INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION DEMOS

HOW LOCALIZING YOUR DEMO CAN INCREASE GLOBAL SALES

argos
multilingual

Overview

Client-centric – and successful – software publishers know that customers expect to see a localized version of the product they are purchasing. This is equally – and perhaps more true – of product demos. A localized demo shows the whole range of decision makers and influencers that you are ready to serve all their in-country needs.

Why localize international demo data?

A localized demo means that the demo content – user generated (aka user entered) data – must be localized too. One of the fastest ways to alienate a potential customer is to show them a system with content in the wrong language. Besides distracting stakeholders from the value of the system itself, wrong language demo data implies that your product is only partially localized. Even if this is not true, it sends the message that your audience is unimportant to you.

After all, you only get one chance to make a first impression. Make sure that impression is a positive one by showing your audience that their needs matter to you.

1. You want to show your product at its best – with the full flexibility to adapt to an international audience – by presenting a demo with data that is relevant to your customer.
2. If the customer sees untranslated or irrelevant data, it may stop them considering your product.
3. Most of all, you want to show your customer that they are a priority for you.

You've already made a sizable investment in your overseas presence; demo data is not the place to skimp! You're likely to recoup the up-front costs rapidly in increased sales and satisfied customers.

What is demo data?

Demo data is any content an end-user, manager, administrator, or implementation team member would type into your system. When you're demonstrating your product, you'll need sample data to show your customer how your product is relevant to them.

Internationalizing the demo data is made evident in three levels:

1. The language: demo data needs to be translated. Job titles, account charts, expense types, businesses, and other fields should be in the target language.

2. Familiarity: demo data should conform to the local conventions. In some countries, address formats vary in order – the country might come first, or the postal code might come before the city name (rather than after the state, as in the U.S.). Verify the usage in your target market, and make sure your software is ready to accommodate the variations.

3. Content: the examples themselves must be relevant to your target country. The best demo data reflects current issues and real-life situations your end-users might find themselves in. Modify the entire scenario as needed, so your potential clients can see that you have adapted your model to their environment.

Note: Localizing your demo data assumes you've already done the work of internationalizing your software, such as having the user interface (UI) strings (text displayed on the UI) externalized, dates, currencies, or other data ready to accommodate local country variations. See more in **How do you localize demo data?** later in this article.

Examples:

- **Business:** some environments, such as human resources (HR), payroll, finance, and healthcare, are highly specific to the target country. Demos showing U.S.-based data – such as a payroll program showing a deduction for "401k" – would be critiqued in Europe where the pension plans are different and not called 401k.

- **Education:** for an educational program, your target country may very well have different school systems, so terms such as "high school" may not translate well. Consider the grading scale: in some countries, the equivalent of the American A-F grades are 1-5. But is 5 low or high? It differs by country, so if you show mostly "5" entries, intending to show high grades, you might inadvertently be making it look like most students are failing!

Take the time to investigate your target market to be sure you've created examples that reflect their local systems. And if you have local sales people, speak to them to ensure locally relevant examples.

Who owns demo data? Who uses it?

In many companies Engineering owns the database as part of the product, as they have the technical ability to maintain it.

However, a number of parties should be involved from the outset: central office sales people, your in-country sales and marketing team, and in-country experts or partners your team can call on.

Work with your localization agency to establish processes for creation and review of localized demo data. Localization is actually done by a combination of your localization agency and in-country experts for verification of data.

Many groups in your organization will have need of the localized demo data, so your investment will pay off considerably:

- **Sales:** this group is likely the initial requester of demo data, and other groups are dependent on what they create, so keep in mind downstream needs.

- **Training:** for training courses, the needs are different; a typical course starts with unfinished data, and prompts the customers to enter data, so you should have ready examples to use in classes and webinars.

- **Marketing:** collateral pieces need product demos, recorded demos, screen shots.

- **Technical publications:** documentation relies heavily on screen shots to show the user how the product works, and those screens will need demo data. In addition, many tech writers need data to test functionality as part of writing the doc. In that way their need is similar to the training groups.

- **Support:** representatives need to be able to do a run-through to help the client with issues.

Demo data is an investment that keeps on giving: what you develop for one group can be shared throughout the organization.

How do you localize demo data?

There's a smart way to go about developing international software demos. Begin by considering your core goal (localizing a demo for a particular market). Next, extend your plan to include additional markets, and other aspects that contribute to your software's success. These include sales training, help systems, graphics, packaging and marketing messaging.

