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magazine for international information management

tcworld

February 2017

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Turning your documentation into SEO gold

A strategic approach to reviewing

Rethinking in-country language reviews

Boosting your international SEO

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tcworld

magazine for international information management

From the editor

Breaking down silos

There are many reasons why technical documentation is not a cumbersome obligation, but a valuable business asset. Just consider these:

- Unlike traditional marketing material with its promotional lingo, technical documentation doesn't raise any red flags for search engines such as Google. Keyword-rich and frequently updated documentation could well be your most valuable SEO asset.

- Technical documentation that makes use of social media and allows a direct interaction between your company and its customers and potential buyers holds a wealth of business intelligence that can deliver priceless information to product development teams and other parties within your company.

- Documentation that is up-to-date, interactive and findable on the Web can demonstrate how well your company understands the market and its customers and draw new leads.

Now, we probably don't need to tell our community of technical writers and content developers to stop seeing documentation as a necessary evil. But despite the increased awareness of the value of good technical documentation, it still doesn't live up to its full potential in many organizations. A major reason for this might be the continuing chasm between technical writing teams and other departments such as marketing and product development. Which is why, in this edition of our magazine, we are taking a look at technical communication from outside the box: What does the documentation we produce mean to content marketers? Why do we need to listen to web developers? Who else in the company can benefit from our terminological assets? Only a strategic and collaborative approach can help to break down silos and reveal the full potential of technical communication.

C. Melville

Corinna Melville

technical communication
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Technical documentation – marketing's secret weapon

Technical documentation offers far more than a guide on how to use your products. Include strong keywords, update it frequently, make it social and well-structured and it will become a priceless content marketing asset. page 12

Boosting your international SEO

More than half of all Google searches are performed in a language other than English. So are your keywords relevant to a global audience? page 26

A strategic approach to reviewing

Are your in-country reviews causing delays and frustration? Then you are missing their value as a keystone of a successful quality management strategy. page 32

Content marketing spending to be increased in 2017

Marketers in the UK that are extremely or very committed to content marketing value creativity and craft in content creation higher than other marketers, a report by the Content Marketing Institute has revealed. Such marketers also understand what an effective or successful content marketing program looks like within their organization.

As organizations come to realize the value of their technical documentation as a business asset, content marketing provides an outlet for this content to be leveraged to promote a company or brand. Key highlights of the report include:

- 60 percent of UK marketers are much more or somewhat more successful with content marketing than they were one year ago
- 53 percent plan to increase their content marketing spending over the next twelve months
- 82 percent will focus on lead generation as a content marketing goal over the next twelve months
- 65 percent can demonstrate, with metrics, how content marketing has increased their number of leads

The report, *Content Marketing in the UK 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends* has been produced by the Content Marketing Institute and sponsored by Tomorrow People.

http://contentmarketinginstitute.com

Image: © bulentozber/istockphoto.com

Less than a third of companies have a sophisticated approach to terminology management

Acrolinx' latest report, ***Terminology Management: How Companies Use the Words and Phrases That Matter Most to Their Business***, released in December 2016, provides a detailed look at how modern companies ensure that their brand and product names, slogans and taglines, and other terminology are used consistently and accurately enterprise-wide.

"Large organizations often have hundreds, if not thousands, of unique words and phrases that they use to describe themselves and the way that they do business," says Dr. Andrew Bredenkamp, CEO, Founder, and Chairman of Acrolinx. "Ensuring that those words and phrases are used correctly is critical to maintaining their brand voice, ensuring that their content is credible and authoritative, and avoiding the kind of confusion that can erode brands over time."

The report helps to dispel the conventional wisdom that terminology management is only of interest to technical documentation teams and only done for translation purposes. It also helps cast a light on industry best practices around terminology management, including:

- Which departments usually drive terminology management efforts
- How companies approach suggesting, approving, and enforcing the use of new words and phrases
- How companies resource their terminology management efforts
- What tools and technology are used to help automate terminology management
- What challenges and pain points companies face in this regard
- How sophisticated they view their approach to terminology management to be

Image: © Franck-Boston/istockphoto.com

One of the report's most interesting findings is that while 99 percent of companies see value in terminology management, only 84 percent actually practice it in some form. More importantly, just 29 percent of companies feel that they have a sophisticated approach to terminology management, meaning that most practices may not be as efficient or effective as they could be.

"We believe that being able to capture, manage, and enforce the usage of the correct words and phrases is an important part of developing a mature content strategy," Bredenkamp continued. "And when you consider that in many cases a company's terms get translated into dozens of languages, you can quickly imagine how complex terminology management can become and why it's a topic that most companies need some help with."

The report is based on the results of a survey of more than 200 content professionals from well-known brands as well as a series of interviews with a select group of terminology managers. A free copy of the report is available online.

www.acrolinx.com

MADCAP CENTRAL RELEASED

MadCap Software, Inc., provider of multi-channel content authoring solutions, has launched MadCap Central, a cloud-based platform for content and project management designed specifically for the documentation industry. MadCap Central is integrated with MadCap Flare combining technical authoring software with a cloud-based publishing and content management environment to streamline the entire documentation workflow and enable documentation teams to manage projects and content in one centralized location.

www.madcapsoftware.com

CSA REPORT ON NEURAL MACHINE TRANSLATION

Research firm Common Sense Advisory, Inc. has published the report *Neural MT: Sorting Fact from Fiction*. The brief looks at what neural machine translation (MT) is and how it works, three myths about neural MT and where it will fit in the language technology landscape.

www.commonsenseadvisory.com

SDL LAUNCHES LOCALIZATION PROCESS CONSULTING

SDL has launched the SDL Localization Process Consulting offering to help organizations lower the cost and complexity involved in localizing and managing global content. SDL's consultants – located across 14 countries – provide training and expert insight and advice across topics such as migration to XML/DITA for technical documentation; software localization; software testing and query management. The service also provides best-practice workshops on authoring for translation, terminology and style guide management, machine translation applications, and more.

www.sdl.com

LIONBRIDGE GEOFLUENT FOR SALESFORCE APPEXCHANGE

Lionbridge Technologies, Inc. has launched GeoFluent on the Salesforce AppExchange. The new app integration brings GeoFluent's real-time translation solution to Salesforce Service Cloud, allowing Live Agent customers to improve global customer experience and reduce costs by adding multilingual capabilities to their existing applications. GeoFluent will allow agents to communicate in real time with customers in over 100 languages.

www.lionbridge.com

Businesses recognize the value of content

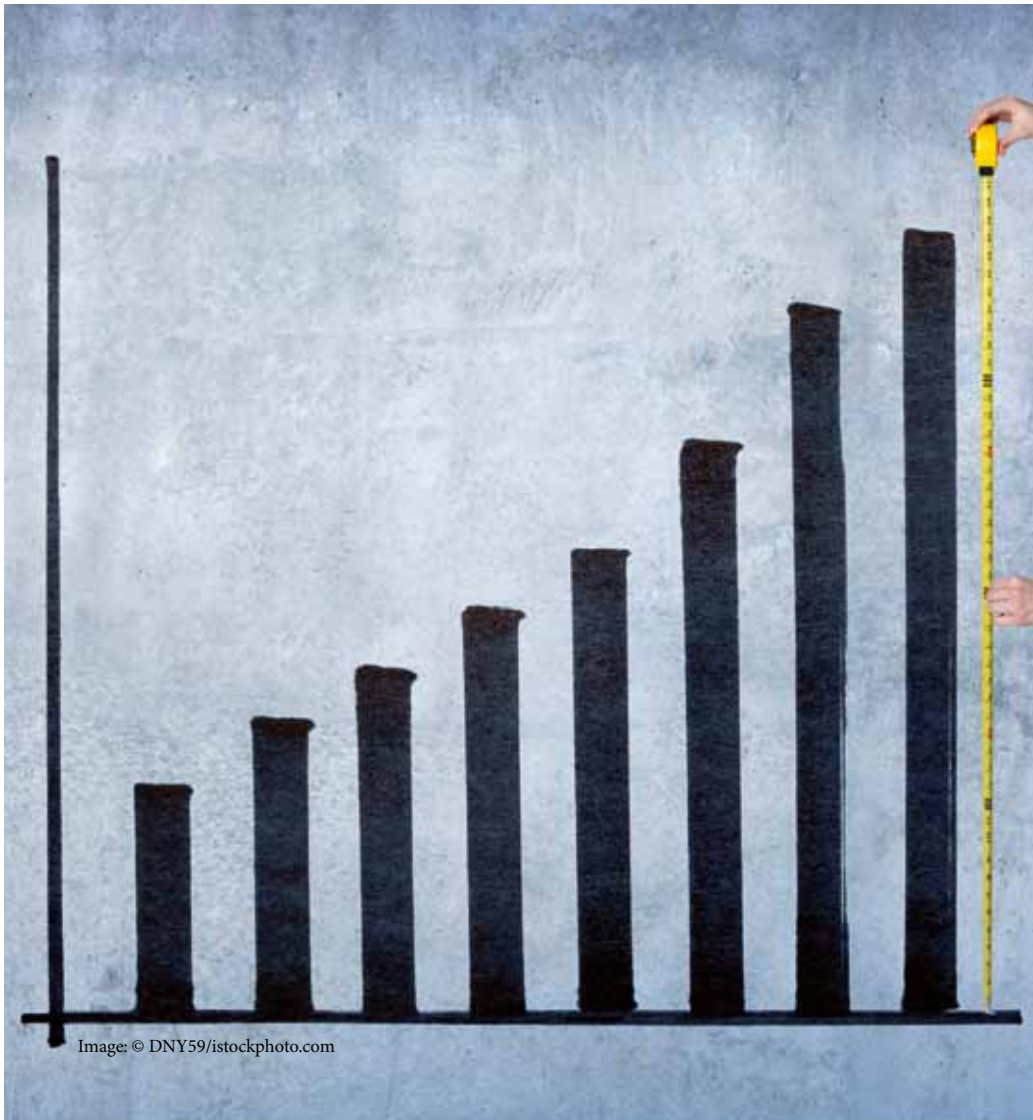
Research and advisory firm Forrester has evaluated the state of marketing content spending and found that businesses recognize the ways content leads to better customer experiences, which is leading to greater and greater content investments: In 2016, content spending will exceed $10 billion in the US alone.

According to Forrester, content marketing is critical to 70 percent of marketers, and investments in content and content marketing are up across the board. In fact, Forrester data found that one out of every two brands is increasing its investment by 20 percent or more each year.

While marketers will aim to increase their content efficiency with in-house hires, they'll gradually discover that third parties provide better outcomes for the price. Why? Because "marketers are poor judges of their own content marketing performance, and their agency partners bring a much more skeptical take to marketers' content skills," according to the research.

The results of this research are detailed in the report ***The State Of Marketing Content Spending*** which can be purchased on the Forrester website.

www.forrester.com



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LIONBRIDGE SIGNS ACQUISITION AGREEMENT

Language service provider Lionbridge has signed a definitive agreement to be acquired by an affiliate of H.I.G. Capital, LLC, a global private equity investment firm. Closing of the transaction is subject to customary closing conditions and expected to be finalized in the first quarter of 2017.

www.lionbridge.com

KANTANMT AND ADAPT CENTRE COLLABORATE

KantanMT, a subscription-based machine translation service, in collaboration with ADAPT Centre, has developed a platform optimization technique intended to improve the performance of its core technology. The new optimization incorporates research into varying translation models similar to the IBM model 2 approach.

http://kantanmt.com

GALA announces its new Board of Directors

Members of the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) have elected four industry professionals to the Board of Directors for the 2017-2018 term:

- Tea Dietterich, 2M Language Services (Australia & France)
- Pedro Gomez, Microsoft Corporation (United States)
- Sabina Jasinska, Donnelley Language Solutions (United Kingdom)
- George Zhao, Boffin Language Group Inc. (Canada)

They join the following continuing board members: Jesper Sandberg, STP (United Kingdom); Klaus Fleischmann, Kaleidoscope (Austria); and Wafaa Mohiy, Saudisoft (Egypt).

Board Members Robert Etches, Textminded (Denmark); Véronique Özkaya, Xplanation (Belgium); and Manal Amin, Arabize (Egypt) will conclude their Board service.

Board members are directly elected by GALA member companies. One representative from each company is designated as the voting contact for their company. Board terms are for two years, beginning in January.

www.gala-global.org

tcunplugged

The case for the classics

Text by Leah Guren

My involvement in technical communication training has made me aware of some weaknesses of modern education. Have you seen the videos of American university students failing to answer basic questions about history, politics, and science, but knowing the latest gossip about celebrities? And what about those terrible social media typos? If you are like me, you may not know whether to laugh or cry.

I applaud the inclusion of more modern topics in high schools, colleges, and universities. Technology subjects, for example, are important and relevant. However, they cannot be at the expense of critical core topics. In all white-collar professions, you need basic math skills, basic knowledge of history, and the ability to read and write at a high level. In a profession based on the ability to communicate clearly and correctly, we should expect a much better mastery of grammar, syntax, and punctuation than I see in many of my adult students.

Our profession is uniquely challenging in that the best practitioner must be a true *Renaissance man;* that is, an individual who is well-educated in a wide variety of subjects. I see three gaps in young technical communicators entering the field: general knowledge, logic, and public speaking.

The case for general knowledge

Our profession demands a breadth and depth of knowledge that is rare in today's world of specialization: A successful technical communicator needs to know *a lot of stuff about a lot of stuff.* Ours is a career well suited for individuals with a passion for learning rather than a passion for a specific subject.

Broad general knowledge is what allows technical communicators to recognize patterns, put things into context, and even recognize what they don't know. It allows a technical editor to identify a product name or marketing slogan as problematic because of its association with a negative historic event. It allows technical authors to connect to a wider range of audiences.

