

Special Considerations for International Organizations

Companies with a global presence have all the challenges any company does with establishing connections across Your Online Sales Engine potentially multiplied by the number of countries and global field marketing offices involved in the process. Be fearless in the face of organizational complexity, because making these connections will pay off!

Going Global in the New World Order

If you sit in the United States reading this book, you might not be well positioned to understand the global marketplace, because you are most likely not fluent in languages other than English. However, because of population patterns and Internet usage worldwide, many if not most of your potential customers may be sitting outside the borders of the United States, probably searching for your products in languages other than English.

According to comScore, Internet usage is higher in the Asia-Pacific region than in Europe and North America, as shown in Figure 10.1, so pursuing an English-only U.S.-centric strategy is limiting yourself to only a portion of the available market.

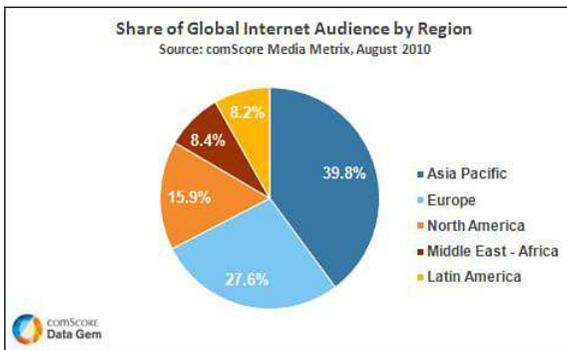


Figure 10.1 *Share of Global Internet Audience by Region from ComScoreDataMine.com.*

The Return of the Silo Problem

Of course, doing business internationally has its share of legal setup, which is outside the scope of our discussion here. Instead, we discuss the online sales engine for companies that already have websites and marketing teams focused globally.

A key issue in a globalized company is coordination across country and language barriers and between teams located in disparate global offices that conform to different business hours and communications protocols. Many information silos can emerge or hide in a global and multilingual company.

Triage for International Disorientation

As you likely can predict after reading this book's other chapters, our approach is to urge you to unify your systems and processes to expand Your Online Sales Engine across all relevant markets and websites.

The “Basic Mechanics” sections of this chapter may very well feel like a list of “well, duh” tasks. If you are an old hand at international projects, feel free to skim. It is pretty tactical, and some or most of the recommendations will seem obvious when you read them.

Yet, we’ve seen sophisticated and smart folks and large companies make minor or major gaffes in these activities, so it might do you good to read through this summary of mechanics and best practices. At worst, you will experience a little *Schadenfreude*. At best, you might head off a similar glitch at your company.

The Impact of Language, Culture, and Transparency

All the “basic” recommendations later in this chapter are more about the configuration and organization of your campaigns. The key to a successful international online sales engine is of course relevant, localized, and consistent content both on your website and in your campaigns.

We devoted an entire chapter to speaking the language of your customer, and it is true again for global marketing. You need to speak the language of your customer—including their dialect—to effectively market. Otherwise, your website, landing pages, and your materials will sound... well, foreign and wrong.

You need to translate your website content, translate your landing pages, translate your target keyphrases for search engine optimization (SEO) and for paid search efforts, and translate any giveaways such as whitepapers to the native language and then localize to the right dialect for your intended audience.

As in Figure 10.2, a direct translation can often be incorrect, particularly with short phrases that must stand on their own. Don’t be tempted to run even your short paid search keyword ads through Google Translator and simply go with that.

Working with Translators and Localization Experts

In today’s world, most professional translators and localization experts use computers to do a rough machine translation of the text. Then the human (who has knowledge of both languages) does the manual cleanup, based on cultural and linguistic differences between the two texts.

To accommodate the subtle nuances between target cultures and language, a localization expert takes over, to tweak the translation and do the final cleanup. This needs to be a human, and preferably a native speaker of the target culture and language.

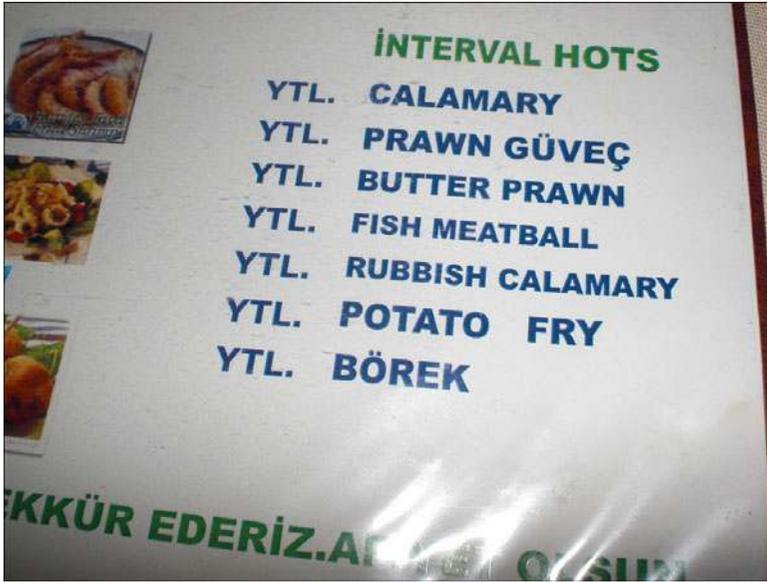


Figure 10.2 A translated menu that's less than appetizing! Shared by Like the Grand Canyon on Flickr www.flickr.com/photos/like_the_grand_canyon/.

