

Tips to Development: Interlocking with NLS

by David Chakmakian, Globalization Coordinator, IBM Retail Store Solutions

Here are some tips that helped our Development organization interlock better with our NLS (National Language Support) group. Please consider how these tips may apply to your activities and see if you can learn from them as our development teams have. Then present the material to your product and information developers to enable them to help you produce quality globalized deliverables.

Translatable Source Code Reviews

Reviews of source code is performed by development as a regular part of their process to check for accuracy and applicability. However, inspection for translatability is also important. Effort should be spent during routine code reviews to inspect development's messages and help panels to ensure not only are they accurate, but that they are translatable as well. Development may also spot check for translatability concerns in the product while capturing screens for the manuals.

Tip 1: Try to expend additional effort during Code Reviews to seek and improve translatability issues.

To do so will help to ensure the text can be translated efficiently and will help keep costs down.

World Wide Simultaneous General Availability (WWSGA)

Delivering all language versions of a product at the same time can present obstacles that may seem insurmountable. However, Development has been challenged to achieve WWSGA across the product set. If active in that pursuit, great success may be found.

Tip 2: Recognize the cost and customer satisfaction benefits of WWSGA and continue to aggressively strive to achieve that goal.

Utilizing Supported File Formats

The trend to acquire existing products locally or from other countries can cause translatable source to come to you using formats not supported by your Translation Centers. Great strides must be taken by your developers to ensure such acquired products are properly ported to translatable formats, which decrease costs and increase productivity.

Tip 3: Ensure that new products utilize supported formats, and port legacy or existing source into such formats.

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Product Schedules

The difficulty in reigning in schedules and locking in dates for the source code is a given in development. Date changes can also have quite an effect on the schedules of the various countries translating the products and publications as well.

Translation has additional constraints while considering overseas holiday schedules. Some countries who translate your products may take the same weeks off, during which their translation operations may be severely restricted. Development reschedules into those weeks can become show-stoppers for your products.

Tip 4: Understand that date changes are multiplied by the number of countries translating products and their publications.

Volumes of Translatable Text

The estimated number of words of translatable text or publications pages can vary greatly over the production cycle. Predicting volumes of translatable product text and pages of publications revisions and additions is an art. However, as is true of the sizing of the source development, miscalculations in translation estimates can become quite costly.

Tip 5: Ensure translatable information is sized as accurately as possible early in the cycle.

Finding Balance Between Volumes and Schedules

Dynamic development schedules impact attempts to deliver specific volumes of text to NLS at scheduled intervals. Products that deliver what is available when a drop is scheduled, even if the volumes of text are not what was originally estimated, ensures that Translation is working on the product, rather than to be idle while waiting for the volumes to come up.

Tip 6: Work with the NLS Planner to try to find balance when current demands do not line up with original development and NLS schedules.

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Scheduling of Development Time

Just as the technical writers need time from Development to acquire initial information for the publications, so too does Translation need time from Development to understand the product. Timeliness in acquiring necessary information will ensure timely returns of translated material and result in good quality NLVs (National Language Versions.)

Tip 7: Ensure time is scheduled in the development's production cycle to answer questions from Translation.

US-centric Information

Developers in the United States are starting to think of their products as destined to world wide audiences. However, there is still the tendency to write the product from a US point of view. Translation can have particular problems when faced with text that only has meaning in the US. Examples include values expressed in inches with no metric equivalent.

Tip 8: Ensure an understanding of the international implications of your products to present the text in a way that can be globalized.

Publication Formatting Changes

Translation costs are affected by numerous variables, and not all of them are intuitive. One such variable is the format of the source of the publications. Due to the way the countries structure their translation memories, changes in structure to the US source after an initial submission to translation can be quite costly to accommodate. Examples include cosmetic changes or moving sections of text between chapters.

Tip 9: For rework of existing products, please ensure you exercise caution in making only formatting changes that are necessary.

Tip 10: For new publications, ensure formatting design is accurately made up front and are as stable as possible.

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Correlation between the Pubs and the Product

Part of the NLS Planner's responsibilities are to ensure that shipments of the product and its publications are properly planned and timed to allow correlation. The countries use their translations of the program product to help translate the publications, and vice versa. Therefore, it is critical that the pubs and their graphics match the product. Last minute updates to the product that do not match the publications can be problematic to the countries.

Tip 11: Please ensure that discrepancies between the pubs and the product are kept to a minimum.

Tip 12: Please ensure that NLS has the resources, (advanced notice, translation time,) to accommodate the translations if the Pubs and the product drift out of sync.

Code and Publications Freeze Dates

At some point, initial product translation must cease. Further translations due to defects found to affect translatable text and their associated publications changes must be planned. The countries plan their resources according to their understanding of what is a Final Drop and what are updates of the product source, or for publications, the understanding of what are Draft drops and Final drops.

Tip 13: Ensure that development and ID can hold to a posted schedule, which will work towards efficient translation without incurring extra costs.

Tip 14: Try to avoid adding drops of new source to an ongoing Plan to account for late breaking changes.