The problem is that general knowledge is only gained through extensive reading and exposure to a wide range of subjects. There is a strong correlation between intellectual curiosity and good general knowledge. Personally, I will always prefer a technical communicator with intellectual curiosity!

The case for logic

Stephen Brookfield[1] is part of a generation of educators who viewed critical thinking as the most important element of an education. But while it is important in all professions, it is ***crucial*** in ours. As technical communicators, we are faced with a steady stream of information from our SMEs. Our job is to analyze this information and make good decisions about what content to present (and how to present it) to our users. Therefore, we must have superb logic skills to be able to spot missing information, unnecessary information, and incorrect information. We must be able to question "facts" that are contradictory or illogical. Sadly, when I present students with illogical source content, fewer than 20 percent are able to spot glaringly obvious problems. How can this be possible? These are people who are blessed with an above-average IQ and a university degree. So why are they not capable of critical thinking? Why do they accept information passively?

The answer is complicated. First, very few primary schools teach critical thinking (logic). Children are expected to memorize and regurgitate facts, rather than think for themselves or question information. These are skills that are best developed at an early age. When children don't learn critical thinking, they become the next generation of passive students and then mentally lazy adults, accepting information rather than spotting logic flaws. Teaching logic and critical thinking to adults isn't impossible, but it takes skillful training and plenty of reinforcement.

The case for public speaking

The case for critical thinking is obvious. But why do I consider public speaking to be an essential part of the "classical" education of a technical communicator?

I could argue that our profession is technical ***communication,*** which means all forms of communication, not just the written word. However, the ability to express our ideas in confident, effective, articulate speech is more important for our individual success and career development than for the skills we bring to our employers.

I have seen qualified, competent technical communicators ignored in meetings, or forced to produce substandard documentation, because they were unable to make a compelling oral presentation. Learning to speak means learning to ***speak up*** in an effective way; to be able to explain the benefits of your ideas; to be able to gather support for your suggestions.

Adults who learn public speaking skills are more likely to get ahead in their careers. Ginger lists seven reasons why public speaking helps your career[2], including improved clarity of thought (there's your connection to critical thinking) and setting yourself apart from the competition.

A word to tech comm managers

Don't make the mistake of only looking at a job candidate's knowledge of tools and how well they punctuate. Consider their general knowledge. Ask questions that allow you to gently probe their critical thinking. And listen to the way they speak. Let's bring back the classics!

Do you have an opinion about these "classic" technical communication skills? I'd love to hear from you.

References:

[1] Brookfield, Stephen D. *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question Their Assumptions. Jossey-Bass,* 2012

[2] Ginger Public Speaking, "Communication Skills: 7 reasons inspiring public speaking is good for your career." http://www.gingerpublicspeaking.com/communication-skills-public-speaking-good-for-career/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Guren
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Technical documentation – marketing's secret weapon

A long way from the jargon and puffery of marketing messages, technical documentation offers credible, fact-driven and highly valuable information. With little effort it can become your SEO gold.

Image: © valdum/istockphoto.com

Better together: technical writers and content marketers

Technical communication and content marketing have a defined goal in common: to deliver high-quality content that helps people solve problems. Yet given this fact, why does a gap – often a yawning chasm – persist between the efforts of technical writers and content marketers within most organizations?

Text by Davin Pukulis

What marketing value does technical content have, and how can it be efficiently leveraged? What do tech comm and content marketing teams stand to gain by working collaboratively? The answer in short is: quite a bit, on both the tech comm as well as the marketing side. But to get there, a shared understanding of business goals, a mutual respect for the talents that both teams bring to the table, and a strong methodology of cooperation and collaboration are needed.

Content marketing and the gap

In recent years, content marketing has become one of the most important tools for businesses to generate awareness and demand for their products and services. This rise is due to a particular reality we all face in our modern world – we're saturated by messaging. In both our online and offline lives it's nearly impossible to escape the pervasiveness of marketing messages. In fact, the interruptions are getting stronger, more constant, and more desperate in order to get through. Mobile notifications alone increased by over 30 percent in 2016. Ironically, the more messages we're bombarded with, the less we're actually willing to listen.

Content marketing reverses all of this. It assumes that the best way to get through is not to ***interrupt***, but to ***inform***. The idea is to focus on the need that a product or service meets, and to dive deep into understanding the challenges, motivations, and goals of potential customers who have this need. This understanding forms the basis for the creation and publishing of content, which addresses these needs and offers relevant solutions. It's an SEO-focused tactic: If the content is truly of value, then it will be found by those searching the Web for solutions and will help to build the trust that can lead to a purchase. As Rand Fishkin of SEO leader Moz Inc. sums it up: "[The] best way to sell something: don't sell anything. Earn the awareness, respect, and trust of those who might buy."

The common ground between content marketing and technical communication is a strong focus on the needs of the user. Both aim to meet these needs by providing helpful, high-quality information. The big difference is that tech comm is about the "how", while content marketing is about the "why". Technical content addresses the problems of ***existing*** users by teaching them ***how*** to do things. Content marketing addresses the problems of ***potential*** users by teaching them ***why*** doing things differently can be beneficial to them. This "how" versus "why" is the essence of the gap, and it must be understood by both tech comm and marketing teams in order to achieve genuine collaboration.

The benefits of teamwork

When the work of technical writers is leveraged to help the efforts of content marketing, the most important result is higher quality content for information consumers. An organization's existing documentation can be a wellspring of building blocks for marketing teams to use to create SEO-focused articles and posts. And by mining documentation metrics, such as page traffic, time on page, and usefulness ratings, marketing teams can get valuable insight into the needs of solution seekers. With feedback from technical writers, content marketers can achieve better accuracy in the materials they develop. And because skills often overlap between members of both teams, collaboration can achieve greater efficiency by eliminating duplicated efforts.

Technical writers are professional communicators with a role that keeps them sharply focused on user needs. Because of this, they're perfectly positioned to drive a virtuous cycle of marketing content improvement by giving regular feedback. Tech writers are intimately familiar with the features, benefits, and use cases for products and services, which is the lifeblood of marketing communication. And because they have put themselves in the users' shoes, tech writers are often able to articulate the desires and behaviors of potential customers to the marketing team in a much clearer way than the product or engineering folks.

My company, K15t Software, builds tools to help organizations take a collaborative approach to documentation, so we're keenly interested in exploring the benefits that come from using a shared documentation and content platform throughout an organization. This has been incredibly helpful for us in achieving a cooperative working relationship between marketing and tech comm. What we've found is that when the two teams work collaboratively within the same system, they can build a single source of valuable documentation that perfectly serves information consumers both before and after purchase.

A two-way street

With insight from content marketers on the "why" – the product or service's benefit – technical writers can improve their own work too. Bringing a bit of benefit language, with a very light touch, into the documentation can reveal empathy for the reader and build rapport that helps to get readers more engaged with the content. It can also help to build brand loyalty in an indirect way that's worlds away from typical sales or marketing messages. Apple's documentation provides numerous examples of this, often explaining at the topic level in very direct terms "why" a function or feature exists before going into "how" to use it.

But perhaps the most important benefit that technical writers can receive from closer collaboration with marketing teams is to help open the organization's eyes to the power of documentation in helping to achieve its business goals. When tech comm plays a bigger role in the creation of marketing content and helps make that content more effective, it becomes more obvious to other stakeholders that great documents can be a tool for organizational growth. The marketing team can be a strong advocate for the business value of technical documentation.

Go light, go fast: five bridge-building tactics

If you're itching to get started, you're in luck. There are many things your organization can do right now to get technical communication and content marketing more closely aligned. These changes don't have to be arduous, complicated, or painful. You can start now by teaching your old docs new tricks.

1. Publish prominently on your site

Your existing documentation is content marketing, whether your organization realizes it or not. The documents are a huge, search-friendly resource of topic-relevant information that is specifically designed to help people. Search engines love content like this but, to give your business the SEO credit it deserves, the docs should be published on your root domain (www.yourcompany.com/help) or on a subdomain (www.help.yourcompany.com). Documentation is such a great asset, it should also be easy to find – place a prominent "Get Help" link on the home page or in the navigation of your site. It will not only assist purchasers or trial users in having successful experiences with your company's solutions, but also inspire confidence in those considering making a purchase.

2. Use keywords, tags, and links strategically

A simple keyword and tag strategy, based on the search queries of solution seekers, should be defined by marketing and implemented throughout the documentation. This helps to set up a unified termbase according to topical relevancy as search engines index the site, and it provides clarity to users as well. The same idea should be applied to the link structure of the documents. Though linking can be a more complex topic, it's worth addressing, as links are another crucial way that search engines determine which articles are relevant to what topics. (For more information on a successful keyword and linking strategy, see the article starting on page 17.)

3. Make tech comm part of the brand experience

This may seem obvious but, surprisingly, it is often overlooked. The documentation is as important a brand touchpoint as other assets, and it should be treated that way. An organization's style guide should be applied to any public-facing documentation, including logos, color palettes, typography standards, and even written tone-of-voice where applicable. When documentation proves truly useful and leaves a reader satisfied, presenting it within a unified brand experience can increase trust and foster loyalty.

4. Give your docs interactivity

Modern consumers expect their online experiences to be interactive. Make sure your documentation doesn't deny readers the valuable opportunity to communicate with your company. Place a comment section, feedback rating or "Was this page helpful?" widget, and add share buttons to your documentation articles. Many of the tools to implement this functionality are inexpensive or free, and they're easier than ever to implement.

This will not only help your customers and customers-to-be to have a more fulfilling experience, but it will also provide valuable insights for tech comm and content marketing teams as to what content is most valuable and which things are lacking or could be improved upon. You can even go one step farther by hosting communities via email groups or forums to allow your users to help one another.

5. Leverage documentation as a content foundation

There are many ways your existing technical content can enable and inform the work of the content marketing side of your organization. By performing regular reviews of documentation articles and highlighting those with strong usage statistics, marketers can glean a wealth of material to form the basis of best practice and tutorial content such as blog posts, videos, webinars, and whitepapers.

Documentation articles can even be used to inspire success stories. The idea is to take relevant articles that are frequently read, and ask outside partners to tell the story of how they followed these processes through to successful completion. Bear in mind, though, that every time marketing teams take content inspiration from documentation, they must remember to include the "why" benefit argument. This will make the content more relevant to those who are searching for solutions to their problems, but who are not yet customers.

Go deep: three ways to build bigger, stronger bridges

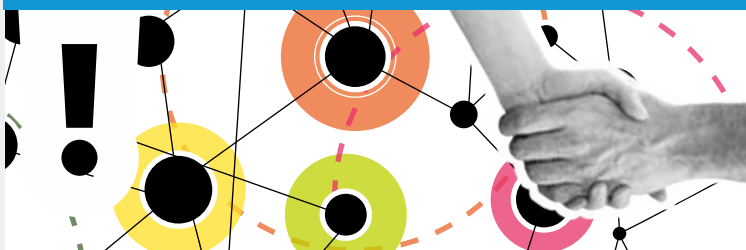
In my company, we're on a journey to make the relationship between technical writers and content marketers truly collaborative. This sort of change not only requires tactical modifications but also major changes to the organizational approach and mindset. Some initiatives are not yet complete, while others have already proven to be of great value. Here is how our teams are going deeper and building bigger, stronger bridges between tech comm and content marketing.

1. Realize that documents are a business asset

The unfortunate truth is that some businesses treat documentation of their products or services as an afterthought. The outdated mindset is that once a sale has been made, supporting the experience afterwards will only have diminishing returns. And while tech writers have never followed this line of thinking, content marketers can help add new arguments for the business value of great documentation.

The SEO factor alone is very important, where docs can help potential customers who are searching for solutions to more easily find the company's offerings. Above all, high-quality documentation increases brand confidence and helps solution seekers achieve success with products they're able to try out before purchasing. And then there is the more widely accepted value of the post-sale documentation. With the pervasiveness of forums and review sites, customer loyalty and first-hand recommendations are more important than ever to the growth of a product or service. The influence of great documentation cannot be stressed enough here.

Finally, there is the long list of aforementioned advantages to be reaped when documentation is leveraged collaboratively. This must be seen in the light of the fact that nearly all marketing teams today do content marketing. On average, B2B marketers allocated 28 percent of their total marketing budget to content marketing in 2015. In 2016, 47 percent of B2B buyers viewed three to five pieces of content before engaging with sales. If content marketing is important to an organization, and if documentation is important to content marketers, then the business should recognize the role of tech comm in helping achieve its marketing and sales goals. Organizational stakeholders must be on board with this idea in order for the tech comm/marketing partnership to be successful.



2. Share the big picture

Marketing departments understand the high-level business objectives of their organization and derive their marketing goals from these. However, these goals are not always shared with technical writers. Problems arise when the two departments have to work cooperatively, yet do not have a common understanding of where the organization is headed. Marketing and technical communication teams must come together with other stakeholders of the company and come to a shared view of the business objectives, the strategy that will be used to get there, and what tactical roles each team must play to succeed.

Following the alignment of business goals, the next step we took in my company was achieving a shared understanding of the buyer's journey. This was extremely helpful. We gathered the marketing team, technical writing team, and the CEO together for a "funnel summit" where we looked at the path a buyer takes from awareness of the problem all the way through to being a repeat, evangelist customer. We determined what type of content was most helpful at what stage, analyzed what we already had in place and which gaps remained, and developed a plan to fill them and improve our existing materials. Content marketers and technical communicators both have important roles to play at multiple stages in any buyer's journey, and the best way to achieve this is an open and effective collaboration.

