can be applied to any kind of content, it makes a lot of sense to employ it on websites, since your customers use your website as a mirror to judge your organization's credibility and value. Your website is the first touch point for your prospective customers. Customers form their opinions about your company based on their experience with your website. If your website is cluttered and not well-structured, customers will not hesitate to move on to your competitor's website. A content strategy may also be applied to online applications.

## How do I apply a content strategy?

You can deploy a content strategy either when you create a new website or when you want to make your existing website more effective. A content strategy immensely helps in both scenarios. You need to follow the Discover, Define, Design, Develop, Deploy, and Govern route for achieving a successful content strategy implementation.

### DISCOVER:

Identify your business goals. Find the problem with your existing content. Audit your content quantitatively and qualitatively. Discover what is good to have and what is not. Ask questions from the user's perspective. Discover pain points. Document all the findings. To do so, ask yourself the following questions:

- What are my business goals?
- What do I want to achieve?
- What difference can I make?

- Who are my users?
- What content do I have?
- How is it organized?
- Who creates it?
- Who maintains it once it's published?
- Where is it located?
- Is the content accurate?
- Is it useful?
- Is it usable?
- What are the competitor websites doing better?

### Expected deliverables at the end of the

**Discover phase:** Defined business goals, problem statement, reports about how the existing content aligns with business goals, content evaluation and inventory reports, existing information architecture, content matrix, copy deck, competitor benchmarking reports.

### DEFINE:

Define what you need based on what you have now and the gaps identified in the Discover phase. Define who will be involved. Define how you will measure success. Questions you might like to ask include:

- What message needs to be communicated?
- How will I achieve my business goals through my content?
- What will be the tone of my content?
- How long will it take to develop content?
- Who will I develop it?
- How will I measure if the content is achieving my goals?

### Expected deliverables at the end of the

**Define phase:** User profiles, user scenarios, goals-KPI matrix.

### DESIGN:

Design the required content in a way that will be most usable. Develop a content delivery and governance model to ensure that the content is updated in the most efficient manner. Ask these questions:

- What design or structure would be preferable to my audience?
- What team structure would work best for my content team?
- What workflow would be optimal for my content team?

- What different options can be explored to design my content? How will I source content?
- How will I ensure that the content I get is accurate?
- How will I keep content up-to-date?
- How will I ensure ownership of content lifecycle stages?
- What rules will I devise to ensure that content is governed properly?

#### Expected deliverables at the end of the Design phase:

Content improvement strategies, information architecture, content governance model, processes, workflows, review checklists, recommended tools, and copy deck.

If you are applying content strategy principles to an existing website, you need to create a list of recommendations to reorganize the content. You can create this list based on your analysis in the Discover, Define, and Design phases.

#### DEVELOP:

Develop the content using appropriate methodologies and metadata. Then, test and review your content thoroughly. Ask yourself:

- What kind of templates will be required?
- Who will create the content?
- Who will test and review the content?
- How will bugs be fixed?

#### Expected deliverables at the end of the Develop phase:

Samples, templates, content, style guides, content testing reports, bug analysis reports.

#### DEPLOY:

Publish the content on the interfaces that are most suitable for accomplishing user tasks. Answer these questions:

- How will I test published content?
- How will I get feedback on published content?

#### Expected deliverables at the end of the Deploy phase:

Published content.

#### GOVERN:

Maintain the published content using the predefined governance model. Ask yourself:

- How will I follow the content governance model?
- How will I address deviations?

- How will I resolve content governance issues?
- What will be my long-term strategy to accommodate change management requests?

#### Expected deliverables at the end of the Govern phase:

Content governance processes.

## Applying content strategy principles

Having discussed the high-level methodology, let us now have a quick look at the actual process involved in applying content strategy principles to a website.

1. Define your objectives and how you want to achieve them. As an example, you might want to increase your online business by 5% in a quarter.
2. Review your website content. Conduct a thorough content audit. Prepare the content audit reports.
3. Conduct a benchmarking study. Investigate what others do better. For example, 'Cash on Delivery' might be a must-have feature on your e-commerce website. Explore such differentiators.
4. Conduct a thorough user analysis. Understand user requirements. For example, users need options to compare products, hints about products that they may be interested in, etc.
5. Create fresh content inventory, content matrix, information architecture, and copy deck dossiers. Use benchmarking study reports, user analysis, and key business practices as input to create these dossiers.
6. Create a detailed content governance model to keep your content up-to-date and relevant.
7. Design the content as per the new plan. Test your content frequently. Set performance measures.
8. Publish the content. Monitor the change in business.

## Advantages

Unstructured or poor content can play havoc with your business prospects. An effective content strategy helps you achieve your business goals. A great content strategy can arouse latent needs in customers and make them buy items that they weren't explicitly shopping for.

The user experience that good websites offer is something that builds brand equity and enhances business prospects.

## CS differentiators

In a nutshell, content is one of the most powerful means to communicate your business values to your target audience. Users are not involved in an active real-time dialog while exploring websites. They possess the discretionary rights to move on to other websites. This passivity of websites makes it even more important to present the most engaging and enticing information to end users. The only way end users can get a positive impression about your organization is to present information in the most convincing manner. The principles and methodologies discussed in this article can help companies to improve their content so that it generates extraordinary sales leads.

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#### contact

#### Sameer Suryakant

Kulkarni is content architect at Infosys Limited in Pune, India. He has nine years of experience in technical communication, focusing on designing and creating content for users.



Sameer\_Kulkarni01@infosys.com  
www.infosys.com

# Do-it-yourself MT: Taking (statistical) machine translation to the next level

New web-based statistical machine translation services are currently revolutionizing the market. These SaaS solutions allow users to customize an MT engine with their own translation memories. As most of these services follow the subscription model, launching a DIY MT project costs only a fraction of deploying a traditional machine translation tool, which makes this powerful technology affordable for even the smallest organization.



Image: © mrPliskin/ istockphoto.com

By Uwe Muegge

During the last two years, several SMT services have emerged that give users a high degree of control over the quality of machine-generated translations. Their business model is simple: Make a powerful statistical machine translation system accessible via the Web and allow users to customize an MT engine by uploading their own translation memories. And reduce the price of using a customized SMT system to a fraction of what high-quality machine translation traditionally costs.