There's a difference between the Spanish used in Spain, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and countries in South America; a difference between French in France and Quebec; and a difference between the German spoken and written in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland. A localization expert captures the essence of these linguistic specialties appropriately, for your website.

To get a better quality translation (and help to reduce the number of issues that come up during translation), you can do a little preparatory work to smooth the way:

1. First, clean up your English text and make it ready for translation. Use an approach such as “controlled English” and edit the text to get it ready (remove contractions, idioms, metaphors, and so on).
2. Create a glossary to help the translation team.
3. Give the team some leeway to create a better, more culturally appropriate translation.

About Controlled English

The trend among many international organizations is to move toward “controlled English” in documents to be translated. Using controlled English in a document requires that you

- Restrict the core vocabulary. (You might want to make exceptions to this rule, to accommodate your target keywords for SEO.)
- Use a limited range of simple sentence structures.
- Apply it to commercial and technical information, such as operating instructions and simple descriptive writing.
- Simplify as much as possible, whenever you are presenting complex information.

Controlled English is not particularly well suited for theoretical discussions, abstract analyses, or creative writing (all of which are atypical to corporate websites). The advantage of using a writing style like this is that it controls the text quality, accuracy, and consistency between the original English text and its translated counterparts.

Controlled English: An Example Table 10.1 illustrates several sentences that have had controlled English applied; compare the original text with the edited version to get a feeling for the writing style. Active writing, simpler phrases, and clear verbs are part of the controlled English writing style.

The editing process eliminates passive voice, indirect references or vague adjectives (such as *they*, *main*, or *whole*) complex sentence structures, and nonstandard verbs (*pay out*, *lock up*, *power down*, *reboot*).

Table 10.1 Before and After Sentences, When Editing Using Controlled English

Before	After
Four phase power is provided by four generators.	Four generators supply the four-phase electrical power.
They are the main source of power for the main DC Bus and the whole handheld tool appliance system .	These generators are the primary power source for the primary DC Bus and the handheld appliance .
Three of the generators are driven by separate motors and one generator is driven by a separate backup power unit.	Three separate motors operate three of the generators. A backup power unit operates one generator.
The operator pays out the cable for the generator.	The operator releases and controls the cable for the generator.
If the handheld tool system locks up , power it down and reboot it.	If the handheld appliance stops working and displays ****? , push the Off button. Wait for 30 seconds. Then push the On button to start it.

Additional Methods There are other competing schools of thought similar to controlled English, namely ASD Simplified Technical English, Basic English, Global English, Plain English, and Globish.

Some people prefer Global English because it can feel more like the original text when comparing it side by side. Global English is characterized by a set of specific (complex) sentence structures to *avoid* as opposed to a set of (simple) sentence structures to *apply*.

Don't get too hung up on which one to pick; they are all making a step in the right direction and can help you prepare your English text for translation by simplifying it.

Preparing Your Website for Translation and Localization

Work through your existing website content and follow these tips, before you send your text out to be translated, to avoid (costly) headaches:

- Use clear, concise controlled English, suitable for online presentation.
- Avoid noun phrases and multiple modifiers (no more than three nouns in a row).
- Avoid gerund phrases (“ing” verbs), which often have no equivalent in other languages.
- Avoid ambiguous direct and indirect objects.
- Avoid metaphors, analogies, and similes.
- Use active voice.
- Keep sentences short (15 to 25 words).
- Put statements in positive form.
- Avoid contractions.
- Avoid unnecessary words.
- Be consistent.
- Avoid too many polysyllabic words.
- Write for eighth grade reading level.
- Avoid idioms and slang.
- Avoid neologisms (newly developed words not yet part of the language).
- Avoid humor.
- Use standard symbols.
- Define acronyms and abbreviations.
- Remove cultural bias.

WORLD-READY ENGLISH

In addition to controlled English, which is a useful method for handling English text before translation, there is another concept known as *world-ready English*. This writing style seeks to eliminate the differences between British English and American English, effectively blurring the line (so that someone from Great Britain cannot identify the text as being from the United States and vice versa).

How is this done? By avoiding or working around terminology and phrases that identify the text as distinctly American or distinctly British.

For example, a British website might state “Whilst speaking to customers, we...” and the American version would be “While speaking to customers, we...” The world-ready version of this sentence would begin, “During customer evaluations, we...” thereby avoiding the whilst/while gap.