3. Move forward with mutual support

Once the marketing and tech comm teams have the groundwork in place to understand their roles in supporting one another and advancing the goals of the business, they should keep the relationship close as they move forward. Stakeholders from each department should meet regularly to be sure they're in alignment regarding relevant decision-making, keep tabs on project collaboration and workflow progress, and find solutions to potential blocks.

These stakeholders should also communicate regularly with leads from other departments such as sales, customer service and support in order to receive feedback about the quality and effectiveness of the documentation and marketing content produced. The tight relationship has been transformational for the teams I work with and, after following this road, neither the marketing nor the technical writing team can imagine it any other way.

A common goal and shared success

When two teams in an organization aim to provide high-quality, problem-solving content to information consumers, it's only natural that they should join forces and bring their unique talents to support each other. By taking steps to bridge the gap between technical writers and content marketers, through tactical changes, shared understanding, and a collaborative approach, your organization can increase the effectiveness of each team along with delivering a better experience for customers and customers-to-be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Davin Pukulis is Director of Marketing for K15t Software GmbH. After a decade spent leading marketing teams in the cycling industry, he's now with the collaborative documentation toolmaker, bringing his team together with in-house SMEs and tech writers to power a nimble content-forward marketing program.

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The secret life of taxonomies: Web findability beyond browsing and facets

A taxonomy is essential infrastructure. Its visible forms such as menus and facets are only one application. It can also provide the crucial plumbing and wiring – the metadata and logic to guide your customers from Google to your site and finally, to the actual content they need.

Text by Joe Pairman

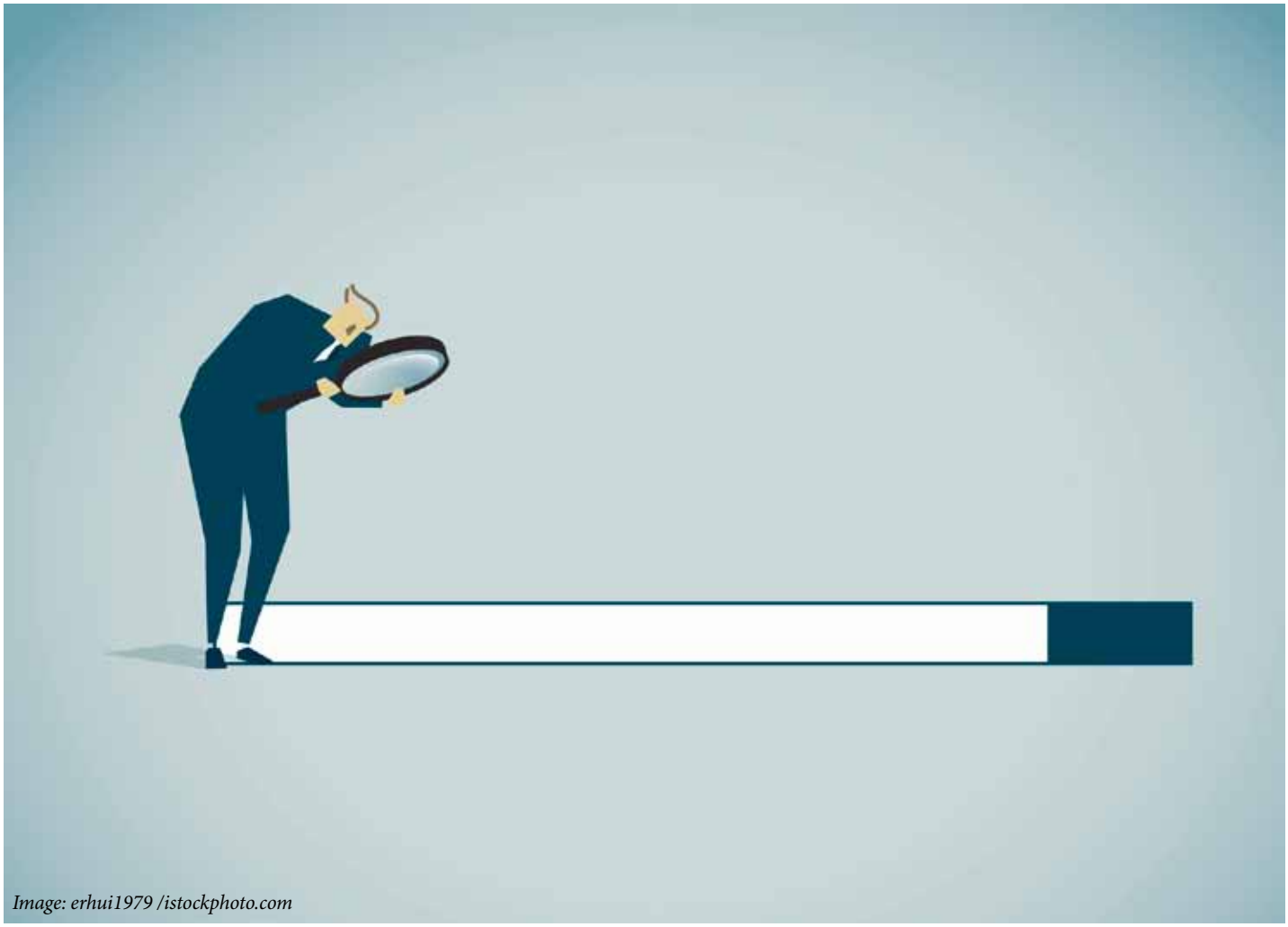

Image: erhui1979 /istockphoto.com

It has to be said that most people have never heard of taxonomy. Others associate it exclusively with plants and animals. In tech comm, however, taxonomies relate to the classification of things in general – not just in biology, but for information of any kind. Most visible in the digital world are the tree-like structured taxonomies that we see in website menus.

When trying to tidy up the implicit taxonomies in your current tools and content – the directory structures and tables of contents – you might uncover ambiguities and conflicts in the ways you or your colleagues categorize and name things. In fact, if the classification tree is all you know of taxonomy for information delivery, you may well become disillusioned with its dogmatism and exclusivity, where each thing belongs in one container only.

As information delivery catches up with e-commerce, we are starting to realize the exciting potential of faceted browsing, where customers filter content based on the criteria they themselves deem most important – the products it relates to, the tasks it enables, the date it was written. Without learning our taxonomy, they can quickly combine criteria to find the exact piece of content they need.

However, faceted search relies on customers finding their way to your site. The big search engines – Google, Bing, Baidu, and Yandex – are now everyone's home page, everyone's top-level navigation. Few people will start their hunt for information on your site, unless you operate in a highly specialized sector. If you are documenting a nuclear power station or a particular medical device, search engines may not concern you much. But most customers of consumer equipment will start their search on the open Web, and if you don't put your information there, they will take it from other users or even your competitors.

Of course, websites still need top-level navigation, just as offices still need phones and photocopiers. But if trees and facets are all you see of taxonomy, you may relegate it to a position of mere infrastructure – necessary but not really a strategic asset to nurture and grow. Out of sight, however, below the floorboards, taxonomies provide some essential plumbing to help your content show up in search results and to make those results more appealing. They also link your content to related pieces of information, not only on your site but also in the overgrown but prolific garden of the Web.

Synonyms: Driving traffic to your site

An American colleague of mine once reminded me that our respective home countries were "divided by a common language". In London, I take the lift, walk into my flat, and turn on the tap, whereas Americans ride the elevator to their apartments, which have faucets.

Image 1: Faceted search on Cray's portal, built on the DITAweb delivery platform
Source: www.cray.com

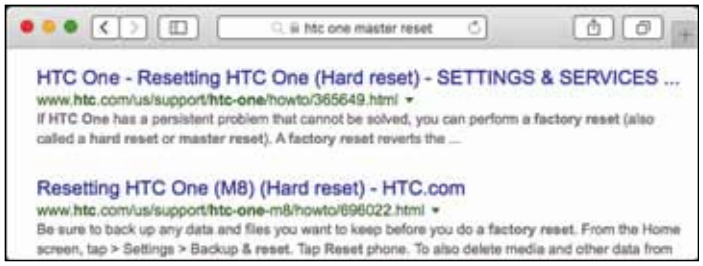

Image 2: Effective use of synonyms displayed on a Google search results page
Source: Google.com

Organizations adopt their own vocabularies in a similar way and, sometimes, even teams on different floors will coin their own micro-dialects. Without specific guidance on terminology, when writing for end users, we tend to use the words we feel most comfortable with – words that are clear to us, but may be completely vague to the uninitiated. If you are not using the words that your customers would use to search, it is unlikely that they will find your content.

It has to be said that Google is getting better at understanding synonyms and showing results for common search terms even when those terms do not appear in the listed pages. However, this does not apply to specialized domains, for which there is less content available and hence less for Google's algorithms to work on. Even when Google does successfully show results for synonyms, it does not highlight those synonyms in the search snippet. When searchers don't see the term they've used and are familiar with, they are less likely to follow that result.

Here is Google's own SEO advice:

> *Users who know a lot about the topic might use different keywords in their search queries than someone who is new to the topic… Anticipating these differences in search behavior and accounting for them while writing your content (using a good mix of keyword phrases) could produce positive results.*

Methods to manage synonyms and find new ones

By using taxonomy with a thesaurus structure you can organize and keep track of synonyms. Like a traditional, book-based thesaurus, it groups phrases with identical meanings. However, as we will see later, it provides richer relationships. Taxonomy management tools allow access to and exports in various formats, so they can act as a useful reference for authors who need to look up synonyms when writing.

A thesaurus needs to be populated with synonyms that customers actually recognize and use. Various forms of taxonomy research can help with this task: One popular example is the card sort. An open card sort exercise prompts participants to group sample content into categories that they create. These user-generated categories are an excellent source of new synonyms, although they should be corroborated with wider evidence wherever possible.

For a broader validation of these new terms, and to get ideas for others, you can perform a corpus analysis, i.e. the statistical analysis of a body of text. To do this, you need to collect a large number of documents and pages from your own site (or docu-

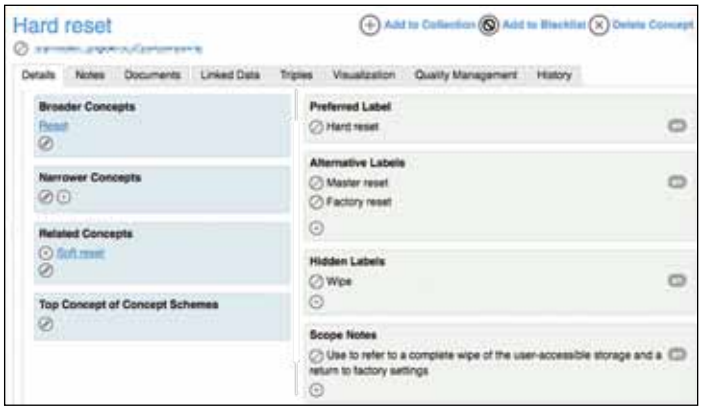

Image 3: Concept within a thesaurus structure, in the PoolParty taxonomy management tool

ments), from user postings, and even from competitors. Corpus analysis techniques show you which are the most frequent terms across that body of documents, and which words tend to go together to form particularly relevant phrases. For example, an analysis of a large amount of tech comm content showed me that "metadata" and "DITA" are salient terms, and "business case around single sourcing" is also recognized as a term by the algorithm. Comprehensive taxonomy management tools provide easier ways to perform corpus analyses, and allow you to match up this data with your own taxonomies. This helps to get new potential synonyms for the terms you already use, and you can even see which of your terms are not frequently used in the wild. This might be a sign that your terminology is not in sync with that of your actual customers. However, it could also indicate that the subjects you deem important are not well represented in the currently available information. You will have to do further research to determine whether this is because content is missing regarding these subjects, or because these topics are not relevant and you shouldn't bother writing about them!

Keeping users on your site

So, taxonomies can help you maintain a richer, more relevant variety of terms in your content and thus increase the chance that the content will rank well for searches in your domain. You might say that this is all you really need to worry about in terms of findability. If your content is good and uses relevant terms, the big search engines will help users find it, and all is well.

But what if your users land on your relevant-looking page with its high-quality content, but it is just not quite what they are looking for? A single page or topic can only cover so much information. It may be that users need to fine-tune their search to find related content within your site. This is where your own site's search feature becomes useful.

These days, few users start their search on your site. But many still use your search to take them the last step of the way to the information they need. And once again, taxonomy can help. The same synonyms you made available to your authors can be integrated with your site search to display content, even when authors did not include these synonyms in the content itself.

In fact, thesauri can contain a special kind of synonym – a hidden term – that should never be displayed directly to users but nonetheless should be recognized when they search. For customers who have recently switched to your product from a competitor, you might want to let them find information using the competitor's terms for the features of this product, to ease the transition. Or, if you can set a standard for terminology, you might want to allow non-standard terms in searches without encouraging their use by featuring them directly in your content. In the example above, the concept of a hard reset has a hidden label "wipe", which may be a usage that the organization does not want to promote.

Automatic link suggestion

To cover the last part of the journey from Google to useful information, present links that users may need to get them from a page that's merely in the vicinity of the searched-for subject to one that fits exactly. Users are accustomed to seeing these links under headings such as "Related Content", often in a sidebar next to the main page content. If we only have a few topics or pages, we can probably create those links by hand, and update them as necessary when the destination pages have been changed or removed. As our content

increases, however, this becomes less manageable.

It is possible to completely automate the process not only of creating these links but also of driving the logic behind them. If you have a very large quantity of content, natural language-processing techniques such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation can identify the subject matter of each document or page in relation to the whole, enabling automatic link generation between pages on the same subject. For example, on a site offering information on financial services, pages about insurance might be linked together, even if some of them did not even feature the word "insurance" but rather "protection". However, apart from the need for a very large quantity of content to get high-quality results, these techniques do not offer the ability to tailor the links to specific user needs.