## Traditional approaches to customizing SMT

### Google Translator Toolkit

Google Translate now supports more than 70 languages and has more than 200 million daily users, which makes Google's statistical machine translation the most widely used automatic translation service. In 2009, Google launched the Translator Toolkit, a free cloud-based translation memory tool that lets users post-edit translations generated by Google Translate. In fact, Google Translate lets users upload their own terminology databases, however, these glossaries can only be used for post-editing, not for customizing the machine translations Google Translate creates. The only way users of Google Translator Toolkit can customize the output Google Translate produces is by re-using their previously post-edited SMT output. Google Translator Toolkit currently does not offer any functionality for customizing Google Translate beyond the ability to select a source and target language.

### License SMT software

Up until recently, licensing a commercial statistical machine translation product was the primary solution for corporate users who wanted to take full advantage of SMT. Language Weaver, which was acquired by SDL in 2010, practically owned this market. As the name of the product indicates, the 'Enterprise Translation Server' was designed for large commercial and governmental entities who would engage Language Weaver to build custom SMT systems. In other words: The provider of the machine translation system would typically not only sell a translation software product but also customize the SMT system with either client- or domain-specific data.

The major drawback of this type of SMT solution was its high cost: Not only for licensing the software, but also for the high-end server hardware required to run this software, and the professional services involved in the customization process.

### Moses

Moses started in 2005 as an academic experiment at the University of Edinburgh, and since then has evolved into a massive open source project with many institutional supporters throughout the world. In fact, as of 2012, the European Union funds the Moses Core project, which aims at making Moses' open source statistical machine translation accessible to an even wider audience. And this is where the challenge lies: While Moses is both free and supports any language combination, this statistical machine translation system is not exactly an easy-to-use application. Truth be told, Moses is not even an application but a collection of software modules designed to be run on a Linux server.

In other words: Moses is a powerful and very flexible SMT system that is supported by a broad and well-funded development community, but it takes a background in computational linguistics to operate Moses. So even though the Moses software is free, it's the staff and hardware infrastructure that's necessary to operate this MT system that makes using Moses a prohibitively expensive proposition for most small and medium-sized organizations.

## The DIY approach to statistical machine translation

### Using a cloud-based web service

When several companies started hosting their own SMT system on Web-enabled servers and made it easy for users to customize those MT engines, that was a major paradigm shift. With a hosted solution, users now no longer have to make a heavy up-front investment in either software, hardware, or human resources, but just pay for services as they go. In this type of Software as a Service (SaaS) model, the user does not have to deal with, or even understand, the complexities of statistical machine translation.

All users do in a DIY MT environment is upload their own data for training the SMT engine, upload the source documents for translation, and download the translated target documents. The only software the user interacts with directly is the SMT service provider's browser-based user interface, which is typically limited to simple project management functions.

### Using your own data

In contrast to Google Translator Toolkit, which lets users generate

### THREE DIY SMT SERVICES THAT MAKE IT EASY TO GET STARTED

#### ☞ Microsoft Translator Hub

Like the Translator Toolkit, Google's initiative to improve the quality of the Google Translator, the goal of Microsoft's Translator Hub is to take the Microsoft/Bing Translator to the next level. Unlike the Google Translator Toolkit, however, the Microsoft Translator Hub is a DIY SMT service that lets users create their own customized MT engines. Best of all: Using the Microsoft Translator Hub is completely free for users translating less than two million characters per month.

[hub.microsofttranslator.com](http://hub.microsofttranslator.com)

#### ☞ KantanMT

KantanMT is a brand new DIY SMT service that just opened its doors. Unlike many other SMT service providers, KantanMT neither has up-front customization charges nor per-word translation fees. Instead, KantanMT charges a flat monthly subscription fee for customizing and maintaining either 20 or 40 engines for €499 and €999, respectively. KantanMT offers a free trial period of 14 days.

[www.kantanmt.com](http://www.kantanmt.com)

#### ☞ SmartMate

SmartMate is more than just a DIY SMT service; it offers a complete cloud-based translation management solution, including online editing and terminology management functionalities. Monthly subscription rates start at US\$85 for 100,000 words and two editor seats. SmartMate offers a free trial period of five days.

[www.smartmate.co](http://www.smartmate.co)

and post-edit generic translations, DIY systems make it easy for users to customize the SMT engine. The purpose of customization is to have the statistical machine translation system generate translations that are consistent with the terminological