These are the overall phases, with detailed steps below.
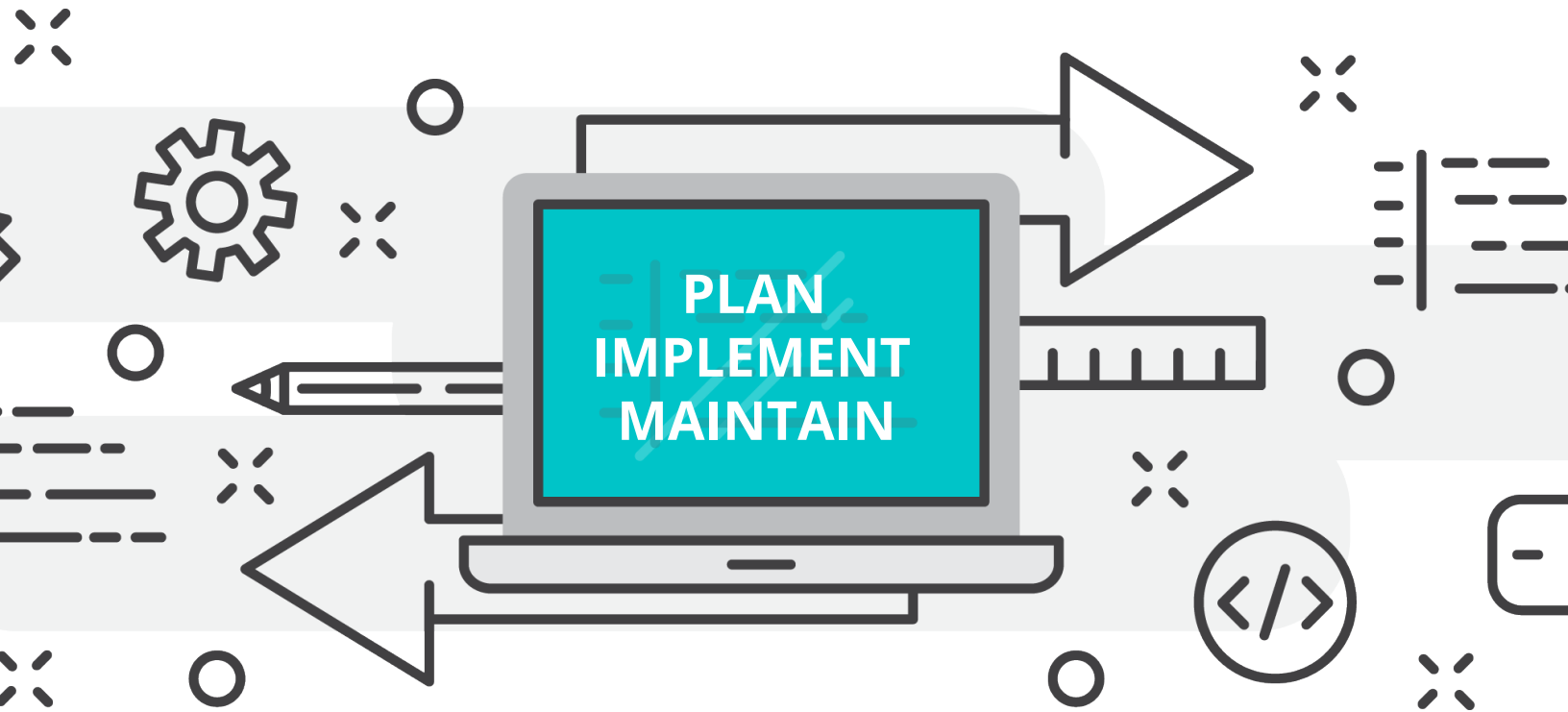
1. Plan

- Decide as soon as you can. In a perfect world, you've decided to publish internationalized-ready software and you've built that into your plan. If you have, much of the heavy lifting is done for you. Either way, it's time to start work now, as soon as you know you want to be able to do international software demos.

- Prioritize target markets with your sales and marketing teams. Which countries are most important? Which target markets need to be ready to go when?

- Determine what features will – and will not – require localized demo data. In a perfect world, your entire product demo will be localized for each target market. This may not be realistic if your product is complex and multi-layered, or not applicable if not all parts of your product set are available in all markets. Work with your sales and marketing team to prioritize features for demo localization.

- Go through an entire demo flow with your sales team and your localization agency. Your team will be most productive if they're working from a carefully planned series of steps. Note every screen shot that will be part of a demo. Make a list of all of the places requiring users to enter content. List out in full detail the planned series of steps for the demo.

2. Implement

- Choose a translation and localization agency who can offer you tight collaboration. Your localization agency needs to be responsive to your technology, sales, and marketing teams from the start. You need a localization team with the capacity for tight collaboration since a software demo can require input from many different departments, such as product development, sales, tech pubs/training, marketing, and customer support. If you're on a tight timeline, you also want an agency who can easily integrate into your development environment (waterfall, agile, etc.). Argos calls this level of integration "in-between sourcing."

- Make sure you have in-country help. Whether you're creating this content or working with a localization or marketing agency, you need expert, in-country assistance to create the right demo data. Specifically, your in-country demo team should have or be able to quickly develop:

    1. Deep familiarity with your software and product features so that they can be showcased most attractively
    2. Expertise in your market or profession so that all content created builds your credibility
    3. Expertise in the state-of-the-market in his or her own country so that your demo remains in appropriate cultural context and on point

- Review imagery. All icons, images and pictures should be reviewed for cultural appropriateness. Build time to do this – and acquire additional art if necessary – into your plan.

- Make a help system plan. The demo data will be needed for screen shots in your help system. Also, if you'll have international customer support, the demo data should be worked into your plan and timeline.

- Give your localization agency access to all application content. Your localization team will be most productive if they have access to all of your application content and not just a demo subset.

3. Maintain

- Create a plan for updating demo data at every release of the product suite. Work with the team that develops the "New Feature" release notes to stay on top of what is in the new release. The demo data should always be current and ready to ship with the product.

- Help your team manage expectations. Create a guide on how the demo data is structured, including such information as basic data, main business processes, recorded demos, so your teams are able to work from clear, accurate information and build the trust of your clients.

Still unsure about preparing your code for internationalization? **If you haven't, check Argos' Best Practices for Internationalization-ready Code.**

For more on "in-between sourcing.", see Argos' eBook on Working in an Agile Environment.

About Argos

Argos Multilingual provides global language solutions. With over 30 years of experience, we serve clients in the high-tech, life sciences, human resources, and financial industries.

We make it easy for businesses to grow globally and connect with expert talent anywhere in the world. With production centers in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, we follow a strategy of building robust programs for continuous translation and localization.

You can expect a long-term and transparent partnership, backed by innovative solutions around technology, AI & data, creative content, and quality assurance.

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