Metadata powered by taxonomy strikes the perfect balance between manual and automated linking. By carefully defining the required metadata fields for each page or topic as well as the sections of your taxonomy that are used for each of these fields, you can control the pool of links that will be automatically generated. You can also prioritize links based on the role the linked resources play, not just the general subject matter they cover, for example by highlighting the link to a conceptual overview that introduces the current page's subject matter.

Let's say that you are designing the support content for a range of task and project management tools. In your metadata framework, you mandate that each page is tagged according to the general goal or task it enables as well as the products it relates to. In addition, you have a field for the page's general role within the support content as a whole – scenario, troubleshooting, overview, or lookup table. Using the first two fields, you establish the pool of related links for a given page – links to all the pages relating to the same task that apply to the same product. Within that field, if there is a page with a role of "Scenario", the link to that is placed at the top, to allow users to easily jump to a realistic example, putting the more specific instructions on other pages into context. (Authoring guidelines and editorial process ensure that there is at least one scenario for each general task area.)

In the example shown in Image 4, a number of example page titles are shown in black. Some pages have a Task domain metadata value of "Working with contacts", picked from the options in the Task section of the taxonomy. Some have a Product value of "Task Buster Pro". And some have the "Scenario" role, as those pages walk the user through a prepared example. As a result of this metadata tagging, the three bolded titles would be the pool of related links – each page of those three would present suggested links to the other two. On the two non-scenario pages, the link to "Scenario: A project with contacts from multiple sources" would be presented at the top.

This may seem technically daunting, but relies in fact on the same techniques used in faceted browsing, i.e. taking the intersection of various metadata fields to arrive at a pool of results. The only difference is in the presentation.

The links created in this way are far more useful and focused than those created automatically, without any guidance from taxonomy. Yet, they are much easier to maintain than those directly created by authors. If you delete or replace the page on "Assigning a task to multiple contacts", any links pointing to it are updated. Should you add more content that relates to working with contacts in the Task Buster Pro product, new links to that content will be added from the relevant pages.

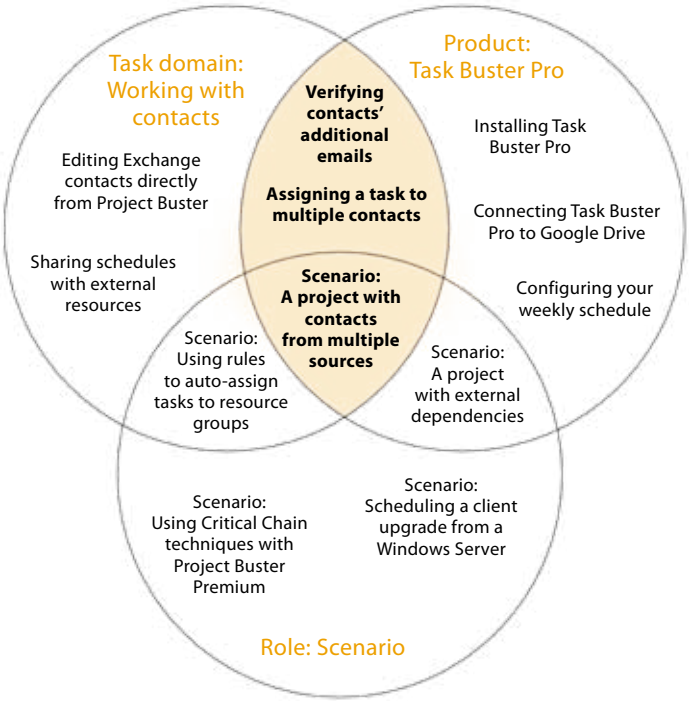

Image 4: How relevant metadata values can provide a prioritized list of suggested links

Conclusion

Taxonomies not only support the obvious navigation elements of a site, but also provide an underlying logic to automatically suggest related links. They enable you to maintain a rich variety of real user language in your content that users can easily identify and recognize in search results. The variety of terms is crucial in order to receive top rankings in relevant searches. Far from becoming irrelevant, taxonomy is more important to findability than ever.

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Linked Data and Schema.org

Crossing the language chasm with terminological assets

Since 2011, the Schema.org initiative has set a standard for structured information. The technical communication community can already benefit and deliver valuable input for further progress.

Text by Christian Lieske and Felix Sasaki

The results pages returned by search engines often contain more than just links to websites presumably relevant to your search. They also reveal various types of information such as reviews, and sometimes even a visual preview of related content on websites (see Figure 1).

The trick behind this is a concept called "Linked Data" as well as the so-called "Schema.org", an endeavor driven by Google and other major players on the Web [1].

This article explores the state of affairs of Linked Data with regard to technical documentation in general, and terminology in particular. The idea is to answer the question "Which role can terminological assets play in today's Web – especially concerning the search context?"

Let's start with the following scenario (see Figure 2): A Chinese technician familiar with Chinese terminology in his field of expertise is searching the Web for a product related to "图形提供商" (Easy Graphics Framework). A vendor offers this product in his portfolio but only provides corresponding information in English and German. Because the Web content is not available in Chinese, the technician remains unaware of the offer, and the vendor thus loses a potential sales opportunity.

So-called "tailor-made cross-lingual snippets" are an important ingredient in crossing the language chasm in the Web. These blocks of content are derived from a dedicated, curated bilingual company-owned asset such as a terminology database (see Figure 3). They are sensitive to the domain-specific language and are therefore far more accurate than the bilingual texts generated by generic machine translation solutions.

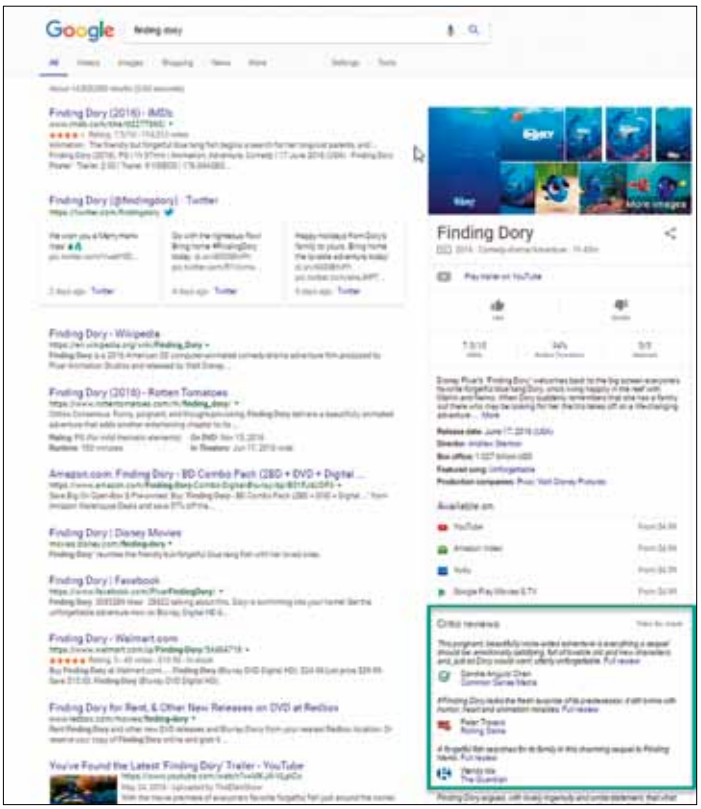

Figure 1: Search engine results page

Today's web search

A web search involves far more than a search engine and a keyword being entered into a search box by a user. Rather, it relies on the infrastructure on which any distributed

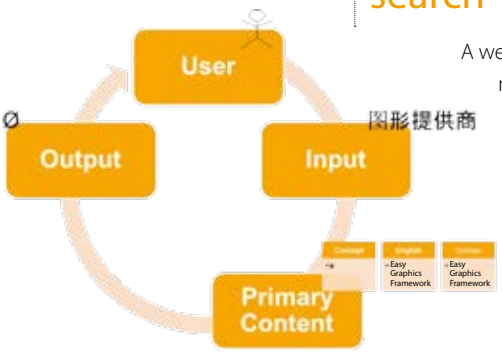

Figure 2: Original search scenario

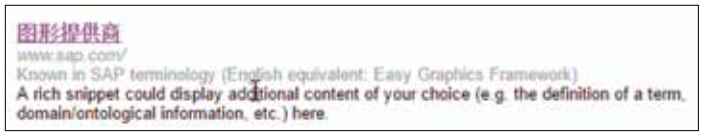

Figure 3: "Tailor-made cross-lingual snippet"

application on the Web is based (see Figure 4): a client (e.g. a Web browser), a network, and a server. Behind the scenes, this infrastructure makes use of a set of technologies such as the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), which are sometimes collectively referred to as the Open Web Platform [2].
In a similar vein, the complexity of a search engine results page (SERP) is not visible. SERPs have evolved from simple lists of links into rich, interactive assemblies of content blocks called "snippets" or "cards" (see [3] and [4]). In many cases, these content blocks are organized in different categories such as organic or sponsored results, rich snippets, informational boxes, or knowledge graph cards (see Figure 5). As referred to in the introduction, an approach named "Linked Data" supports most of this. Linked Data can also be described as a kind of "universal application programming interface (API)" that dramatically facilitates information handling on the Web.
But not only search engines make use of Linked Data. Many websites are also distributed applications: Their content is not written by the website owner but rather aggregated dynamically from a variety of sources. And this aggregation makes ample use of Linked Data. The music landing page of the British Broadcasting Corporation, for example, uses Linked Data to tap into information sources such as Discogs, Dbpedia, last.fm, and MusicBrainz [5].

Close-up 1: Linked Data

As Linked Data is behind Web searching and websites, it is a major force in today's Web. Its fundamental ideas are:

1. Put interesting data entities (e.g. facts) and the relations between them on the Web and identify each of them via a Globally Unique Identifier (GUID).
2. Use Semantic Web technologies to create mashups of these entities (e.g. attractive websites or powerful search applications).

Quite a number of concepts and technologies related to Linked Data originate from the so-called Semantic Web – the notion of a Web-based network of units with explicit meaning. The Semantic Web tackles semantic issues such as the following: A program called a "screen scraper" looks at the string "Call me on 2016-07-27" but misinterprets "2016-07-27" as a phone number. In contrast, the Semantic Web extracts the correct meaning by using structured information. It thus explicitly encodes "2016-07-27" as a date (see Figure 6).

A pivotal concern regarding the Semantic Web is the explicit representation of information. The basic model behind this representation structures information into a subject, predicate, and object. For example: A product (=subject) has the name (=predicate) Easy Graphics Framework (=object). This model can easily be visualized as a graph (see Figure 7). Here, both entities (= subjects) as well as their characteristics (= predicate) are identified via GUIDs. This basic model relies strongly on the concept of "vocabulary": A vocabulary can be understood as the set of values that can serve as subject, predicate or object. A vocabulary thus describes an area of relations, as it comprises all terms that are relevant to that area. For example: the "friend-of-a-friend vocabulary" (FOAF; see [6]) describes relationships between persons (e.g. "friend", "father", "sister", etc.).

Close-up 2: Vocabularies and semantic annotations

The Linked Open Vocabularies (LOV; see [7]) site maintains an overview of popular Linked Data vocabularies like (but not limited to):

- "Friend-of-a-friend (FOAF)" for persons and their relationships
- "Dublin Core" for general metadata (e.g. titles of works of art)
- "Basic Geo Vocabulary" for geographical information (like latitude and longitude)
- "Schema.org" for popular search areas (e.g. events, products, reviews…)

Schema.org is particularly relevant with regard to Web searches [8] and thus deserves a closer look. In 2011, the world's biggest search engine providers realized that their users could benefit from Linked Data, and that they as key players could assist in lowering the entry barrier to the world of Linked Data. Therefore, they

```
<div itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Product" >
   <div itemprop="name">Easy Graphics Framework </div>
</div>
```

Figure 6: Text with explicitly encoded/structured information

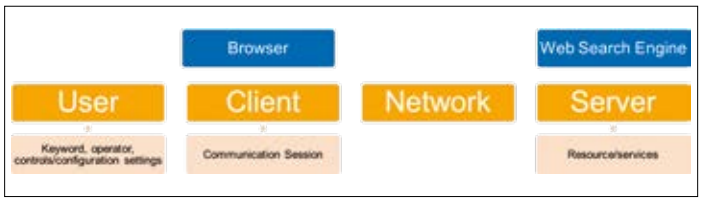

Figure 4: Web-based application

Figure 5: Left: Rich snippet for a recipe; far right: informational box

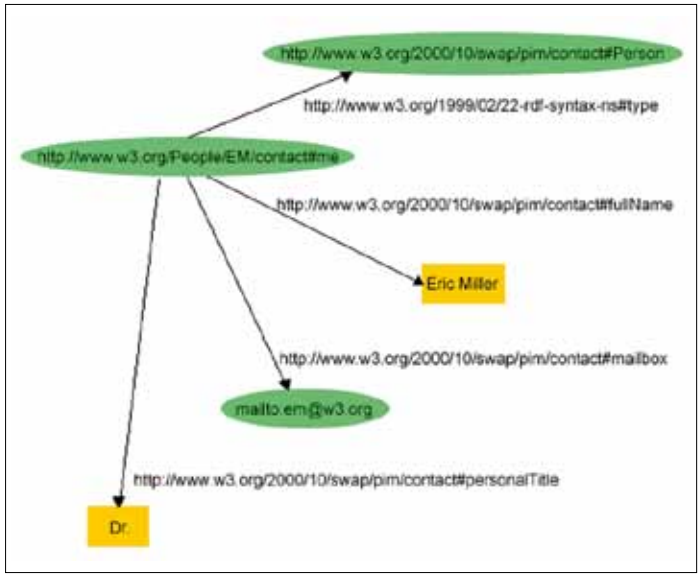

Figure 7: Visualization of Semantic Web

took the core concepts of the Linked Data technology stack and agreed on simple mechanisms (markups and vocabularies) to encode (linked) information in Web pages. The outcome was Schema.org, an effort to bring the idea of linked and structured information to the Web at large.