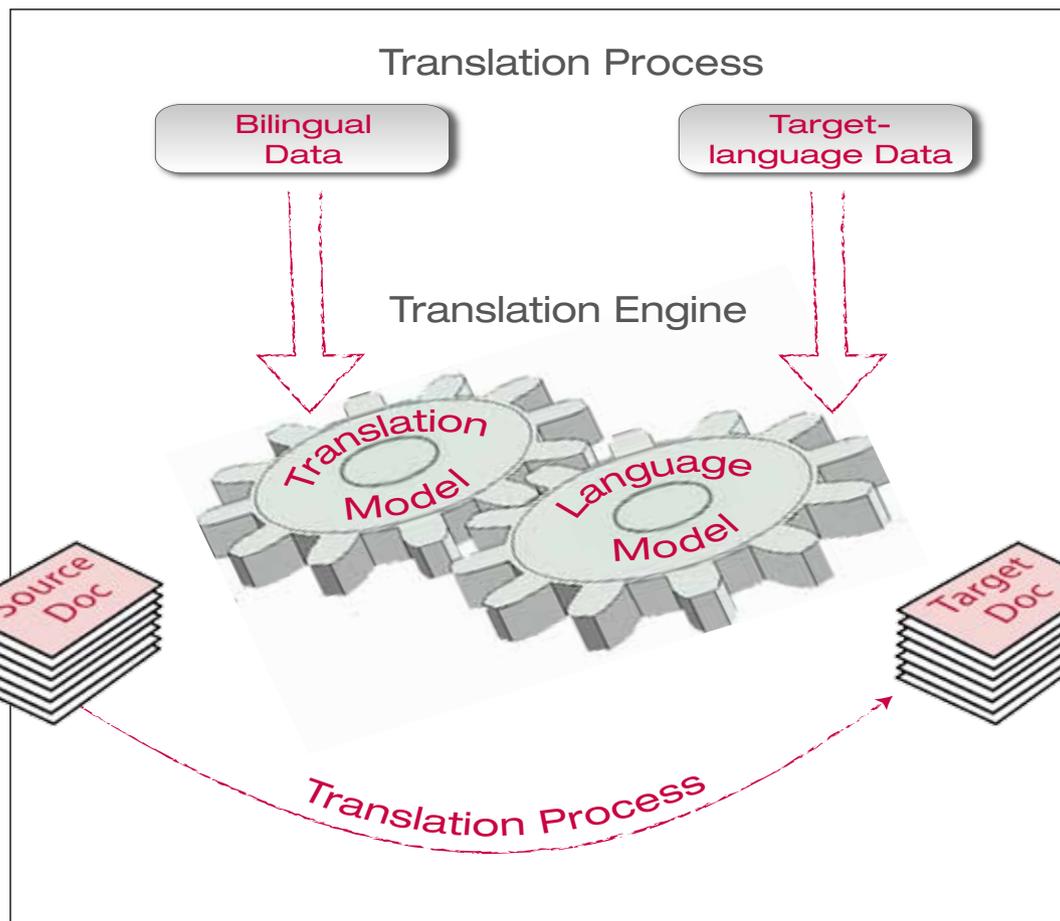


Figure 1: Functional diagram of how statistical machine translation works

and style conventions of their own organization. In other words: After customization, the translations the SMT system creates should be more usable and require less post-editing than translations created by traditional MT systems. Customization is typically a multi-stage process during which the user submits multiple sets of user-specific data. For training the translation model, which generates a set of possible translations, the user uploads a corpus of aligned sentences in the source and target language, typically in the form of a translation memory. For training the language model, which helps the SMT system pick the most 'fluent' translation generated by the translation model, the user uploads a corpus of translated sentences. There are two things to know about

SMT customization: The first is that customization requires fairly large data sets, with 10,000 sentences typically being the lower limit. This means that in order to create an SMT engine that produces translations that approximate your organization's style and terminology, the user must have a substantial set of available translations. And, in addition, these translations should have been reviewed for accuracy to ensure that the training data is of the highest quality. The other thing to know is the fact that SMT customization can be very granular. In other words: An organization can have multiple SMT engines, each for a specific domain. For instance, a user could have one engine for translating user manuals and another engine for translating.

#### Deploying a machine translation solution in days if not hours

As is true for many other Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions, setting-up a do-it-yourself SMT service typically takes much less time than rolling-out a traditional statistical machine translation solution. After creating an account, the main task is to upload the bilingual and monolingual sets of training data, and then wait for the customization process to complete. Depending on the service provider and the size of the training corpora, customization can take anywhere from less than an hour to little more than a day. In addition, getting a DIY statistical machine translation project started does not require the user to make any major financial or long-term

contractual commitments. In fact, many providers of DIY SMT solutions let users try their services for free!

## How to successfully roll-out your own DIY MT project

### Manage your linguistic assets

You probably already know that translation memories are valuable assets: TMs help translation buyers avoid having to pay full price for the translation of material that was fully or even just partially translated before. In the context of statistical machine translation, translation memories become even more valuable as these bilingual documents, together with customer-specific translation-only documents, form the basis for customizing an SMT engine.

Currently, many – if not most – providers of DIY SMT services aim their offerings at small and medium-size language service providers. However, this type of solution is just as attractive to small and medium-size buyers of language services, provided these buyers have access not only to their translated documents, but also their translation memories.

### Invest in training staff

As mentioned above, it doesn't take a computational linguist to operate a cloud-based do-it-yourself statistical machine translation system. In fact, users don't even have to be translation experts to perform the basic functions of customization and translation in this type of environment. However, organizations that wish to maximize the benefits of DIY SMT should consider hiring or training a translation or localization manager.

The translation manager will determine which projects go through a) a traditional human translation process, b) a pure SMT process, or c) an SMT process with subsequent human post-editing. In addition, it would be helpful to provide training to the organization's authors to enable them to use the same terms and the same style consistently. While consistent style and terminology in the source language help improve the quality of any translation project, stylistically and terminologically consistent source texts are particularly important in statistical machine translation projects.

### Manage user expectations

Do-it-yourself statistical machine translation is a great new technology that makes high-quality automated translation accessible to a much wider audience than ever before. But if you think that DIY MT makes human translation obsolete overnight, think again. Statistical machine translation is a very powerful technology, but even the most advanced translation engine cannot make up for deficiencies in the source. If writers use sentence structures or terms that didn't occur in the training material an SMT system is based on, translation errors are inevitable.

On the other hand, DIY SMT is suitable whenever the alternative to machine translation is no translation at all, e.g. the translation of knowledge-base articles or user forum messages. And of course translations generated by a DIY SMT system make an excellent source for post-editing by human linguists.

### Summary

Do-it-yourself statistical machine translation is a technology that holds a lot of promise - especially for organizations that currently use (S)MT and wish to improve transla-

tion quality. Cloud-based DIY SMT services not only make it easier to generate customized, or user-specific, machine translations; these services also make high-quality MT more affordable than ever before. In fact, several DIY SMT providers offer their services at such low cost that it puts this powerful technology within reach of even the smallest organization - including individual freelance translation/post-editing specialists.

#### contact

**Uwe Muegge** has more than 15 years of experience in the translation and localization industry, having worked in leadership functions on both the vendor and buyer side. Uwe has been with CSOFT International, a provider of language services based in Beijing, since 2008, and he currently serves as Senior Translation Tools Strategist for North America.



uwe.muegge@csoftintl.com  
www.csoftintl.com



## Your connection to translation and localization companies

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GALA is the largest global non-profit association within the language industry, providing resources, education, and research for companies working with translation services, language technology and content localization. Member companies are vendors and buyers of language services and technologies. They deploy sophisticated multilingual strategies and proven tools to take content and products to markets around the world.

# Using SCRUM in technical documentation

By nature, technical communication projects are rarely predictable and requirements frequently change while work is in progress. Allowing flexibility while upholding thorough project planning can become a tricky balancing act. Find out how a technical communication team tackled the issue by introducing Scrum.



