

Why Software Localization is a Business Tool

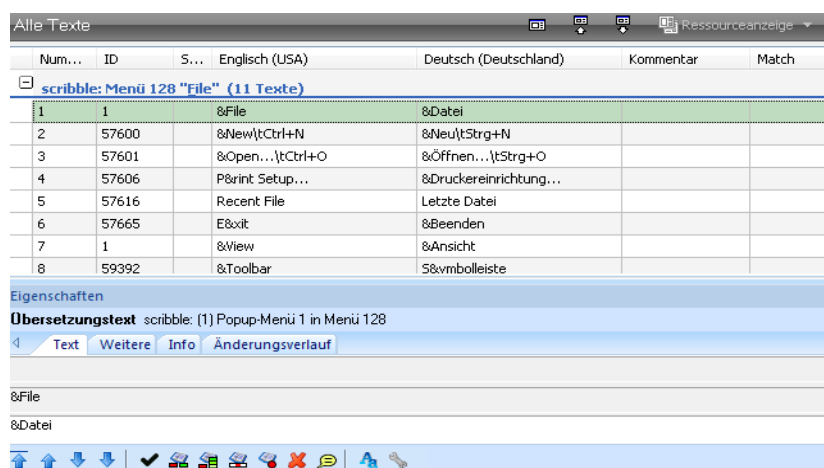
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Introduction

There are many hurdles to overcome for companies that want to tap into new markets in other countries. One of the biggest is the language barrier. Translating business content into English may be sufficient for many target markets. But for software products and documentation for your clients in the target country, only one language really counts: the native language. Therefore, the success of software products in countries where a different language is spoken often depends on the quality of the translation, among other things. This kind of translation is known as software localization and it is offered by professional service providers.

Software Localization: The Entrepreneurial Importance

Having solid translation expertise alone is often not enough in order to develop software products for clients in other countries. You must also consider the particularities of your target market. This not only means the adjustment of content to the customs and linguistic characteristics of the target country. You must also consider the conversion of values, measurement units, currencies or addresses as well as graphic aspects and relevant operating system aspects. In order to ensure this, professional service providers also need to demonstrate IT expertise for software localization. That means that they are able to communicate with the client at the developer level and they know how to make best use of resource files for localization. In this respect, experienced software translators can support IT experts thanks to their technical know-how and their pertinent vocabulary knowledge, even more so because they are both using tools tailored to software localization (software localization tools). The user will certainly notice the positive effect in the target country: It is not the user who must adapt to the product, but rather the product adjusts to his/her needs – this is efficiency from the customer's standpoint.



Software Localization Tool: the translator's working environment

Software Localization: (More Than Just) the Technical Side

Special software localization tools facilitate efficiency and consistency. By default, these applications for computer-aided translation and localization have a feature known as translation memories (TMs). This is basically storage space where completed translations can be filed. With their help, identical or similar text segments (strings) are displayed during the translation process. Furthermore, translators can use existing translations to check consistency. With the help of these tools, the consistency of an entire product range can be guaranteed over many years without having to completely rework or revise anything because something may subsequently change. Another special feature of software localization tools is the fact that a localized user interface (for instance a message window) can be generated during the translation process. This means that the respective context and the length of the text can be checked in relation to the available space.



Localized (German-English) buttons on a software application

Finally, certain tests of the translated, or in other words the localized product, form part of professional software localization. They are performed to check the visual properties of the software, the linguistic quality and the features. Once again checks are made to determine if the typography and the layout work well together, if there are no line breaks within words, if the specialist terms used are valid, consistent and used in accordance with customer-specific wording requirements – and if all buttons and references work as they do in the original.

Conclusion

Along with these technical tools, it is essential that the technical translator has some common sense. After all, efficiency and consistency during the translation process should always be proportionate to the context of the respective content. Computer-aided translation tools can therefore certainly simplify the localization process, but they cannot replace skilled translators, editors or project managers. On the contrary, localization competence and technical translation tools are always adapted to the individual requirements of the customer. The localization service provider's experience is what makes the decisive difference.

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