Early on, these search engine providers understood that Schema.org could only achieve broad adoption if their work was handled and informed by an open community rather than a closed club. Thus, in 2015, a dedicated Community Group was formed within the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to provide an open and transparent forum [9].

The basic ideas behind Schema.org are:

1. Provide a way to identify unique concepts and relations via Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs). For example, the concept of a person is identified via http://schema.org/Person.
2. Provide simple means to embed the aforementioned information into Web content.
3. Use just one vocabulary for Schema.org definitions, and one domain name, viz. http://schema.org, for all vocabulary definitions.

This is a key difference between the Semantic Web and Linked Data: Vocabularies like FOAF or Dublin Core are maintained independently and rely on different domain names. The benefit is flexibility; the disadvantage is uncertainty for the user about how the vocabularies work together, and what to use when.

According to the Schema.org website, today, more than ten million sites use Schema.org markup to encode Linked Data information – without requiring in-depth knowledge of the complex Semantic Web/Linked Data technology stack. The coverage of domains differs according to the type:

- Markup for persons appears on more than one million Web site domains.
- Markup for news articles appears in fewer than 50,000 domains.
- Markup for technical articles appears in fewer than 1000 domains.

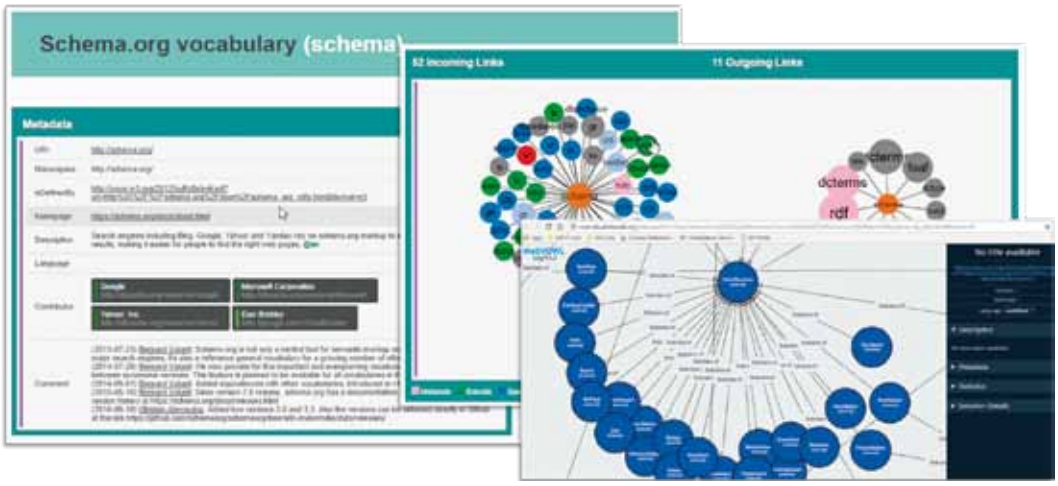

Figure 8: Schema.org as strongly connected vocabulary *Source: low.okfn.org*

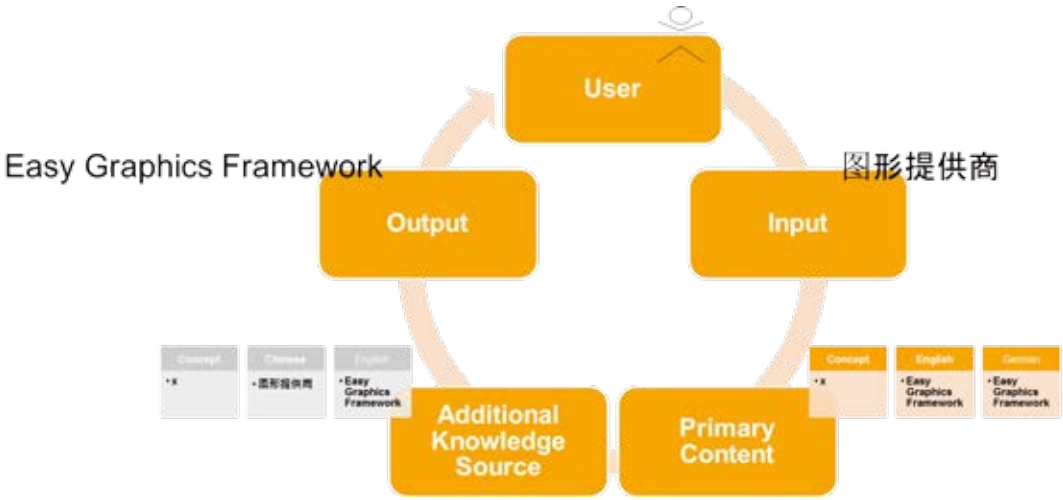

Figure 9: Terminology as additional knowledge source

Crossing the language chasm

So let's go back to the scenario described at the beginning of this article – an unsuccessful search in Chinese and a lost sales opportunity – and find out if the result might be altered by turning to Linked Data and Schema.org (see Figure 9). How could the vendor's terminological knowledge be leveraged? Implementing Linked Data and Schema.org for this scenario involves the following steps:

1. Get terminology out of the terminology database (e.g. as TermBase eXchange (TBX) – a standard for the exchange of terminological data)
2. Map the vocabularies of the terminology database to that of Schema.org (e.g. "Pr" to "http://schema.org/Product")
3. Get the mapped information serialized (e.g. as JSON-LD)
4. Annotate content automatically with your serialized data

Steps 2, 3 and 4 are often combined and basically create a view of terminological data that is of high value in the context of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). First tools are emerging to facilitate these steps [11]. Relying on technology from the FREME project ([12] and [13]), these tools assist with the conversion from TBX to JSON-LD (see Figure 10).

Unfortunately, translations cannot be realized in a straightforward way: Schema.org does not include an "is_translation_of" relation to express that something is a term, let alone a whole term database entry [14]. Schema.org's "sameAs" is not tailored towards cross-lingual links, and its "CreativeWork" is not tailored towards terms but only towards books and movies, etc. Thus, the tailor-made cross-lingual

Input (TBX)	Output (raw)	Output (through the "eyes" of a search engine)
<langSet xml:lang = "DE">... <term>Easy Graphics Framework </term> <langSet xml:lang = "ZH">... <term>图形提供商</term>		

Figure 10: TBX to JSON-LD conversion

snippet as outlined in Figure 3 cannot be easily realized yet. This is likely to change if the Schema.org Community Group receives corresponding requests and input at the W3C. Nevertheless, with a bit of twisting and bending, there is a way to realize these cross-lingual snippets using Schema.org: Schema.org provides a "sameAs" relation and the ability to assign a language identifier to a concept via the "inLanguage" type. Taken together, these two Schema.org constructs can encode the translation relation between "图形提供商" and "Easy Graphics Framework" that is needed in our scenario (see Figure 11).

As TermBase eXchange (TBX) is used widely in terminological contexts, a TBX-to-Schema.org converter (see [15]) can be used to generate Schema.org markups that can facilitate cross-lingual searching (e.g. retrieving English content based on a query in Chinese).

A more comprehensive mapping of TBX to Linked Data can be realized through the OntoLex Linked Data vocabulary [16]. OntoLex has already emerged as an industry standard for publishing terminological information as Linked Data. IATE – the terminology database of the European Union, for example – has already been converted to OntoLex. A general converter from TBX to OntoLex is available [17].

Summary

Based on Semantic Web concepts and technologies, Schema.org enhances the search experience for users, and helps content owners and website administrators to make their content more findable. The approach benefits from standards-based information provisioning – the fact that no specifications are necessary, and no proprietary API is involved. Furthermore, modeling is easy and universal.

However, as of today, Schema.org does not include everything that is needed to realize cross-lingual scenarios easily. As Schema.org is based on feedback, input from the technical documentation and terminology community could help to change this.

```
{ "@id": "http://example.com/my-term-data-base-entry-1",
 "schema:inLanguage": "zh",
 "schema:name": "图形提供商",
 "schema:sameAs": {
 "@id": "http://example.com/my-term-data-base-entry-2",
 "schema:inLanguage": "en",
 "schema:name": "Easy Graphics Framework" } }
```

Figure 11: "Translation relation" in current Schema.org

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[1] http://schema.org
[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Web_Platform
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[5] www.bbc.co.uk/music
[6] www.foaf-project.org
[7] http://lov.okfn.org/dataset/lov
[8] http://lov.okfn.org/dataset/lov/vocabs/schema
[9] www.w3.org/community/schemaorg
[10] http://schema.org/Person
[11] http://fsasaki.github.io/stuff/tekom2016
[12] www.freme-project.eu
[13] https://api.freme-project.eu/doc/current
[14] https://search.google.com/structured-data/testing-tool
[15] https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/public-schemaorg/2016Sep/0025.html
[16] www.w3.org/2016/05/ontolex
[17] http://tbx2rdf.lider-project.eu/converter

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Boosting your international SEO

It's as simple as this: Global customers won't buy what they can't read. And they won't read what they can't find. Here are some tips to make sure your keywords don't get lost in translation.

Text by Rob Vandenberg

There are a lot of reasons to translate your website into multiple languages, but just consider these: Global customers don't visit websites, browse the Internet, or make purchases on sites that aren't in their native language. They aren't searching Google in English either. In fact, a McKinsey & Company report found that more than half of all Google searches are performed in a language other than English.

To make your keywords relevant to a global audience and to improve your customer engagement worldwide, you need tools that will automate and integrate translation and – most importantly – enhance your search engine optimization (SEO).

An international SEO strategy helps you to optimize your website across multiple locations and languages. This enables you to deliver different content to users based on their geographic location – a localization strategy known as

Image: Pesky Monkey/gettyimages.com

geo-targeting. To attract visitors from multiple countries and those who speak many different languages, your website needs to be constructed in a way that makes it easier for international search engines and users to find you. You want them to know that you offer tailored content customized to country, region, and language, and that it's easy to find.

Optimizing keywords for international SEO

The words in your URL and page title tag are the most important tool for increasing your page ranking. That's why it is important that every word – even if hidden in code – is translated. The ability to add these tags doesn't necessarily come out-of-the-box with your CMS, so it's important to choose a CMS that lets you add meta, url, and sitemap tags. These are all things that have to be translated or your international search engines won't work.

To make your web page easier to find, browsers and search engines will index your site. The engines use keywords as clues to figure out what each page is about. These clues are usually coded into your page. This indexing can get lost if your translation process includes cutting and pasting into a Word document that is then sent out for translation.

In addition to the text on the page, the search engine uses content coded into the page. This embedded information includes items like image names, heading tags, etc. If headings are simply bold (rather than using the heading tag), search engines won't pick those words out of the page for indexing. If this heading information is not included in your web page, it could hurt your SEO.

Keywords are specifically used to index your site. If you are paying Google for specific keywords, you want to make sure those words are always translated the same way into another language. That way, the search engine can find them.

Indexable content that is "hidden" in code:

- URLs
- Metadata (descriptions, abstract, keywords, glossary terms)
- Titles and headings (H1, H2, H3)
- Image names
- Image alt text (descriptions)
- XML Sitemap

URLs

To improve your international SEO and search engine rankings, you need multilingual, search-friendly URLs. If you don't have an SEO language switcher with a URL language code option for the languages you are supporting, Google may not realize you have a site in a particular language. Especially for e-commerce or directory sites, you need to preserve URL parameters and make sure that each domain has translatable product tag URLs. When your site contains multiple languages, it's important to make sure that the language switcher points to the correct URL.

Metadata

Metadata at the top of the web page makes it easier to index the page. It includes your description, abstract (a summary of the site), and keywords. The abstract – a summary of the site – should also be indexed. Your metadata should also take into consideration any character limits for the most popular search engines in your target regions and the use of double-byte character languages like Chinese and Arabic.

Titles and headings

Titles and headings capture the main ideas of an entire piece, and are therefore a vital factor in SEO. Be sure all headings are assigned properly. Don't just use bolded text to delineate titles, use the H1, H2 and H3 tags.

Images

If you have text inside charts, tables, or on images, it won't be extracted for translation. Whenever possible, separate text from images in different layers. In websites and web applications, CSS and JavaScript can be used to create an embedded appearance.

XML Sitemap

The best method for attracting search engines like Google to your localized content is the XML sitemap. The sitemap gives visitors an overview of your site and can also display RSS feeds. An XML sitemap helps search engines crawl your site more efficiently so they can automatically submit your site to a number of search engines. If your sitemap is not translated, Google won't recognize important pages. It will then take that into account when determining the relevance of your site for the search.

Automating and integrating translation of keywords

To reach an international target audience, you not only need to translate keywords, but also create relevant content that connects with global visitors. A cloud-based translation management system (TMS) makes it easy to keep up with the need for searchable translation of dynamic global content. Users of a cloud-based TMS can translate, localize, update, and publish global content continuously in real time. As a result, the globalization of content becomes faster and more streamlined. This gives enterprises the ability to easily create and manage different types of content across multiple channels, including social media.