Image: © nyul/ 123rf.com

By Martin Brueggemann

## Why we moved to Scrum

The main task of our team is to provide high-quality, accurate documentation across nine languages for our internal and external customers in a timely manner. With regard to content for end users, this ranges from Online Help, technical reference documentation to installation and setup guides in different output formats – from MS Office documents to PDF and even XML.

The size and complexity of the documents vary from one to 100 pages, and so does the associated effort from less than one hour to three weeks.

Traditionally our documentation was done using a best-effort approach: team members worked in parallel on different tasks as fast as they could. With only basic tracking capabilities it was not possible to extract information on resource utilization, or to reliably estimate delivery dates. However, as our organization grew more mature, it became increasingly important to provide this sort of information. Looking back on our projects of the past ten years, the lessons learned generally fell into two contradicting categories: “We need more flexibility, we need to plan less!” or “We need to plan more, our customers need status information” (a.k.a. “...or the costs might spiral out of control”). Each of these approaches comes with its own set of drawbacks. The “plan less” approach would often lead to a lot of ad-hoc decision-making, multitasking, working with little or no specifications, and maybe even letting quality control slip just to get a product finished and off the desk. This method leads to an initial high level of customer satisfaction but results in stressed workers, high staff turnover, overtime costs, and in cases where quality was compromised, negative customer feedback. The “plan more” approach means grouping similar tasks together and then working on them in unison. This approach is commonly known as “waterfall” project management, and emphasizes efficiency by maximizing the size of batches being worked on. In theory this sounds like a smart idea, but there is a catch: Waterfall planning only works for stable requirements, precisely known at the start of a project. For projects with rapidly changing requirements, change control forms end up being introduced. Change control forms usually indicate that something in the process is not working as it should. Such projects are always “in progress”, leading to lengthy delivery times and low throughput on a per-task basis.

Since Waterfall planning emphasizes the individual project phases, even labels them to be “discrete”, it tempts departments to try to find local optima, missing a holistic view of the workflow. Therefore, if a team meets their internal time requirements at the cost of quality, it will be the next team down the line who have to deal with the fallout - blame is being passed downstream. While the approach indeed brings stability, it also has a lower level of customer satisfaction, as it offers less flexibility. No one wants to tell their customers they cannot have a new feature now because it was not specified in the requirements document signed six months ago. We certainly don't, here at emarsys!

Caught in between these two scenarios, our team started looking for ways to achieve higher throughput and useful reporting, without sacrificing quality. We needed a method that required only limited resources and no further investment. Surely, flexibility and customer satisfaction had to be achievable at the same time as planning and committing to deadlines without overloading resources.

While we were looking for an eloquent way to solve this puzzle, we came across a wonderful quote ascribed to economist J. M. Keynes: “Better be roughly right than precisely wrong!” Keeping this in mind, our approach became to plan less at stages where we had less information, and then formalize our plans at the last responsible moment (but no later!) before commencing the work. And this... is Scrum.

## Introducing Scrum at emarsys

Some of you familiar with Scrum might instinctively argue that this methodology is relegated to software development, and wonder how it can have anything to do with technical documentation. But applying Scrum to non-software environments actually means bringing it back to its roots, as Nonaka and Takeuchi never mentioned software in their original, now famous, paper *The new new product development game* [2].

Scrum is nothing new, there is a wealth of information out there, such as the articles *Project Management with Scrum* (July 2011) and *Adjusting to Scrum* (November 2011) published on tcworld.info. Introducing Scrum was not easy due to a number of impediments, the biggest being skeptics who did not appreciate the potential benefits as they

had found a practicable way to cope with their daily workload. To work around this reluctance, we introduced Scrum in distinct phases, using a check-and-adapt approach to make it relevant to their needs and maximizing their benefits from Scrum. This enabled us to show the results and improvements for every phase. Only after one phase was stable, would we move on to the next one. Each phase is described below.

### Phase 1: Creating a unified backlog

A big problem we encountered when introducing Scrum were lists. There were lists everywhere: to-do lists, work in progress lists, and even lists of lists to update when a task moved from one state to another! By engaging in some in-depth housekeeping we were able to put all tasks into a unified backlog, eliminating duplicates and obsolete issues.

To our advantage a ticketing system was already available and in use by our support and development teams. Everyone in the company had an account for it, so this step did not incur any additional costs. Thus, it was decided, the new

What is...?

#### Scrum?

Scrum is an agile methodology, which allows a team to work following a flexible, holistic development strategy. Scrum particularly values interactions between individuals. It comes with its own set of terms, the most important of which are explained below.

**(User) Story:** A feature or element described from a user's perspective that can be divided into tasks. Because Stories are independent from each other, they can be estimated and scheduled one-by-one.

**Story Point:** This is the (relative) measure of a Story's complexity. “3 Points” means “3 times larger than a 1”, nothing more, nothing less.

**Backlog:** A list of Stories, sorted according to their business value.

**Sprint:** A set of Stories a team commits to complete. The time frame for this is usually 1 to 4 weeks.

**Velocity:** This measures the Story Points completed in one Sprint.

backlog would be maintained in the Atlassian JIRA platform.

One benefit of the housekeeping was that several previously invisible tasks surfaced. Team members could now easily see what tasks were on their agenda, and for the first time could get a clear overview of what needed to be done by whom and when.

The downside to making such a radical change to a 'stable environment' is resistance, which ranged from reactions such as "I don't care", "How does this help me?", "I don't have time for this" to "If it's not broken, don't fix it". Some of those who reacted with enthusiasm at first, later revealed no interest when Scrum was implemented. Other staff members withdrew into their distinct silos of work with no real overview or appreciation of customer value as a whole.

An "us versus them" perception does not work in agile environments. A direct benefit of adopting Scrum was the ability to "just say no" to new tasks as resource utilization was now more transparent, and the impact of daily "quick favors" could be measured easily.

### Phase 2: Visualizing the workflow and identifying bottlenecks

Team members and stakeholders had started to become used to working with JIRA for more than just support tickets, and were now actively keeping track of tasks and providing reliable status updates. JIRA comes with an out-of-the-box support for the agile methodology; it can even display your tasks on a virtual Kanban board!

So we proceeded to formalize and standardize our workflow and tailored JIRA to display the right information on our Kanban board, presenting an overview of our work.