World-ready English is a convenient tool for those instances when you are not translating a document but you expect non-native English speakers around the world to be reading it. (Many countries emphasize British English in schools, so some uniquely American phrases could be confusing.)

Create a Glossary

It’s helpful for your translation team to have a glossary of the English terms you use on your website. Perhaps you use multiple terms as synonyms, to boost your search engine rankings as part of your search engine optimization efforts.

But a translator (either human or machine) has no way of knowing that those two terms are identical. When two different terms are used, it is generally assumed that they have two different meanings. So you need to spell this out (that the terms are synonymous, for example), to avoid creating confusion during translation.

Deliver the glossary as soon as possible to your translation and localization team. This lets them identify terminology issues early on, clarify terminology, and expedite the translation process. In addition, you want to invest in keyphrase research in your target countries to choose the best fit translated terms both in terms of meaning and in terms of search volume.

Accept Cultural Differences

Don’t be surprised when you receive a translated version of your website that is not an exact match to your English original. A good translation is *not a word-for-word match*. Cultural differences abound and need to be taken into account during translation.

For example, French instructions for using computers are much more indirect than in English. The French find the imperative voice (“Fill in your name and address, then download the whitepaper.”) bossy, rude, and annoying.

Similar cultural differences exist for other European languages, and can be even more pronounced in Asian and Middle Eastern languages. (For example, a Japanese business document typically does not begin with an Executive Overview section, but instead a brief explanation of why the author has chosen to write the document.)

Case Study: Spidering to Keep All Localized Websites Up-to-Date

With the right technology partners, you can set up quite sophisticated systems to keep a set of international domains concurrent. One global company works with Translations.com to translate and host over 20 localized versions of its website. The foundation of the set of web properties is the English-language website, and it is updated regularly to reflect new products, offers, and content.

Translations.com keeps the localized websites in sync with the English website by spidering the English-language website periodically. This identifies changes that need to be reflected in all of the other language versions of the website.

Translations.com translates the new copy and then provides translated drafts to the in-country marketing offices for review before the updates are published.

Basic Mechanics for a Global Metrics-Driven Practice

The critical gaps that exist between marketing and sales systems and processes are only amplified in global companies, because responsibilities might be divided between marketing and sales offices across the globe.

After you and your leadership define your sales engine goals, the trick is to

- Implement the tracking across many websites with different, country-specific top-level domains.
- Unify and standardize the sales force automation (SFA) or customer relationship management (CRM) interface and processes.
- Share reporting on opportunities and sales to feed back into the process.

This is an immense infrastructure project and will require the collaboration of teams across the globe. But without a common process and common goals, your company won't really have a global strategy or global reporting, but a jumble of local or regional approaches and practices instead.

Use a Single Website Analytics Program Globally

Website analytics programs may measure the same things slightly differently. When we have two different analytics programs running on the same website, the metrics vary in minor ways.

Using different analytics programs even to report the same metrics for different domains (say, using Yahoo! Web Analytics for the Japanese website and using Google Analytics for the U.S. website) may lead to confusion. Standardize within the same program across all your websites, and give yourself a common dashboard from which to review your websites and common definitions of metrics.

Set Your Web Analytics to Track Across Top-Level Domains

Your website will likely be set up to let visitors hop to the right country-specific top level domain. If they, by chance, arrive on the .com website, they may be able to jump to the Portuguese-language .br website from a pull-down menu or a country flag in the upper-right corner of the website.

Because you will encourage visitors to hop between domains, you should use a single analytics profile that spans all your website properties. This way, someone that moves from one of your domains to another (say example.com to example.co.uk to see your prices in British pounds rather than U.S. dollars) doesn't look like a visitor who left one domain and then arrived as a new visitor on another.

Aggregate the Analytics Profile

If you treat your country-specific websites as entirely separate websites, you inadvertently inflate your visits and visitor numbers and decrease your conversion rates. Instead, you want your country-specific websites to aggregate their analytics so that a visitor can be represented more accurately as having visited to multiple properties inside the same website constellation.

Within Google Analytics, it requires using the same web analytics profile number (i.e. UA-XXXXX-XX) on all your websites. Deploying the same Google Analytics snippet across all your websites is a snap to do if all of the websites share a common template.

Manual Aggregation of Analytics

But, the procedure is the same, but more manual, if your websites do not share a common template. In that case, you just have to make sure you deploy the same analytics tracking snippet across all your websites on all their pages.

After this is complete, you can then look at the performance of individual country websites by using advanced segments or by creating filtered profiles showing individual country-specific domains. Search on “cross domain tracking” in your website analytics program to learn how to bridge your websites into a summary profile.

Unify Your CRM or SFA Process

Similar to the reasons for unifying your web analytics into one platform across all of your top level domains, if you want to measure incoming leads across the globe, you will want to use a common CRM or SFA system. Otherwise, you won't have a common dashboard to measure the outcomes of your global marketing activities.