How proxy translation can negatively affect your SEO

Proxy-based translation systems can have a negative impact on your SEO because the proxy may not localize your URLs or your keywords. In the world of translation services, proxy refers to a vendor computer system acting as a proxy for your website URL. When a user wants to see your content in a different language, a translated version is displayed as a separate web page. A proxy page is translating only what's visible, and code isn't visible, so it's difficult for search engines to search back and forth between a website and a proxy. For that, you need to have a federated environment – a security model that allows systems with the same login credentials to talk to one another. It's possible to have that with proxy, but it is difficult and expensive. Content that is responsive and in real time, like error messages, drop-down lists, and other UI and navigational elements, may not get translated with a proxy system. Skipping the translation of this responsive content can lead to a frustrating or negative experience for your global customers. The bottom line is that on-premise or proxy translation systems require extra work: you have to go in, find those keywords, and then get them translated.

Compare that with cloud-based translation management that integrates directly into your existing CMS. When translations are published directly back to your CMS, your international content never has to live on a separate server. This makes it easier for Google and other search engines to find your multilingual content. It fully automates the translation process in real time and taps into the SEO features of your CMS, like metadata and clean URLs. Cloud-based, integrated translation is preferable because it enables centralized, cross-lingual searching. A cloud-based system can translate all of your keywords – no matter where they are –automatically.

Terminology management ensures consistency

A high-performance TMS can automate the efficient use of your linguistic assets. Terminology management allows you to achieve effective and accurate translations by organizing keywords with a clear set of rules for their usage. Terminology management ensures that any keywords you use for search engine optimization remain intact, so your content remains searchable in any language. Enterprises build strong brands with consistent messaging. When companies go global, they need to maintain the integrity of that message. For example, Google Spain is going to be looking for "inicio," not home. These tools will remember to localize "home" and automatically translate it as "inicio." This is important because there are different words in Spanish that also mean "home" such as "casa" or "hogar". But in a web context, "inicio" is most often used to refer to the home page.

Reusing translated keywords is cost-effective and speeds up your translation process. It will also increase messaging and brand consistency so your international users and customers will have a similar customer experience. Translation memories (TM) are important to agile, accurate SEO because they help you leverage every word for faster, more cost-efficient translation. When your translated keywords are stored in a TMS in the cloud, they can be reused and recycled across several different enterprise applications. TM stored in the cloud make localized keywords immediately accessible. Some older, offline translation services require emailing TM databases back and forth between translators or merging separately maintained keyword files after the project has finished.

With a cloud-based TMS, you have better access to your TM. No matter what department is translating – marketing, sales, etc. – they can use the same TM and ensure consistent reuse of translated words across all of your different assets. This TM sharing lets you update keyword translations in real time, which increases global SEO while cutting costs.

More translation means higher rankings

Translating your content and correctly indexing your keywords helps search engines rank your site higher for its relevant, multilingual content. If you have a thousand pages on your English site and those pages are translated into five languages, the search engines recognize your site as having 5,000 pages of content. The more languages you add, the higher your ranking. If they aren't tied together with the proper tags, Google won't see you as important and you won't get credit for your multilingual sites or content.

Make it easier for global buyers to find you

If you want your website to resonate with consumers around the world, you need to have an integrated and well-optimized site that uses the latest cloud-based translation tools. Proper indexing and translation of keywords, even those hidden in code, are crucial. Also important is the technology you are using to manage translation. An agile, cloud-based TMS that can store, manage, and reuse your linguistic assets in real time is another integral tool.

When your content is easily searchable because you have optimized your international SEO, you will better engage a global audience that wants to search, shop, and buy in their own language.

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Eight steps to successful localization

For every product or service launched, thousands of words are written for technical manuals, product guides, marketing documentation, software Help, websites, blogs, articles, health and safety warnings, and more. Taking a few steps to incorporate localization early in the documentation process can save time, resources and money.

Text by Louise Law

Image: © cybrain/istockphoto.com

Many global brands and organizations embark on a globalization journey with the intention of creating value, equity and, ultimately, revenue. Content is developed at many stages along this journey. It may start with protecting intellectual property by registering an innovative patent in multiple locales and continue through to creating user manuals and marketing materials.

In a global organization, everyone is affected by content and localization. Whether your job is in legal services, finance, engineering, technical writing, marketing, sales, customer support, human resources, or product development, you are dealing with content that needs to be written, engineered, and translated to reach multiple audiences.

Translation of technical communication

Specific priorities apply when it comes to translating and localizing technical content. Translated technical documents, or any complex or regulated content, must be as accurate, relevant, and concise as its source. Technical documents are high-impact content requiring both linguistically and culturally accurate translations. Other information, like user-generated content (UGC), has a lower impact: Its translation can reflect the message or concept, but does not necessarily need to stay linguistically faithful to the source.

Here are eight best practices and techniques to ensure the successful localization of technical documents in today's content-rich world:

1. Use consistent style and tone

Localized technical documents not only need to achieve a high level of quality and accuracy, but also maintain a consistent style and tone of voice across multiple languages, content types, file formats, and platforms. Each translation project cannot be dealt with separately, but must be considered strategically as a whole. The style of technical manuals, marketing and training materials, and their terminology must be consistent. This is possible through tools like translation memory (TM) and terminology management. It ensures consistency for global brands at every touchpoint and in every market.

Providing linguists and translators with subject matter expertise further ensures consistency. A consistent team dedicated to localizing company content creates multiple benefits: Teams are familiar with how a product works and the value it delivers. They understand the customer experience and ensure that it is delivered across all locales.

2. Garbage in, garbage out

Poor, nonsensical input will produce undesired output, regardless of the target language or the quality of the translation. If, on the other hand, the source meets required levels of quality and business objectives, then any subsequent translation or transcreation will meet set standards. A common complaint from in-country translation reviewers is that a delivered translation project may be "accurate" but, due to errors and bad copywriting in the source, the localized versions are just not great. The same applies to graphics, engineering diagrams, audio, and video.

Keep content and graphics as culturally neutral as possible to prevent having to make significant, costly, and time-consuming changes at the localization stage. Each culture has a different value system: varying beliefs and interpretations of non-verbal communication. Even in complex technical communication, culture needs to be considered.

3. Help localization teams to get to know the product

Many global organizations send teams of translators to product training sessions so they can truly experience the product or service. As global business evolves, providing in-context information to localization teams is crucial to gain commitment to a brand. In-context information also helps at a granular level: When illustrations or software user interfaces are translated, a linguist can deliver a more accurate translation by getting the whole picture and learning where the content is used. Investing in permanent, well-informed translation teams paves the way for great global technical content.

4. Be open to transcreation

Translation of technical documents requires high quality and accuracy. However, developing content that is linguistically and culturally appropriate may require some transcreation work. This means tweaking the translation while retaining key concepts, messages and facts. Transcreated content and illustrations may not linguistically represent the source 100 percent, but they are better received by the end user, which is the ultimate goal.

5. Prepare graphics well

Technical manuals and documents contain many complex graphics that may require the insertion of translated text. Including original graphics in translated documents is important, but not always possible. Graphics such as flowcharts and diagrams may have been obtained from a variety of sources within an organization or from previous documents. Over time, it is common for the original source files to become untraceable. Graphic files may have been converted into formats that can't be edited, such as JPG or TIFF. This can cause challenges in the localization process.

Providing access to text layers in the original graphic files will increase cost savings and reduce turnaround times. For example, in order to localize a GIF or JPG file, the original Photoshop (.psd) or Adobe Illustrator source file is needed along with overall style guides that were used to create the original graphic: color information, fonts, design specifications and export or save settings. The number of target languages will only multiply the challenges with graphics in the source language.

When possible, also supply a list of all graphics, along with their respective formats and information. Describe which graphics do or do not have text to be translated and where the files are located.

6. Consider text expansion

When you translate from English into another language, the translated text will take up more space. Most languages are longer than English by about 15 percent. Languages such as Russian can be up to 40 percent longer than the English version. Once the text in the graphic is translated, text expansion can cause problems with the original layout of the graphic, see Figure 1.

You can reduce issues by using numbered callouts rather than including copy in the actual diagram, see Figure 2. This allows for text expansion.

7. Consider the use of CAT tools

Graphics are usually localized with the use of computer assisted translation (CAT) tools. There is software available that allows translators and DTP en-

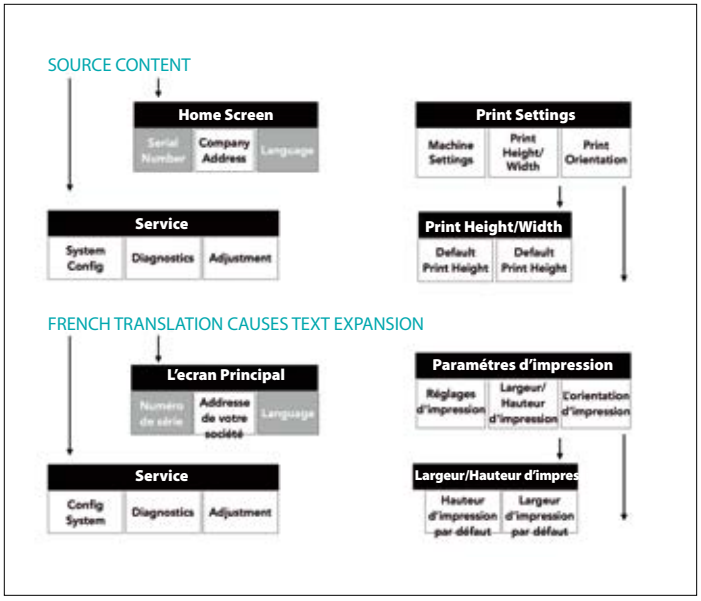

Figure 1: Translations from English into French causes text expansion.

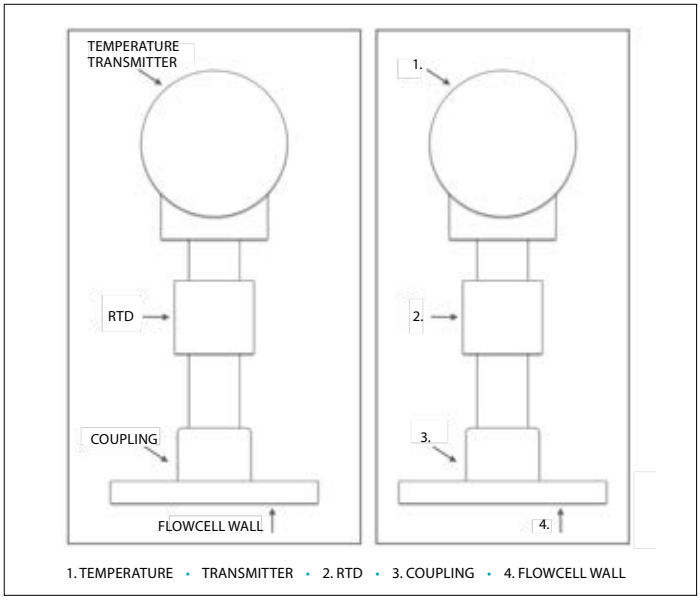

Figure 2: Use numbered callouts in diagrams to allow for text expansion.

gineers to automate the extraction and insertion of text from graphics created in software such as Illustrator or CorelDraw into RTF files.

If text is adjacent to graphic elements, try to position it in a way that leaves some horizontal space for text expansion, ensuring that the text is in a text box and no hard returns are contained within the paragraph. When the TM tools analyze segments, the text is usually segmented at a logical break, such as a hard return. Inserting a hard return into a paragraph – for example so that a long sentence description can fit into a narrow text box – can negate the benefits of using CAT tools or simply mean that file preparation takes longer.

8. Consider multimedia content

As content volumes grow, content types will continue to evolve. Multimedia, especially video, will continue to drive communication. According to YouTube statistics, 3.25 billion hours of video is watched on YouTube each month. Consumers all over the world are spending increased amounts of time viewing multimedia, using a wide variety of devices. Technical information is no exception. Instructional and training videos are frequently used to convey complex data and information. Localizing multimedia involves a wide range of formats: text, graphics, audio, video, digital, presentations, software, animation, voiceovers, captioning and subtitling. Good practices, such as source quality, provision of in-context information, supply of original files and transcreation, all apply to multimedia content as well.

As the volume of multimedia in technical communication increases, so does the use of techniques such as on-screen-text (OST) transcription and synthetic voice translation (text-to-speech, TTS).

For TTS solutions, scripts are loaded into synthetic voice software and turned into phonetic text. Technological advancements make TTS techniques a viable option, opening video as a key communication tool for more organizations and product areas.

Product videos and advertisements often include images and instructional illustrations of a product – shots of the user interface and sample text to highlight product features and functionality. OST is often more cost-effective and quicker than voiceover work. As is the case with most source files, original files aren't always available, and techniques such as OST and transcription can overcome this problem and deliver impactful localized video content.

Conclusion

Technical communication requires high levels of quality and accuracy, both at the source and in translation. With increasing digitalization, evolving content types and consumer habits, there are a number of emerging best practices and techniques that can be applied to the preparation and successful translation of technical content. A strategic approach to localization enables global business growth and ensures products and services are safely distributed around the world, driving revenue and creating value on the globalization journey.

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A strategic approach to reviewing

Are your document review cycles cumbersome and frustrating? Then you are missing their value. An integrated review process can – and should be – a keystone of a smooth quality management operation.

Text by Klaus Fleischmann

Image: © Elena Vagengeim/123rf.com

"Client language reviews – often called in-country or third-party reviews – are notorious for causing delays and frustrations for all parties involved." This is one of the findings of a Common Sense Advisory study on ***Rethinking Client Language Reviews.*** Reviewers "alter the meaning of translations, introduce mistakes, fall into an editing black hole, or sit on review files for months." So, how do we get reviewing out of this dead-end street and onto a finely tuned, strategic and solution-oriented translation highway?