By visualizing the flow of work, Kanban boards allow teams to reflect on the process and identify impediments. In our team, for example, we identified the "review" stage to be a constraint, and a subsequent root cause analysis showed that the resource responsible was beyond overloaded. Identifying this allowed us to fix it, and we were then able to double our throughput.

Our biggest challenge during this phase was to devise a stable workflow with just enough formalization. There was nothing we could build on, since we used to decide on an ad-hoc basis what task should be worked on next. This often resulted in increased stress and multitasking, which we termed "flexibility". We set off with a workflow that was just "good enough" to get us started and allowed us to

quickly gather feedback. This feedback nurtured continuous improvement and to date our workflow has been revised three times.

### Phase 3: Introducing time-boxing and iterations

At this stage, our workflow was rather stable, but the flow of tasks within the process was not. The individual process steps varied between overload and underutilization, making it look like the constraint was everywhere and nowhere all at once. What we now needed was something to set the pace, so all resources could work to their sustainable capacity.

We addressed this by introducing time-boxed iterations ("Sprints"; see [3] and [4] for further information), with a duration of two weeks. Using relatively short iterations allowed us to focus more readily on the tasks at hand, with daily progress indications. One significant improvement was that our team was less stressed, creating a more relaxed working atmosphere. Looking back, this phase was the hardest to implement due to the disparity in skills and the high level of commitment and discipline required from all members. For the first iterations, we were committed to much more than we could realistically achieve. All the work in progress ended up slowing us down, which ironically is how Scrum works: Scrum has a strange property where you achieve more by going slower.

### Phase 4: Introducing estimation with Story Points

Those familiar with Scrum might argue that it was a mistake to introduce estimation only after starting with iterations. This is a valid point as it pretends that all Stories are of equal size. But I have to counter: When introducing an abstract metric such as Story Points to non-technical members it was important to get the idea of measuring relative complexity across without endangering uptake. Had we introduced Story Points first, it is likely that we would have ended up with random, meaningless numbers. We even renamed the Story Points to Gremlins, which resulted in greater interest from Scrum beginners.

We were now able to measure the team's velocity (Points per Sprint), which, when combined with our unified backlog, helped give all stake holders a clear overview, and helped them in their decision-making process. The feedback we received ranged from "you have quite a decent level of planning" to "I am amazed that you can already commit to completing this".

The only real challenge we faced was that the concept of relative estimation in Story Points was abstract and unfamiliar at first, but translating our day-to-day experiences into Gremlins proved to be more reliable than using traditional estimation in hours or Euro.

### Phase 5: Introducing Ceremonies and an informative workspace

If our goal was to simply introduce Scrum, then we could have stopped right there. However, we wanted to create a self-reliant process, which did not need a Scrum Master to tell the team what to do next. We needed a way to nurture information exchange and to establish a unified, structured approach to process improvements. So, the next (and currently final) step was the introduction of "Scrum Ceremonies" by having a Sprint Retrospective meeting in addition to the planning and review meetings we already had. This extra meeting enabled us to highlight impediments and make suggestions for improvement. Furthermore we started to hold daily 15-minute stand-up meetings to get an overview of who is working on what during that day and work out which team members needed assistance. Initially it was difficult to convey the value of this extra meeting in an environment already full of meetings, but when a team member was absent we were quickly able to react: The overall velocity of the team was reduced, but tasks were easily redistributed, and the quality was not affected.

Until this point we had not had to spend any money on our Scrum implementation, but we identified the need for an information radiator [5] in order to openly display our current status information (e.g. Burndown chart, current Scrum status). Buying a device solely for this purpose was not feasible without being sure that having such a display would be of benefit to us – so we repurposed an old PC and monitor, reducing the cost to €25 to buy some network and power cables.

## Outlook: The missing bits

Not satisfied to rest on our laurels, our accomplishments have accelerated our desire to keep improving, very much in line with Agile's cousins Lean Manufacturing and Kaizen (continuous improvement).

One particular area of improvement we are looking at is refining the planning process, enabling us to plan and estimate also on a sub-task level, to be able to add internal accounting/costing in the

future. We are also working on the capability of having fully distributed teams, independent of the location. This brings with it the challenge of exporting our process to other teams. We could further improve information exchange and the quality of our output even more, by applying pair programming [6].

## Summary

Through applying Scrum we have been able to solve the stalemate of the “less planning” vs. “more planning”, enabling us to start accurate planning in an environment with high levels of uncertainty. Because we wanted to ensure that every team member and stakeholder is happy with the changes we introduced, we purposefully broke it down into stages geared towards easy understanding and uptake. By ensuring the stability of each phase before moving on to the next, the five phases described here in utmost brevity actually

took more than six months to implement, but we believe the overall quality has been improved across all areas.

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## contact

### Martin E. Brueggemann

is a graduate in both Computer Science and Communication Studies (Potsdam, Berlin & Aachen), with a passion for knowledge management and agile methodologies. With more than a decade of experience as a technical author, and experience in driving projects of varying sizes and complexities, Martin now works at emarsys eMarketing Systems AG in Vienna as a key member of the documentation team.



[martin.brueggemann@emarsys.com](mailto:martin.brueggemann@emarsys.com)  
[www.emarsys.com](http://www.emarsys.com)

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# What constitutes a healthy localization department?

Just like a physically-fit person, a department or organization functions best when it is healthy from within: Happy and confident staff with a strong sense of belonging and unity form the strong core of any successful project team. So how can we boost the health of our localization department?



By Shirley Yeng

It recently dawned on me that the health of a localization department is just like the health of a person: A healthy person brings up the right level of energy to function, has the ability to carry out the tasks at hand as well as a clear mind that knows the purpose and goals of every action taken to follow the right path to success. Thinking more closely of the keywords, “healthy”, “localization” and “department”, I defined them in the following way:

Healthy

Strong inner core of the department which is primarily made up of people

Localization

The purpose and support structure of the department

Department

Team working together as one body

## Strengthening the inner core of the localization department

The inner core of a department is primarily made up of people. Therefore, social and emotional intelligence has a major impact on departments.

The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations has published a comprehensive list of the components of social and emotional intelligence quotients, which I would like to share with you for illustration purposes (see Table 1).