The challenges to unifying your CRM or SFA include the following:

- Standardizing address formats across widely varying conventions.
- Character set issues. The database may need to accept accent marks not used in English, Cyrillic characters, Japanese Hiragana, Thai script, Devanagari... and the list goes on. Unicode is typically the best choice for storing data that spans several languages and character sets.
- The need to follow different privacy and marketing guidelines in different jurisdictions.
- The need to reinforce or create standard processes for local sales teams located all over the globe.
- Training to help your team get the most from your CRM. Otherwise you run the risk of garbage in-garbage out.

Going with an SFA or CRM vendor that has built-in support for global character sets, currencies, and experience managing global data is a wise choice. If you are using Salesforce.com, David Taber's *Salesforce.com Secrets of Success* has many best practices and process design and alignment overviews.

Talk to Each Other!

Of course, no amount of process rigor and infrastructure investment can substitute for agreement and good feeling between colleagues, and this comes through meeting each other in person periodically and relatively frequent communications via conference calls, web meetings, email, and IM.

Of course, each of these methods of communication has its challenges in a world with different languages and social customs around interactions, but they are necessary elements to bind your team together.

Best Practices for Global Team Communications

Good global team management is basically regular old project management: useful meetings, clear goals, and “information radiators” for formal and informal knowledge and status sharing.

Tips for better international meetings include the following:

- **Have a regular schedule of meetings with clear agendas:** You might have an annual in-person meeting with monthly web conferences.
- **As always, revisit your goals and speak to progress made against them:** Nothing creates alignment like consistency of process, clarity of expectations, and repetition of what’s important.
- **Speak clearly and slowly:** Sometimes the speed with which American English is spoken can be intimidating.

One company holds a monthly conference call between the Korean, German, Indian, Chinese, and American quality management teams. The call is conducted in English, and although English is understood and spoken by all on the line, there is rarely any discussion or questions for the Americans. The explanation: The Americans talk so fast that others simply are intimidated to interact with them.

- **Consider the time:** Consider rotating the time of the meeting for conference calls so that everyone on the team across the globe gets to meet at times most suited to their time zone.

Tips to foster clear communication include the following:

- **Make a place for asynchronous, informal status communications:** If adopted widely, these virtual water coolers or status boards can take some noise out of email inboxes. Options include
 - 37Signals’s Campfire, <http://campfirenow.com/>
 - Harvest’s Co-Op, <http://coopapp.com/>
 - Yammer, www.yammer.com
 - Salesforce’s Chatter, www.salesforce.com/chatter/whatischatter/
- **Avoid local dialect and nonstandard English:** Many people will have learned British English in school, so phrases like *y’all* might not be understood.

Basic Mechanics for Global Organic Search Visibility

If you following best practices on your English-language, U.S.-based .com website to be found by folks looking for answers by search, you should have a great start on organic visibility for international searchers. All the same principles apply:

- **Don't get in your own way by hiding important content** in inaccessible web technologies (see “Watch Your Web Technologies” and “Avoid using Multimedia for Critical and Unique SEO Content” in Chapter 8 “It's All About Visibility”).
- **Label things appropriately** so that they can be found on your website, including image and media files (see “Take Advantage of Universal Search: Tag Your Media Files with Target Keywords” in Chapter 8).
- **Build meaningful inlinks** to your website to demonstrate your company's credibility (see “Link-Building Fundamentals” in Chapter 8).

Most likely, you'll need the help of your team on the ground in each of your target countries to identify the sources of valuable inlinks, to create content in the target language, and to prioritize which keyphrases are most valuable to target in your labeling.

The only additional wrinkles for international SEO include the greater variety of search engines out there. Your team will need to do its homework ahead to ensure you're targeting the right search engine and make sure you use the appropriate web address to maximize your visibility.

Focus on the Correct Search Engine

If you want your website to be found, pay attention to where people go to search. In most of the world, Google is the top search engine. Google is king in the Americas and much of Europe and the Middle East, but a distant second or third to other search engines in the five countries listed in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Five Countries Where Google Is Not the Dominant Search Engine

Region	Top Search Engine	Second Search Engine
Russia	Yandex	Google
China	Baidu	Google
Japan	Yahoo!	Google
South Korea	Naver	Daum
Taiwan	Yahoo!	Google

Review the top search engines in key countries and follow suggestions for targeting your content to be found there.

Optimization Outside of Google

Although Google is still very dominant in many countries across the world, there are some places, notably where other character sets are more prevalent, where local search engines outrank Google. If you're interested in marketing in one of those countries, look at them to see how search engine optimization differs from Google (or Yahoo! U.S.).

Yandex (Russia) Of the three non-Yahoo! search engines, optimizing for Yandex is the most similar to optimizing for Google. Yandex is said to be “Google-like” in its use of inlinks and page content to rank websites, but has a deeper understanding of Russian grammar and vocabulary that, so far, gives it an edge over Google there.