Why review?

Despite all the problems, many still value the review stage as an indispensable step in the translation production process. The reason for this is rather simple: As subject-matter experts – often based in the target country – the reviewers' task is to check if the translation is a good fit for the intended purpose. They are ideally suited for this role, as they know their products, services, brands, and the purpose of the content, not to mention the "lingo" and mindset of their target audiences. After all, this insight is desperately needed and can be decisive for making or breaking the success of a given product or campaign in the target market.

This clearly makes the costs and efforts involved all the more worthwhile, especially if you consider all the money that has already been spent. Before you even reach the review stage, significant sums have been invested in creating the best possible content in the source language, minimizing legal liabilities, translating into all the target languages, adhering to the company's terminology, etc. To forego the review step would increase the risk of wasted expenses. Establishing a review process is thus a matter of content quality – in every language!

Unsplendid isolation

Despite the obvious importance of the reviewers' work, they are often "lone wolves" without guidance, process involvement, or proper tools. Usually, their job description does not even list reviewing, and they are working outside of the "industrialized" translation process. Often, the person who receives the honor of reviewing is the one who least aggressively refuses to do the job. Quite clearly, they are not professional linguists or copywriters and have a different professional background. Yet they are haphazardly asked to "correct" a document, which essentially implies that it is broken to begin with and upon them to rescue the day.

Breaking the vicious cycle

While solving these process and technology issues makes life a lot easier, it does not tackle the heart of the problem:

"[Review…] alone is an imperfect art and can never ensure that an intrinsically bad product will be rendered flawless. Nor indeed should it be seen merely as a form of corrective action. Its real strength and investment value is as a feedback tool that allows its results to be channeled back into the whole cycle of translation production in order to eliminate or reduce problems at source," states Tim Martin, senior staff member of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation.

The industry therefore needs a new approach, which…

- sees the review process as a keystone of an integrated quality management system instead of a last-minute rescue operation;
- gives its participants a new and much more strategic and proactive role; and
- is based on true collaboration between all relevant stakeholders, rather than black-box thinking.

A strategic quality management workflow

For us, quality management starts well before the actual translation and brings together all the stakeholders strategically at an early stage of the process. The entire workflow can be broken down as follows:

1. **Pre-translation efforts:** These include process steps such as terminology work or style guide development, but also the specification of requirements broken down into "content profiles", issue types, quality scores and quality benchmarks.
2. **During translation:** Open collaboration in translator-reviewer teams resolves translation issues and queries as they arise, ideally using special query management portals. This process reveals valuable information about the content and the process, which should be actively spread to all stakeholders.
3. **Post-translation effort:** This is essentially centered on a continuous feedback process to make sure the outcome is in line with the strategic goals and defined expectations. This can be achieved by regularly assessing and tracking the quality of the translation output, or by cleverly calculated text samples, which vary in type and size according to the project's content profile. By assigning clearly defined and objective "issue types" to each reviewer change, a review system can calculate an overall quality score of each document based on the reviewed sample. This data can then be tracked and analyzed in order to identify weaknesses in the process. As a result, the "notoriously frustrating" review experience morphs into a strategic, objective and efficient process that encourages true collaboration and produces business intelligence to measure and improve the entire workflow.

So, what would such a new review and quality management approach look like in "real" life? The most important steps and pitfalls are outlined below.

Getting the basi(c)s right

The more the source text is in line with the defined style guide, the stronger the basis for any downstream work done by translators, project managers, or reviewers. All copywriters and editors should adhere to the style guide and, importantly, the company-wide terminology. Which brings us to another core requirement: It is necessary to use software that enables all stakeholders to work together and to contribute to the success and quality of the project. This should go without saying in the days of "wikinomics", creative commons, and "sharecon-omy", but cooperation still does not enjoy the status it deserves.

Guidelines and terminology

As an example, let's have a look at what cooperative terminology work could, and should, look like. It is crucial that all stakeholders – editors, developers, product managers, marketing teams, partners, translators, and clients – have quick and easy access to terminology for research, for checking texts, for requesting new terminology or terminology changes, or simply for providing feedback. It is important to ensure your software provides collaborative terminol-

Figure 1: Turning review into a quality management process delivers valuable business intelligence over time.

ogy life cycle management, allowing you to manage globally dispersed approval processes across multiple decision levels and languages. Furthermore, it is vital to systematically organize this terminology workflow – request, agree, research, approve, translate, change etc. – and to be in full control in terms of a complete version and change record of the termbase. For a terminology process to be successful, it needs to motivate and encourage users to use and engage with it. This can be achieved through social media-like features such as live chat, term quizzes, "liking", recommending entries or just being part of the community. And last but not least, sound key performance indicators to clearly measure and demonstrate the success of the terminology work, are critical.

Once defined, you will need software that allows you to easily check the texts you are producing for adherence to this terminological base. A widely accepted and validated terminological base will help you throughout the entire process and help you save time – and therefore costs – by reducing ambiguities, queries, and mistakes.

Turn queries into know-how

During the translation phase, translators – by far the most perfectionist usability testers for any kind of text – scrutinize the source text. With their queries, they point out defective and ambivalent spots in texts. Yet these queries are often considered a nuisance and left unattended, rather than harnessing them to unleash their powerful impact on the entire content creation process. After all, the less ambiguous the text, the fewer questions a translator has to ask, the faster the translation can be completed and the more useful it is for the end user in every language – including the source language.

The importance of the data collected from queries is not just common sense, but has been proven in a master thesis at the University of Vienna, which reviewed and categorized large amounts of query data. The majority of all queries – about 80 percent – were of a terminological nature. This proves the importance of a solid terminological basis and the need for a link to the terminology management solution, so that resolved queries can be automatically reused in the termbase. The rest of the queries were about the process itself, e.g., issues with translator guidelines, conflicting information in references, terminology and style guides, or with the source text. Regardless of the type of query, it is vital that every stakeholder in this process step – translators, project managers, clients, and subject matter experts – collaborates openly and freely.

These teams resolve translation issues and queries as they arise. The enabler could be a role-based online portal that has a fully customizable and collaborative workflow. While translators can ask and track queries directly within their translation tool, other stakeholders can answer, delegate, comment on, track or search queries in their web browser, or even on their tablet or smartphone.

Past queries are searched immediately when a new query is raised, preventing the same question from being asked twice. Queries that are relevant in more than one language can be communicated automatically to all team members. As mentioned above, terminologically significant queries must be efficiently captured for reuse through links with the terminology management software. At the end of this process step, any feedback from translators on the source text should be made available to the authors so they can benefit from these specific linguistic insights.

Rethink and reposition the review

After you have put so much time and effort into the steps before and during translation, the previously cumbersome review process can be turned into a more strategic "monitoring" process by having your reviewers assess samples and provide constructive and objective feedback. This allows you to monitor your "service level" of translation, pinpoint weaknesses or "erratic" process outcomes, and thus turn the "last-minute emergency tasks" into a smooth quality-management operation.

To achieve this, it is important to define customized content profiles with different issue types and quality scores. As Alan K. Melby, linguist and translation scientist at Brigham Young University, once put it: "A quality translation demonstrates accuracy and fluency required for the audience and purpose and complies with all other specifications negotiated between the requester and provider, taking into account both requester goals and end-user needs."

These specifications and requirements must be established interactively between clients, LSPs and potentially even end users, and turned into clear content profiles with defined issue typologies and quality benchmarks. Only with this objective classification are reviewers able to assess every type of change they make in the document. These issue types can be quite

complex, as in MQM or DQF, or simplistic, as in "meaning-terminology-grammar-style". This largely depends on the "professionalism" of the reviewers. Each content profile is linked to a different set of weighted issue types. Once a reviewer has assessed a sample or an entire document, the review system will calculate the quality score.

This quality score is then tracked over time, providing a meaningful and strategic dashboard for the project manager to know where proactive actions are required. In addition, it provides a great way to demonstrate quality service levels to clients or reviewers.

Another important aspect is the collaborative aspect of the new review approach. Reviewers, translators, graphic designers (if needed), etc., should work together seamlessly, if possible on the same platform, to ensure a smooth and efficient workflow. This includes ensuring that the translators do not have to manually insert into the translation the changes made by the reviewer, but can simply approve, reject, or expand upon the changes introduced during review. Also, it automatically makes sure translators actually receive the feedback they need to improve or "direct" their work to the liking of the reviewers. If there is a project manager involved, he stays on top of all the changes and who made them. All the approved changes will be included in the translation memory and will be useful in the next translation project. Detailed change logs, including a quality matrix, can be downloaded from the system.

Conclusion

A new review approach breaks down the barriers between the individual stakeholders of the process and boosts the quality of both the source and the translated text. This is achieved through four principles:

- Collaboration: It is vital to the new approach that all stakeholders work together collaboratively, continuously, constructively, and objectively to jointly achieve the agreed outcome.
- Preparation: Global content generation starts with defined content profiles, the right style guide and a solid terminology basis.
- Usability in every process step: Taking into account that some stakeholders are non-professionals, everyone should be able to easily access essential data, such as terminology or quality profiles, and be empowered to do their job without the need for any complex software.
- Management: All the data gathered from issue typology, quality scoring, etc., provide massive business intelligence. The findings are a sound and objective basis for further business decisions, managing language teams and fine-tuning the process.

In a nutshell: Let's shift the paradigm away from last-minute fixes by unguided stakeholders. Let's focus on objectivity, collaboration and achieving the expected results by working together!

Further reading:

Rethinking Client Language Reviews,
www.commonsenseadvisory.com/AbstractView/tabid/74/ArticleID/24739/Title/RethinkingClientLanguageReviews/Default.aspx

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International standard supports acquirers and suppliers of user information

International Standard ISO/IEC/IEEE 26512 assists acquirers and suppliers of user information. Originally published in 2011, the changes in its latest version are indicative of the paradigm shift that has shaped the industry during the past years.

Text by Daryl Colquhoun


Image: © _marqs/istockphoto.com

"ISO/IEC/IEEE 26512 Systems and software engineering — Requirements for acquirers and suppliers of information for users" was first published in 2011 in response to requests from users. It did not replace any other standard. ISO/IEC/IEEE 26512 is currently undergoing revisions and the new version is expected in mid-2017. These revisions include fairly minor improvements to the structure and additions to the bibliography. One change, however, deserves special notice: Instead of "documentation", the norm will now use the term "information for users".

In many parts of the world, the term "documentation" is associated with printed manuals only. It refers to a time when hard copy user manuals were the one and only form of user information. These days, however, user information comes in manifold formats and styles, including online Help, audio and video files or even Augmented Reality tutorials. The neutral term "information for users" refers to all types of content.

Part of a set of standards

Standard 26512 is part of a suite of standards relating to information for users of systems and software. Other standards in the suite relate to:

- Content of life-cycle information items (documentation) (ISO/IEC/IEEE 15289)
- Managers of user documentation (ISO/IEC/IEEE 26511)
- Testers and reviewers of user documentation (ISO/IEC/IEEE 26513

- Designers and developers of user documentation (ISO/IEC/IEEE 26514)
- Developing user documentation in an agile environment (ISO/IEC/IEEE 26515)
- Engineering and management of websites for systems, software, and services information (ISO/IEC/IEEE 23026)
- Content management for product life-cycle, user, and service management documentation (ISO/IEC/IEEE 26531)

All of these standards are published in English only.

The scope of 26512

Standard 26512 and the others in the series are intended to help software users to obtain consistent, complete, accurate, and usable information about the product. It supports the view that the acquisition and supply of user information are an important part of the software life cycle.

It is very broad in its application and does not only apply to traditional "user manuals" such as printed books delivered with software, or PDFs intended for printing. It explicitly states that it applies to all forms of information for users, including, for example:

- Multimedia systems using animation, video, and sound
- Computer-based training packages
- Information for users incorporated into the user interface
- Collaboratively generated information for users (wikis)

In addition, the standard can also be used when creating information for users for products other than software. This is due to the fact that most modern technical products – from motor vehicles down to entertainment and household appliances – now contain software.

What is specified?

Neither standard 26512, nor any other in the series, provides specific recommendations regarding the documentation itself. For example, it does not specify the paper size, nor that paper must be used at all. It also does not require information to be structured using chapters, topics, screens, etc., and it leaves the terminology up to the creators of the information.

ACQUIRER PROCESSES	SUPPLIER PROCESSES
Purpose of the acquisition process	Purpose of the supply process
Outcomes of the acquisition process	Outcomes of the supply process
Information for user acquisition activities and tasks	Information for user supply activities and tasks
Acquisition preparation	Opportunity identification and evaluation
…	Proposal preparation
Supplier selection	…
Negotiating and agreeing on the contract	Negotiating and agreeing on the contract
Contract management and monitoring	Contract performance
…	Delivery
Acquirer acceptance	…
Acquisition closure	…

Table 1: Components of the user information processes *Source: Daryl Colquhoun*

The standard does, however, describe the appropriate process when acquiring and supplying information for users. As it applies to the acquisition and the supply of user information, the standard relates to two processes occurring simultaneously: the acquisition process and the supply process. These are almost, but not quite, parallel processes.

Table 1 outlines the components of these processes. This table is the core of the standard, and each entry contains a reference to the clause within the standard that discusses the respective requirements.

Target audience of the standard

International Standard 26512 is aimed at acquirers and suppliers of information for users who wish to refer to and comply with an accepted and comprehensively described approach.

While this will often be the case where there are separate acquirer and supplier companies, it can be used within an organization too, where the acquirer and supplier are different parts of the organization.