I have found these attributes of intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability and general mood of a person to be applicable to department managers in the working place. Many times, we are swamped with busy schedules of meetings that need to be planned, follow-ups that are pending, projects that have to be executed and monitored, rescue plans that have to be developed for unexpected events as well as managing our clients’ change requirements. The workload can easily occupy our minds both during our work hours as well as in our free time – some of us even still process these issues during our sleep. In such overly busy times, our self-awareness may numb away and our social awareness and interpersonal relationships start to take a backseat. We focus our entire energy on the task at hand and thus become purely task-oriented. When finishing the task at hand and meeting the project deadline becomes the single ‘force of nature’, we struggle to keep a healthy focus on interpersonal relationships and each team

member gets caught up in their own personal battles. However, cooperation between team members and among teams calls for an interpersonal relationship-building effort, which takes time.

And what happens to our adaptability in such busy times? How do we cope with change when a new or better way of doing things is introduced? Some of us may just be so jaded by the daily workload that we have no time to welcome change. Why now? Why not wait until later? This affects our general mood and others. A once excited, ready-to-conquer-the-world person is now buried under the loads of endless work and demands from a fast-paced work environment. As localization department managers, we have two options here:

First, we can leave it to the individual to improve his or her social and emotional intelligence. However, we know that today’s busy work schedules leave little time, and thus only a few individuals might be determined enough to strengthen and enhance social skills on their own.

Second, we as localization managers look at the improvement of our staff’s social and emotional intelligence as a valuable investment. We can contribute to it by working with the human resource team and by providing relevant web-

Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence	
<b>INTRAPERSONAL</b>	(self-awareness and self-expression) Self-Regard: . . . . . To accurately perceive, understand and accept oneself Emotional Self-Awareness: . . . . . To be aware of and understand one’s emotions Assertiveness: . . . . . To effectively and constructively express one’s emotions and oneself Independence: . . . . . To be self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others Self-Actualization: . . . . . To strive to achieve personal goals and actualize one’s potential
<b>INTERPERSONAL</b>	(social awareness and interpersonal relationship) Empathy: . . . . . To be aware of and understand how others feel Social Responsibility: . . . . . To identify with one’s social group and cooperate with others Interpersonal Relationship: . . . . . To establish mutually satisfying relationships and relate well with others
<b>ADAPTABILITY</b>	(change management) Reality-Testing: . . . . . To objectively validate one’s feelings and thinking with external reality Flexibility: . . . . . To adapt and adjust one’s feelings and thinking to new situations Problem-Solving: . . . . . To effectively solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature
<b>GENERAL MOOD</b>	(self-motivation) Optimism: . . . . . To be positive and look at the brighter side of life Happiness: . . . . . To feel content with oneself, others and life in general

Table 1: The Bar-On Model of Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI), R. Bar-On, 2006, *Psicothema*, 18, supl., p. 21.

Source: [www.eiconsortium.org/measures/eqi.html](http://www.eiconsortium.org/measures/eqi.html)

inars, talks and activities. If interpersonal skills can be enhanced, each staff member works with a stronger commitment to do well for others in the team. Such a wholesome working environment would make each staff willing to stay on to contribute their best. This helps to build a strong core with which your localization department will be able to function more efficiently.

### The support structure of the localization department

For some organizations, a typical operational support structure is to have a project manager (PM) as the main contact person for the account managers and their clients. At the same time, however, the PM is in charge of providing client information and requirements to the other supporting pillars such as the translation unit, the quality assurance (QA) unit, the desktop publishing (DTP) unit, the engineering unit, and the finance unit.

This means that there is a tremendous workload and responsibility upon the shoulders of a PM. Every single bit of information that comes to the PM has to be verified, clarified and approved. On top of that, the PM is responsible for overseeing the whole production cycle of the localization projects.

Therefore, the project-oriented type of support structure will sooner or later create a bottleneck at the project management level. This will hinder the flow of projects and may lead to delays in project delivery and in disseminating important information regarding clients' requirements down to the supporting pillars.

Then, there is an alternative form of operational support structure in organizations: In a client-oriented type of operation mode, the clients' information and requirements are readily available to the different supporting pillars without the need to receive this information from the PM. This is achieved with the support of an underlying system to govern the clients' information and project requirements along with the language assets (TM, terminology, style guides), and all business transactions' documents (invoices, purchase orders). This is a system of automated project management workflow with business management intelligence. In my organization, we have developed such a system called TBMS (Translation Business Management

System™), which we use internally as well as externally, thus enabling our clients to govern their localization process and business transactions. The system greatly relieves our PM and the client's PM from being the bottleneck, and they are now able to focus on what they do best: to ensure the delivery of the projects on time, on schedule and on budget. TBMS has become the 'handyman' who fetches the information that the PM and others need.

Whatever tool or system we may decide to use in each of our localization departments, we have to think about how we can achieve a workload balance for each role that we define in our localization department. No one in our team should be overloaded with responsibilities so that it affects performance.

When we design a role for anyone in the department, we begin with the outcome we would like the person in this role to produce. This should be the beacon of light guiding us as managers as we design each role and its responsibilities. In this way, we are conscious of creating a work profile for each of our staff, which is in line with the outcome designed for the role. This will prevent any confusion or frustration for our team members, who are looking to excel in their area and want to achieve the clearly defined outcome. As we know, happy employees make happy clients – and thus healthy localization departments!

### Team working together as one body

As different units of the department strive to work together towards a common goal – a successful implementation and delivery of projects to the clients – we need to walk together in unity. Imagine different parts of a human body that are out of sync: The person would not be able to walk steadily. To walk together in unity means to be able to move in the same momentum, not one part of the body faster or slower than the other. In reality, ensuring that everyone in a localization department throughout all supporting pillars or units is working at the same pace, is the biggest challenge of today.

The demands of work flowing in from clients to the different supporting pillars are not necessarily well-paced. This is due to a fast-paced work environment in which demands change quicker than lightning sometimes and without warning. Well-planned project schedules may need to

be altered overnight and supporting units may struggle to fit in all the demands. As time goes by, the notion of giving one's best may become diluted and reduced to "Oh, let's just get this done and over with. Next!" I may be dramatizing the situation but it is certainly one that we, as managers of localization departments, would like to avoid if we can.