Baidu (China) Although Chinese has many important regional dialects, Baidu operates in simplified and traditional Chinese. Baidu is influenced by such things as whether it is a Chinese top-level domain (see below) and whether your website is hosted in mainland China. Baidu places more emphasis on metadata than Google does.

Naver (South Korea) Naver is less than an index of the entire Internet in Korean language than a guide to user content within the Naver network of social media websites and user-generated content.

The Naver results page pioneered mixing social, video, image, and website listings that Google adopted as “universal search.” For that reason, Naver depends less on the traditional sources of SEO strength for Google (inlinks, content relevance, and consistent labeling).

Daum (South Korea) Like Naver, Daum is more a guide to user-generated content within its forums than a classic index. It has a popular and sometimes controversial forum, called Agora, where people discuss news, politics, and pop culture. Similar to Naver, SEO requires more effort in social media mentions.

Yahoo! (Taiwan) Although Yahoo! has merged with MSN/Bing globally, the roll-out of Bing powering Yahoo! search results had only started at the time of this writing. Yahoo! organic search results in Taiwan will be populated by Bing as it is in the United States and Canada.

Yahoo! (Japan) Interestingly, Yahoo! Japan did not merge with MSN/Bing as Yahoo! did elsewhere, so Yahoo! in Japan will have searches populated by Google rather than by Bing. So, in Japan, you can use the same optimization practices you use for Google, because Yahoo! Japan results will be Google results.

But, this is all changing rapidly, and there's a fair bit of misinformation available, so keep an eye on the current state if you're focused on Taiwan and Japan.

Search Engine Popularity Fluctuates Search engine popularity is relatively dynamic, as Google surpassed Seznam in the Czech Republic only recently. You want to check for the most recent statistics for your target markets!

Tune Your Social Strategy to the Right Channel

Although Google is close to dominating the international search engine landscape, the international social media landscape is more diverse. Therefore, your social media strategy should not focus on only one website, such as Twitter or Facebook.

Instead, consider where your target audience may go. Brazilians like Google's Orkut best, and Russians prefer Vkontakte to Facebook. In China, Qzone has beaten Facebook for market share.

Over the past few quarters, Facebook has overtaken some homegrown social networks, so it is worth checking for the most up-to-date statistics before committing to a particular website in a global social media visibility strategy.

Mind Your Website Top-Level Domains

Use country-specific top-level domains (TLDs) for best organic search visibility in your target countries. The list of TLDs is managed by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA).

So, our mythical TropiCo company should use `www.example.com` for the United States (and `www.example.br` for Brazil rather than `www.example.com/brazil` or `br.example.com`).

If your research indicates you're targeting Google, you can use Google Webmaster Tools to set international targeting for your websites.

If you cannot use the appropriate TLD and you must fudge things a little by using a subdomain or subdirectory, *and* you are also targeting Google in that country, you can give Google a little help to find you by setting your geographic targeting in your Google Webmaster Tools account (see Figure 10.3).

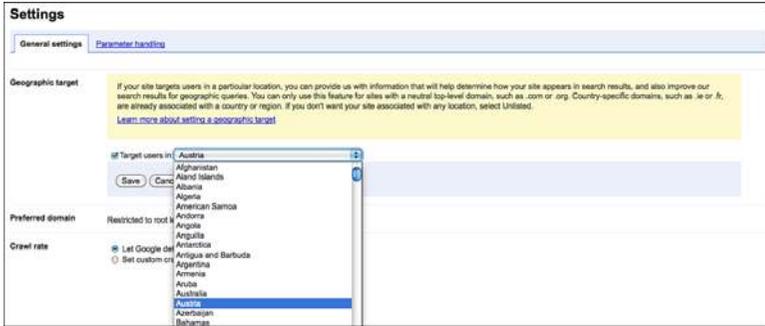


Figure 10.3 Setting your geographic target in Google Webmaster Tools.

Basic Mechanics for Global Paid Search Configuration

Deploy your paid search in the most popular search engine for the country you're targeting (see Table 10.1 countries where Google is not the main engine). Only *after* you are getting all the leads you can for your budget (and to get additional leads you would have to pay more per lead) should you even consider going to the second search engine.

See “Projecting Return on Paid Search Optimization” in Chapter 9, “Running the Feedback Loop,” for the logic behind this recommendation.

Create Regional Campaigns

After you've decided which search engines to target, you want to set up your campaigns specifically for each region. Even if your research tells you that all your paid search needs to be done in Google AdWords, you still want to break up your campaigns to target specific geographies and specific languages. Setting them up this way will help you track budgets and track your success at the regional level instead of averaging over everything.

Advertising in China

If you're going to focus on China, you need to set up an account with Baidu PPC Phoenix Nest, also known as Baidu PPC Search Marketing Pro. Account setup will be tricky for an English-language marketer because the user interface to manage paid search on the Baidu platform is available only in Chinese.