Within the companies that both acquire and supply user information, there is a broad range of people who can use or consult the standard:

- Business analysts who identify the tasks that intended users will perform
- Managers responsible for software development or the creation of its user instructions
- Managers who authorize and approve acquisitions or who prepare proposals
- Information designers, authors and editors
- Graphic designers
- User interface designers, user experience experts and usability testers

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daryl Colquhoun
has had careers as an academic and in IT, before turning to technical writing. As a technical writer, he looks back on a varied career writing about software and hardware, with a lot of exposure to matters of security. He is a member of the Australian Society for Technical Communication and was a long-serving member of its executive committee before becoming its delegate to the ISO/IEC working group on documentation standards.

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Technical writing in Korea and Japan

A strong focus on the user

Text by Yangsook Kim

For ten years, I have been attending the JTCA symposium, a leading conference for technical communication in East Asia held in Japan. Over the years I have learned that many managers of technical communication departments of Korean and Japanese organizations share a common concern: How to find qualified technical writers.

This concern has taken me on a quest to find out what knowledge and qualifications a technical writer needs, what kind of training we need to provide and how we can help staff to develop into qualified technical writers. As the CEO of a tech comm company, I also wanted to find out how we can recognize suitable candidates for technical writing jobs and help them to enhance their skills.

Image: © ferrantraite /istockphoto.com

To find answers, I looked abroad into markets where the tech comm community has been well established for decades. I read books and magazines published in the US and even attended US seminars. I quickly discovered, however, that the key focus of Japanese and Korean technical writers was completely different from that of American technical writers. American tech writers cover a huge product range from industrial machines, IT products, medical appliances, software solutions, heavy equipment, and specialized devices. Professional background knowledge is indispensable for understanding the technology of the product they describe, thus great focus is placed on providing the proper product training to tech writers.

Korean and Japanese tech writers, on the other hand, are mainly concerned with consumer products. The main focus for technical writers here is to enhance their knowledge and qualifications for creating consumer product manuals. The specialization of Japanese and Korean tech writers lies within their technical writing skills. These must meet the needs of consumers from around the world, as home appliances, cars, computer games, and IT products manufactured in Korea and Japan attract global users and sell well in the global market. Product manuals for consumer goods should be developed consistently by a few technical writers that plan, arrange, write and design content and analyze user behavior.

The skill set

So what skills are required for technical writers to develop such manuals? Based on 30 years of experience in the industry, I have concluded that many of the skills required for a technical writer to develop consumer product manuals are character traits rather than learned skills: Personal curiosity, understanding, creativity, consideration of consumers, and a certain tech affinity are all difficult to replace by automation.

Here is a list of skills – in order of importance – that I believe are essential for technical writers in Japan and Korea:

1. Insight into the target user of the product

Based on my experience, the most important characteristic for a tech writer is insight into the target user. The evolution of technology, constant product changes, and new trends affect consumer

taste and selection. With technological advances, not only the content has to be adapted, but tech writers also need to consider the output format for product information. The young generation is more accustomed to YouTube than newspapers, so tech writers need to think deeply about the most effective way to reach this audience.

2. Effective communication skills to deliver the user information

Particularly when you only have one person writing the entire manual, that person needs to be a communication guru. This writer needs to gather information from clients and colleagues of other departments and also continuously share information regarding changing consumer patterns with product developers. If the person doesn't have the skills to gather information and use it to persuade others, he might not be the right candidate for the job.

3. Basic communication skills

Basic communication skills are required in almost every job. It is an especially important skill for consumer product manual writers as they usually fill many roles at the same time – planner, content writer, account manager, and project manager. A tech writer developing a manual for a smartphone, for example, needs to consult with R&D engineers, analyze the main user tasks, arrange the information, and talk with clients, illustrators, graphic designers, and DTP technicians.
Most of all, the development period for consumer products is very short, so the manual writer can only spend a few months. For a short development period, one-person management is the most effective method. Usually, the manual volume for consumer products is less than 100 pages, so one-person writing is manageable and will ensure a consistent quality.

4. Knowledge of how to use the latest software tools

In the past, user information was delivered as text in a printed manual, so the most important skill was good writing. Of course, this skill is still valid: User information needs to be logical and systematic, and effectively convey the message. But as today's users expect to get information in a variety of formats and from various sources, a manual writer should be able to use new tools to deliver user information. Which tool is best suited for delivering user manuals to the particular target group? Have you considered animations, video clips or voice memos? Before deciding on alternative formats, consider the fact that costs will multiply if you need to publish user information in various languages.

5. Understanding of the features and technologies applied to the product

In my point of view, understanding the features and technology applied to a product is a skill necessary for developing B2B product manuals, but it ranks low for developing consumer devices. It is much easier to analyze the features and technologies of B2C products than those of B2B products. For this reason, special product knowledge is not an essential requirement.

To conclude

Based on my experience, the skills required for consumer product manual writers can't be learned or taught. These rely on the writer's innate characteristics and talent. To deliver effective user information to today's consumers, the consumer product manual writer should have the whole package: Basic empathy in order to understand the user's position, open-mindedness in accepting the changing trends in technology, and the ability to merge and apply both qualities to manuals effectively and creatively.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yangsook Kim has three decades of industry experience, demonstrating a varied, vast expertise in content development and localization. She is founder, owner, and president of HansemEUG. She is the former president of the Korea Technical Communicators Association (2013-2015) and now oversees its foreign operations.

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The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) is a global, non-profit trade association for the translation and localization industry. As a membership organization, we support our member companies and the corporate language sector by creating communities, championing standards, sharing knowledge, and advancing technology. To learn more about the value of membership, visit www.gala-global.org or follow us @ GALA_global

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TCTrainNet is an English-language international training and certification program for technical communication. This online program serves individuals like students, technical writers and other TC professionals as well as employers who want to ensure the standards and competencies of their technical writing team. The curriculum was developed by leading professionals and experts from industry and academia and also serves as preparation for the international tekom certification.

www.tc-train.net

Technical Writers of India (TWIN) is the largest community of India-based technical communicators, editors, and language professionals. TWIN offers a professional discussion forum with 4000+ subscribers, a vibrant Facebook community of 5000+ technical communicators, an active LinkedIn group of 2000+ members, and an interactive portal with 8000+ registered members. In cooperation with tekom, TWIN organizes the tcworld India conference, India's largest conference for technical communicators and language professionals.

http://twin-india.org

Valuepoint Knowledgeworks is a constituent company of Valuepoint Group, a $50Million IT/ITES conglomerate. Since 2001, we have helped businesses go global by leveraging on our native language and domain experts & highly refined processes. Over 1000 clients rely on our expert solutions for translation, content development, multimedia & animation, creative designing & digital marketing services. Our plug & play, highly scalable and adaptable solutions help our clients develop the most effective communication best suited for their target audiences.

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VMware is the leader in virtualization and cloud infrastructure solutions that enable businesses to thrive in the Cloud Era. The VMware Information Experience (IX) department is a central organization with global teams of technical writers and tools specialists spread on three continents. With several BUs to serve and a large customer base, the team is focused on efficiency, automation and innovations that improve and modernize the customers' experience with VMware's products.

www.vmware.com

events

tcworld 2017

Outsourcing World Summit

February 19-22
San Antonio, TX, USA
www.iaop.org/summit

Elia Together 2017

February 23-24
Berlin, Germany
http://elia-together.org

tcworld India

February 23-24
Bangalore, India
http://conferences.tekom.de/tcworld-india-2017/home

COMTecnica 2017

March 22-23
Bologna, Italy
http://conferences.tekom.de/comtecnica-2017/comtecnica-2017

GALA 2017

March 26-29
Amsterdam, Netherlands
www.gala-global.org/conference-2017-amsterdam

Intelligent Content Conference

March 28-30
Las Vegas, NV, USA
www.intelligentcontentconference.com

MadWorld 2017

April 2-5
San Diego, CA, USA
www.madcapsoftware.com/events/madworld/

EUATC International Conference

April 20-21
Berlin, Germany
http://euatc.org/conference

European Academic Colloquium on Technical Communication Studies

April 28
Antwerp, Belgium
www.teccom-frame.eu/the-colloquium

tcworld China

May 8-9
Shanghai, China
http://conferences.tekom.de/tcworld-china-2017/tcworld-china-2017/

tcworld China is the premier gathering event for all decision-makers and specialists in the field of technical communication in China. The main conference theme this year is "Let's implement the future now!"
Other topics include:

- Dynamic content delivery (DITA, UX)
- Web analytics
- Terminology management
- Mobile documentation (use cases, app programming)
- Augmented and Virtual Reality
- Structured authoring and metadata with/without XML

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Information Energy 2017

May 17-18
Utrecht, Holland
www.informationenergy.org

The two-day event will take place at Seats-2Meet UtrechtCS on May 17-18, 2017.

At IEn2017 we will talk about the future of information in the context of Industry 4.0, Artificial Intelligence and content automation. The two days are packed with engaging presentations, workshops and interactive sessions with internationally recognized speakers covering the following topics and more:

- From structured content to intelligent information
- Design thinking, service design and information design
- Information 4.0 – the next steps
- Strategic information management
- Technical writing practices

ETC 2017

June 1-2
Sofia, Bulgaria

UA Europe 2017

June 8-9
Harrogate, United Kingdom
www.uaconference.eu/

Content Marketing World 2017

September 5-8
Cleveland, OH, USA
http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/events/

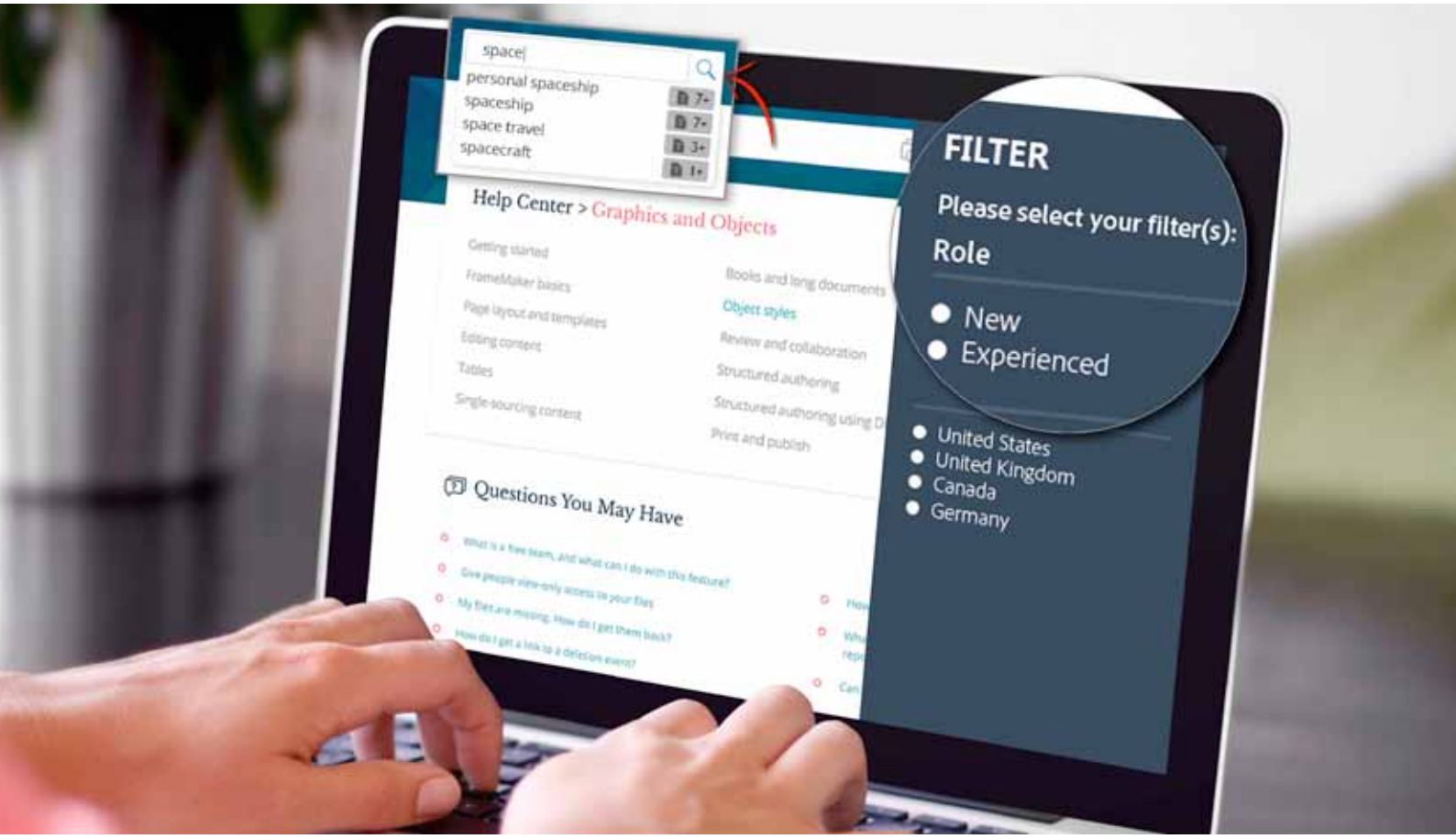
NORDIC TechKomm

September 12-13
Copenhagen, Denmark
http://conferences.tekom.de/nordic-techkomm

tcworld conference 2017

October 24-26
Stuttgart, Germany
http://conferences.tekom.de

Adobe RoboHelp (2017 release)



Introducing

The 2017 release of Adobe RoboHelp

- Produce stunning interactive content with next-generation HTML5 publishing
- Help users find relevant content faster with first-of-its-kind search autocomplete
- Personalize the Help experience of end-users with dynamic content filters
- Deliver content-centric mobile apps for iOS and Android with one click

For any queries, please reach out to us at **techcomm@adobe.com**