The core values of a localization department become highly essential at this point. I personally have created the following values for my organization:

1. Build a sense of belonging and identity, a community of trust and respect for one another in the department.
2. Each person is a localization department ambassador!
3. GIVE our best in serving others
  - Grateful
  - Intuitive and inquisitive
  - Virtuous and very careful
  - Enthusiasm and empathy

### To conclude

This article may not be stating something new, but I hope it serves as a reminder to all managers of localization departments, that it is up to us to build a healthy department, and that it takes a conscious effort and commitment from our part.

#### contact

**Shirley Yeng,**  
a frequent speaker at conferences, has been in the localization industry for more than 20 years.

She started her career as a localization software engineer at Omron and Software AG located in Asia. After working as a vendor manager, account manager, and in senior sales roles at LMI, Berlitz GlobalNET and Bowne Global Solutions she now serves as vice president of Client Services at EC Innovations, Inc..

shirleyy@ecinnovations.com  
www.ECInnovations.com



# tekombelgium officially launched

By Birgitta Meex

On 18 April 2013 we launched the new Country Group tekombelgium. The foundation event was hosted by the University of Leuven. It was the third successful event that tekombelgium organized in close cooperation with the Subfaculty of Language and Communication at the Antwerp campus.

About 75 participants took part in this unique event, among them staff and master students from Translation Studies and Multilingual Communication. The full-day conference program offered a good balance between presentations, panels, and networking.

After the welcome address by Prof. Dr. Frieda Steurs, the host and dean of the Subfaculty of Language and Communication, Herbert Herzke,

vice-president and Country Group mentor at tekombelgium, and Anke Mecklenbrauck, University Relations and Country Group officer at tekombelgium, provided an overview of the main tasks and goals of tekombelgium. They invited the members of the Initiative Committee to introduce themselves and witness the official foundation of tekombelgium by the Country Group mentor. You can watch the video at

<http://youtu.be/tp-LyoQU190>.

Subsequently, Hans Van Heghe, founder and CEO of the ICMS group, explained how knowledge management is linked to technical communication during a lively presentation. According to Van Heghe the big challenge is JERI®: 'Just Enough Relevant Information, when and where

you need it'. In the next presentation Prof. Dr. Frieda Steurs zoomed in on terminology management as a quality assurance factor for multilingual communication in a global world.

Testimonials by two alumni of the Subfaculty of Language and Communication concluded the morning session. Werner Van Scharen, Packaging and Print Professional, and Nico Van Dyck, Editor-in-Chief at dhaxley Translations, who graduated in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, shared their work experiences in technical communication based on their specific linguistic perspective and educational background.

The afternoon session featured two more presentations. Jang Graat, the owner of Jang Communication and an experienced technical author and trainer, demonstrated in a compelling presentation how to 'write less and say more' and how to facilitate users' lives in an era of information overload. In the next presentation, Dr. Michael Fritz, CEO of tekombelgium and tcworld, gave valuable insights into the current state of technical communication in Europe, focusing on legal and educational standards that have to be met. The day ended with a panel discussion with representatives from industry, academia and the service sector. Current developments and challenges for technical communication in Belgium and the rest of Europe and the role of tekombelgium therein were addressed and further discussed with the audience.

One of the main objectives of tekombelgium is to bring together and

to connect all interested technical communication professionals in the Flemish, French, and German speaking parts of the country. Since compared to Germany, both the field and profession of technical communication are to date largely unknown and undervalued in Belgium, the aim is to enhance the visibility and recognition of the profession. University-industry collaborations as well as co-operations between Belgian and other European universities may help to raise awareness of the profession among students, graduates, and HR professionals, and convince them of its potential in terms of added value. In particular, such collaborations address the need for education and training as well as for research in technical communication. Eventually, consumer organizations such as Test Aankoop in Flanders and Stiftung Warentest in Germany should also become involved.

In the feedback from the foundation event and the subsequent tcworld Roadshow on 12 June in Antwerp participants have expressed an interest in presentations on specialist topics (one particular suggestion was multimodal technical communication) and in interactive workshop sessions that include business-related hands-on activities. Another idea that came up was that of speed presentations (e.g. 5 minutes), where participants describe current projects and challenges or present well-defined solutions to tackle problems they have met.

This fall tekombelgium is planning a joint event with the Flemish association for business communication vvzc on the topic of instructive discourse. We will keep you informed!

Find out more about our upcoming activities on the tekombelgium LinkedIn page:

[www.linkedin.com/groups/tekombelgium-4825657/about](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/tekombelgium-4825657/about)



Image: from left to right: Dr. Michael Fritz (CEO of tekombelgium and tcworld); Anke Mecklenbrauck (Country Group officer at tekombelgium); Hans Van Heghe (founder and CEO of the ICMS group); Dr. Birgitta Meex (assistant professor of German at the University of Leuven); Corry Clybouw (documentation manager at Agfa Healthcare); Herbert Herzke (vice president of tekombelgium); Susanna Akdut (technical writer at Roxell).

# tcworld Roadshow makes its successful debut

Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Eindhoven, Antwerp and Paris became host locations to the tcworld Roadshow in early June. Technical communicators gathered in each location to network and listen to thought-provoking presentations from renowned European experts.

By Priyanka Kalvit and Anke Mecklenbrauck

On June 2, 2013 the project team of the tcworld Roadshow and the CEO of tekomp/tcworld GmbH Dr. Michael Fritz started off to Helsinki, where the first of a series of six conferences was to be held. All conferences were centered on the topic of "Technical Contents - A Valuable Corporate Asset". The first week of travel brought the Roadshow team to Northern Europe (namely Helsinki, Stockholm and Copenhagen), where it was supported by the local technical communication associations (STVY Finland, FTI Sweden) as well as the tekomp Denmark Country Group, who acted as co-hosts respectively.

The respective events were well-attended by around 40-50 participants each, who wanted to expand their network and learn more about technical communication as a business.

During the second week of June, the tcworld Roadshow travelled through the Netherlands, Belgium and France, where it was welcomed by local professionals eager to share their knowledge and to learn from the experts. Many of those visiting the events in Antwerp and Paris were already part of tekomp through their Country Groups or were keen to learn more about joining tekomp. Especially in the Netherlands,

where tekomp does not currently have a Country Group, people showed a high interest in future tekomp activities.