Your best bet here will be a local partner in China, or a relationship with a company or individual who is fluent in Chinese and familiar with Baidu's interface.

Advertising in Russia

If you focus on Russia, you want to set up your account with Yandex Direct, Yandex's paid search platform. Yandex Direct offers English-language online help materials to guide advertisers. Although the materials are in English, a successful Russian-language campaign will require fluent Russian to write ads and manage and optimize keyphrases.

Advertising in South Korea

Naver offers a mix of paid search options interspersed in its long and scrolling results page, rich with multimedia and social media information. Paid search on Naver used to include a section powered by Yahoo!'s search marketing engine, Overture, but as of 2011 it eliminated this relationship. Daum currently uses Overture for some paid search ads, although some believe it will follow Naver and also end its relationship with Yahoo!

English-language information about paid search in Naver and Daum is quite limited. Your best bet here is a local partner in Korea, or a partner local to you who is fluent in Korean and savvy in these search engines.

Advertising on Yahoo! for Japan and Taiwan

For the two countries that have Yahoo! as their top search engine, Japan and Taiwan, you need to pursue different strategies. For Yahoo! Taiwan, when it switches over to having its results fed by Bing, you can use the MSN adCenter interface. For Yahoo! Japan, when it switches over to having its results fed by Google, you can use Google AdWords.

Set Geographic Targets

You can set geographic targets in AdWords and other paid search platforms. Figure 10.4 shows the geographic targeting dialog for in the Google AdWords web interface, allowing you to pick bundles of countries or choose individual countries.

Use the Right Language

You need to focus on the appropriate language in your keyphrases, ad text, and landing pages. You also need to configure your paid search account to focus on appropriate languages. These are separate actions.

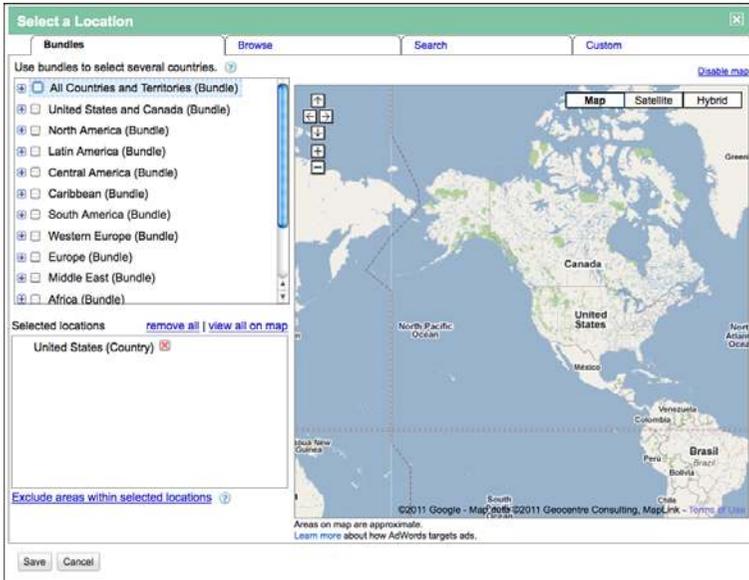


Figure 10.4 Location targeting dialog in the Google AdWords web interface.

Translate Your Keyphrases, Ads, and Landing Pages

Sometimes you get lucky, and because of the nature of the product, people will choose to search in English for it across the globe. We see this sometimes for scientific and technical products. More typically, though, especially with business-to-consumer (B2C) products, running English search terms in countries with other native languages is not going to be productive for you.

Table 10.3 shows competing examples, drawn from two companies both advertising in Japan. In Example 1, the English language paid search has much more limited visibility compared to the Japanese language keyphrases and ads; it garnered fewer impressions and saw disproportionately fewer clicks.

In Example 2, however, the English phrases have higher visibility and a higher clickthrough rate. One thing that might explain the difference for Example 2 is that both English language and Japanese search terms are available for an ad campaign running in Japan. The Japanese terms are translations of the English terms, done by native Japanese speakers in Japan.

In both cases, in Table 10.3, the total impressions and clicks across the English-language and the Japanese-language campaigns is higher for having both languages available. So, it's worth doing the translation and also testing English language terms if that is appropriate for your audience.

Table 10.3 Impressions (Ads Seen), Clicks (Ads Clicked) and Clickthrough Rate for Two AdWords Paid Search Campaigns in Japan

Campaign	Language of Keyphrases and Ads	Impressions	Clicks	Clickthrough Rate
Example 1	English	57,115	212	0.37%
Example 1	Japanese	280,911	1,455	0.52%
Example 2	English	75,138	798	1.06%
Example 2	Japanese	49,776	305	0.61%

Don't forget that landing pages typically contain a focal image that might need to be "translated," as well. For example, the landing page for an appliance store displaying products typically sold in North America would look very odd to someone from Europe, where the washing machines, dryers, and refrigerators are all considerably smaller. Here's another situation where a little A/B testing up front can save a campaign.

Configure the Language for Paid Search

Choose the appropriate language to display your geotargeted campaigns, as shown in Figure 10.5. We've seen folks frustrated because their German-language paid search ads were getting no visibility in Germany because their German terms were restricted to matching English phrases.



Figure 10.5 Set your location and language for ad groups in the Google AdWords interface.

Working with Time Zones

Watch your time zones, too! We've also seen a business-to-business (B2B) company showing ads in Australia based on the business day in the United States. This settings

glitch had the ads showing in Melbourne from 1:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., almost exactly backward from when they should have been visible!

We typically do not restrict timing on showing ads, but if you do, be careful about time zones! Figure 10.6 shows the Google AdWords dialog for restricting the time and day of week for ad display.

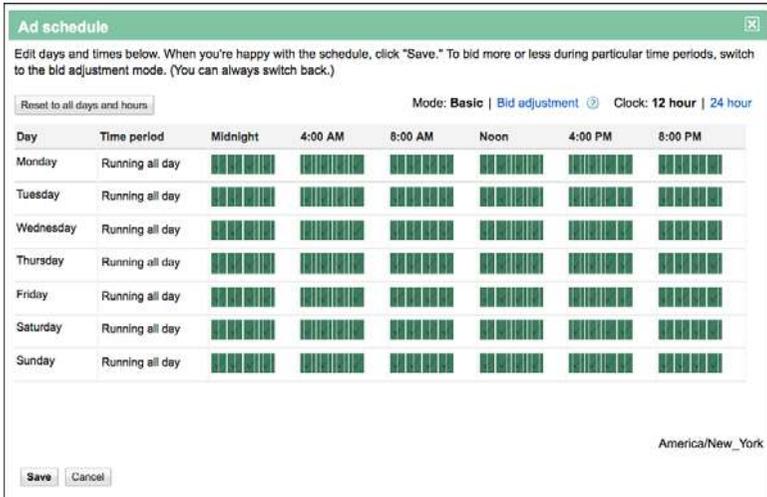


Figure 10.6 Time-of-day configuration in Google AdWords web interface. Note the time zone in the lower right.

There are similar dialogs in the MSN adCenter interface for setting location targeting and time of day, as shown in Figure 10.7.



Figure 10.7 The targeting settings dialog in the MSN adCenter paid search platform.

Basic Mechanics for Global Usability

You might very well wonder whether anything in this world could ever be defined as “globally usable.” (Even a simple tool such as the fork is not globally usable, at least not without some training.)

Perhaps one day, globally usable will be the standard for typical website development. But today, global usability is more of a stretch goal than something realistically attainable, particularly with budgetary constraints in place. Still, you can take some measures to do the best you can today (and hopefully, do a better job at it than your competition).

What you should remember about global usability is that one size does *not* fit all. To make a website globally usable, you need to customize at the local level. Changing the website copy to the local language is just one step in the process.

Before You Translate: Character Set Issues

Make sure your content management system (CMS) can display the character sets required for the languages you intend to display.

In the code for each HTML page in your website should be a single line defining the character set used on the page. This information can be included on the page in the page template, or through the .htaccess file, or set individually on a page by page basis, depending on your CMS configuration.

When this specification is omitted, the visitor’s browser may default to a standard character set, which might not map well to the content on the page and provide a bad user experience and potentially hide your content from search. Make sure you have things set up well so that your translated pages render seamlessly.



In addition, make sure that your browser has the right fonts available to render pages in other languages, just so you can see what’s on the page! Your browser should do a pretty good job out of the box, but if you are seeing nonsense characters on pages in another language, look for a language pack for your browser or your computer to bridge the gap.

Working with Forms

User interface elements, such as those on a basic contact form, need to be adjusted to handle international addresses:

- Many countries format the street name before the street number (Main Street 123, not 123 Main Street).
- ZIP (or postal) codes often precede the city name, and can include alphabetic characters as well as numbers.
- Remember to include a drop-down list to select the country.
- Phone numbers might include country codes (preceded by a plus sign), and have other unusual punctuation conventions (comma, period, or underscore), that vary from North American standards. Other countries often have longer phone numbers (more digits), as well.

The bottom line is that you should loosen your data-checking constraints on addresses, to allow website visitors to actually complete a form and become a new prospect. Another option is to create multiple forms with different data checking rules for different countries and address formats.

Working with Other Data

Here are some additional data guidelines to increase the usability of your website content:

- Date formats also vary by country (days often precede the month, for example). Even when a date is used in a sentence, the format varies from the American English standard.
- Be aware that most of the world uses the metric system for units of measurement.
- Provide temperatures in both Fahrenheit and Celsius.
- Currency conversion should be addressed.
- Electrical standards also vary (110 volt versus 220 volt).