## European technical communication with a local accent

Overall, attendees of the Roadshow included (senior) managers of technical documentation departments or teams, technical writers and



**Antwerp:**  
Interactive session -  
"Successful outsourcing strategies"



**Paris:**  
Participants network at the meet & greet session.



**Eindhoven:**  
Panel discussion on "Best Practices for Creating Value from Technical Contents"

other experts related to the field of technical communication. For tekcom it was very inspiring to meet so many professionals who provided a valuable insight into the market of technical communication in their home countries. At the same time the local audience was very interested in the differences that set them apart from other European countries. Each conference program started with a keynote speech on "Technical communication as a business in Europe", delivered by Dr. Michael Fritz, that gave food for thought and evoked lively discussions. It was followed by the presentation "Changing the engine without stopping the car", during which Jang Graat, on behalf of the platinum sponsor Adobe, demonstrated how to modularize content in FrameMaker to move it into a content management system. Both presentations received great feedback from the audience. Furthermore, each Roadshow event witnessed individual presentations that had been organized by the co-hosts or regional sponsors. Presentations on topics such as "Augmented Reality in Technical Communication" or "How to Successfully Manage Global Technical Documentation in a 'Big Data' World" were highly appreciated. The morning sessions were followed by a lunch break, providing the participants with opportunities to meet and network.

Most participants awaited eagerly the interactive session following lunch, as it gave them another opportunity to network and to share their ideas and thoughts on topics such as "Designing efficient content creation processes" or "Managing international technical communication teams". During these sessions the participants formed small groups in which they discussed and exchanged their ideas about the respective topics. Later on, they shared their conclusions with the entire audience. Many participants stated afterwards that this hands-on session made the conference even more valuable for them.

Another interesting part of the program was the panel discussion during which experts from different industries gave important inputs on "Best practices for creating value from technical contents". This session was concluded with a Question & Answer session, which led to lively open discussions. The panels in all the Roadshow cities included renowned experts from different industries with extensive experience. One of the most notable panels was the one in Eindhoven, which was represented by managers from Philips, HP and DAF Trucks.

## Great feedback inspires future events

After an inspiring day of presentations and networking, participants were enthusiastic about implementing the new ideas in their work life. The tcworld Roadshow team is proud to conclude that the concept and realization of the tcworld Roadshow 2013 was appreciated by everyone involved. Participants have stated that they would like to attend more of these programs in the coming years.

At this point we would like to thank all co-hosts, sponsors, speakers, panelists as well as all attendees, without whom the tcworld Roadshow would not have been such a success.

## Further reading

The presentations of the Roadshow are available for download on our conference website:

<http://conferences.tekcom.de/tcworld-roadshow-2013/downloads/presentations/>



**Stockholm:**  
*Attendees follow a captivating presentation*



**Helsinki:**  
*Presenting the results of the interactive session*



**Copenhagen:**  
*Experts at the panel discussion*

## tcworld calendar

when	what	where
Sep 2 – 6, 2013	<b>Machine Translation Summit</b> <a href="http://www.mtsummit2013.info">www.mtsummit2013.info</a>	Nice, France
Sep 23 – 25, 2013	<b>LRC Internationalisation &amp; Localisation Conference</b> <a href="http://www.localisation.ie/resources/conferences/2013">www.localisation.ie/resources/conferences/2013</a>	Limerick, Ireland
Oct 3 – 5, 2013	<b>ELIA Networking Days</b> <a href="http://www.elia-association.org">www.elia-association.org</a>	St. Julian's, Malta
Oct 3 – 4, 2013	<b>TM Europe 2013</b> <a href="http://www.tm-europe.org">www.tm-europe.org</a>	Warsaw, Poland
Oct 9 – 11, 2013	<b>Localization World Silicon Valley</b> <a href="http://www.localizationworld.com">www.localizationworld.com</a>	San Jose, CA, USA
Oct 14 – 15, 2013	<b>TAUS User Conference</b> <a href="http://www.translationautomation.com/conferences/taus-user-conference-2013">www.translationautomation.com/conferences/taus-user-conference-2013</a>	Portland, OR, USA
Nov 6 – 8, 2013	<b>tcworld conference/ tekomm Annual Conference 2013</b> <a href="http://conferences.tekom.de">http://conferences.tekom.de</a>	Wiesbaden, Germany
Dec 3 – 5, 2013	<b>Gilbane 2013</b> <a href="http://gilbaneconference.com">http://gilbaneconference.com</a>	Boston, MA, USA
Mar 23 – 26, 2014	<b>GALA 2014</b> <a href="http://www.gala-global.org/conference/">www.gala-global.org/conference/</a>	Istanbul, Turkey
June 3 – 6, 2014	<b>Localization World Dublin</b> <a href="http://www.localizationworld.com">www.localizationworld.com</a>	Dublin, Ireland
Nov 11 – 13, 2014	<b>tcworld conference/ tekomm Annual Conference 2014</b> <a href="http://conferences.tekom.de">http://conferences.tekom.de</a>	Stuttgart, Germany

①

The **MT Summit** is an international conference, which takes place every two years and brings together people from the academic world and commercial companies developing machine translation (MT) as well as users of MT systems and other MT-related tools. The conference presents state of the art in MT, its major contemporary trends and practical applications.

The conference program for the MT Summit 2013 will include keynote speeches by renowned experts in the field of Machine Translation, panel discussions and presentations of submitted and invited papers organized in the two program tracks research and commercial/user.

An exhibition of commercial and research systems will be held during the conference as well as a 'Project Village' featuring the best of recently funded collaborative work.

②

The **tekomm annual conference** together with the **tcworld conference** and tekomm fair is the largest global event and market place for technical communication.

Conference attendees include technical experts, decision makers and consultants from industrial, software and service companies. Most of the attendees come from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, but recently a steady increase of visitors from other European countries and overseas, has given the conference a distinct international flair. The event is also enriched by a growing number of students from different countries who are eager to get a first-hand impression of their future profession.

In addition to the numerous workshops, panels and presentations offering in-depth as well as cutting-edge training and information, the conference provides great opportunities for interaction and networking. The broad range of topics covered by the conference allows experts in all fields to reach their audience. The complete conference program is available online at <http://conferences.tekom.de/tcworld13/for-participants/conference-program>

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