If you have a product that works with multiple standards, explicitly state that to avoid ambiguity. It won't affect your North American customers, and someone overseas won't buy your product unless they're sure it will work in their country.

A Note for E-Commerce Websites

Do not forget that website visitors living in other countries need different payment options on an e-commerce website. One of our authors lives in Germany and has had countless experiences where an e-commerce website's shopping cart cannot accommodate a credit card with a foreign billing address (even when shipping within the United States).

It's important to note, as well, that the online shopping economy of many countries simply doesn't work with credit cards. You'll exclude website visitors, and therefore sales, if you require a credit card in some countries. (For example, in Germany only 5% of the population has a Visa or MasterCard, and only "touristy" restaurants accept them... yet you can pay at any restaurant using your ATM bank card instead.)

Consider accepting other payment methods besides the standard credit cards. An international wire transfer, which seems daunting to a U.S. customer, is standard fare throughout Europe when shopping online. (Many people bank online, so it's a simple matter of opening a new window to complete the transaction separately at your bank.)



Tip

Take a look at what eBay, PayPal, and Amazon do in your target countries. What payment types do they accept and how do they handle shopping cart checkouts? This is a good way to get an idea of what online payment methods are typical in a target country.

Making It Usable

The real goal is to create a website targeted to a country, matching the website visitor's cultural characteristics. (Language is just a start.) This means going beyond getting the simple things right, like avoiding offensive graphics.

More important, the website must work in the way that business is done in that country. It should look as much as possible like a website native to that country, for the best results. When you meet an overseas website visitor's expectations, the likelihood of a successful online interaction increases.

The inherent problem with striving for global usability is that there is not one way to design a website that is most usable to every culture, worldwide. You need to examine your target markets, your expected growth in those foreign markets, and weigh the cultural differences against your sales goals to identify how far you're willing to go to meet cultural expectations with your website.

Conduct Testing Locally

Ideally, with a sky-is-the-limit budget, you would conduct usability testing locally, in each of your target countries, to create a set of websites that each appeared culturally appropriate to its target audience.

Consider that you'll need to get around the language barrier to local usability testing, somehow. Do you speak (or understand) other languages? Can you recruit usability test participants that speak some English so that you can understand what is happening while you watch behind the one-way mirror?

Another option to test locally while reducing costs is to have staff in your overseas offices conduct the usability testing, even though they are not trained in usability practices. This often eliminates the language barrier, although the test results may not be as accurate or presented as well as a usability specialist might have done.

Of course, there is more than one way to conduct usability testing. We've outlined several methods in "Qualitative User Analysis: Observations, Usability Tests" in Chapter 7, "Making Websites That Work."

Conduct Testing Remotely

One often-preferred method of conducting usability testing in foreign markets is to use remote testing, which can be more attractive economically than in-person testing in another country.

Remote testing involves using a desktop sharing tool such as WebEx to see the test participant run through a prototype of your website, and you can use an audio link or the telephone in conjunction with it.

The upside is that costs are reduced, the downside is that you can't observe participants working through the test, only their onscreen actions, so you have very little visual feedback. Another potential downside is that you may need to be in your office at extremely strange hours to accommodate the time difference in your target market.

Something Is Better Than Nothing

Clearly, there are pros and cons for applying any of these methods to achieve global usability. But it is better to attempt a more usable website for each of your target audiences than simply to ignore your foreign markets and design a website interface solely for North America.

It might feel overwhelming to realize that you have market share in multiple countries and must test in each and every one. Don't panic. Start slowly, but *do* start. Choose a target country in each of the main areas of the world (one in Europe, one in Africa, one in Asia, and so on).

Or if you can choose just one country due to budget constraints, then do so. You'll learn so much from that first test that it's well worth the effort.

Summary

The path to international Internet marketing success is exactly the same as the path for any other marketing success: setting goals, tracking metrics, speaking to your customer, and making a website that works for your local audience. Yet, the complexity of translating content, obtaining data from business units and offices across the globe, and brokering agreement on standard lead management process adds to the challenge.

Be undaunted; good data and success lie in wait for those who brave the thickets of data gathering and content creation across many field offices and many websites.

Confirm you've handled the international basics as well as worked through the language and translation issues:

- The key to global success is translated, localized, relevant content.
- Simplify and standardize your writing to prepare for translation.
- Create a glossary for often used terms. Research the SEO value of alternative translations.
- Build a process to keep your websites up-to-date.
- Create and maintain one unified global dashboard for your web analytics and CRM reporting.

Choose or build your CMS to accommodate the variation in addresses and currency necessary to your markets.

- Focus on the right search engines in your target markets for search engine optimization and paid search. At the time of this writing, the top engine was Google except within Russia, China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

For paid search, use the correct language, geography, and time zone settings to ensure your campaigns are visible.

- Make sure your forms and shopping cart checkout work in your target countries.
- Invest in diversifying your user research to include an international audience. Test in as many locations as you can.