Why Web Translation is Critical for American Companies
An Interview with Vigdis Eriksen, part one of a two-part series
May 27, 2014

By Laurel Delaney

Web globalization, a strategy that conveys cultural, linguistic and business information to meet the needs of a target audience in an increasingly multicultural and multilingual world is the next imperative for businesses, allowing them to gain traction and relevancy as a means to foster social engagement and enable online purchases. As more and more people access the Internet, English will become less prominent as the language of choice. Which leads me to my interviewee today, Vigdis Eriksen, who leads Eriksen Translations, a leading provider of multilingual services in more than 100 languages. Here, Vigdis discusses how technology has played a factor in the growth of her business, why web translation is critical for American companies to consider and what steps you need to take to prepare. This is part one of a two-part interview.

Laurel Delaney: Thank you for being here. When did you start Eriksen Translations and why?

Vigdis Eriksen: I was born in Norway and came to the U.S. in 1977, where I began my career as a freelance translator. As business grew beyond my capabilities as a single translator, I founded my company Eriksen Translations, in 1986, specializing in the Scandinavian languages.

When I started Eriksen, companies were just beginning to use the Internet to conduct business. As people began to expand into the global marketplace, the need for translation exploded, and we were there to fill that need.

The growth in technology at the time had an impact on language as well, as it created the need for new terminology to express concepts and products that had not previously existed. One of our early jobs included coining new Norwegian terminology for the first HP printers.

LD: Since you started your business, how has technology and the Internet played a factor in the growth of your business, especially on the translation front?

VE: While the proliferation of the Internet has exponentially increased the volume of content to be translated, it has also drastically changed the way translators work. Over the years, translation tools have become more and more sophisticated. Where I once conducted business using a typewriter and fax machine, we now utilize Computer-Assisted Translation tools to save translated sentences into a client-specific database that can be reused to deliver projects faster while ensuring consistency and quality. The Internet provides unlimited resources on any subject matter 24-7. Digital communication tools such as Skype, along with a robust Translation Management System, allow us to conduct business seamlessly with linguists around the globe. Translators’ skill sets have changed accordingly. They now need not only to be proficient in their language and subject matter but must also master the technology.

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LD: Just so everyone understands and is on the same page: What is web globalization?

VE: Web Globalization is a strategy that encompasses two processes—Localization (translation and adaptation of a website to fit the target audience) and Internationalization (the process of building the website so that it can be easily localized).

These are some of the activities done during the Internationalization and Localization of a website:

1. Adapting the text
2. Translating the text
3. Modifying or creating new graphics
4. Changing colors and modifying the layout, if needed
5. Modifying tables, forms, data fields, databases

LD: Why the rise of the importance of web translation and why is it critical for American companies to consider?

VE: According to Common Sense Advisory’s (CSA) research, in the past two years the economic potential using online communication has risen from $36.5 trillion to $44.6 trillion. And only a third of online content is in English. This presents an incredible opportunity for growth into new markets around the globe. To take advantage of this tremendous potential, companies must speak the language of the market they’re targeting.

CSA research has shown that 55 percent of international visitors gravitate to, spend more time at and prefer to buy from websites in their language. So translation is critical when you want to conduct business with the world.

How to Get In the Ready-State For Translating a Website
An Interview with Vigdis Eriksen, part two of a two-part series
May 30, 2014

By Laurel Delaney

This is part two of a two-part interview with Vigdis Eriksen who heads up Eriksen Translations, a leading provider of multilingual services in more than 100 languages. Here, she discusses a five-step process to get in the ready state for translating a website, how to overcome challenges facing companies that are new to web globalization and what’s in store for the future on web globalization.

Laurel Delaney: When you work with clients who want to translate their website into another language such as Portuguese, for example, because the bulk of their inquiries are coming from Brazil, what five-step process do you recommend to make sure they are in the ready-state and have a plan?

Vigdis Eriksen: We work with our clients to make sure the following issues are considered:

1) What type of website do they have, static or dynamic? What type of technology are they using to host the website and is it managed by a Content Management System (CMS)?

2) Does the entire site need to be translated or just pieces? Will the dynamic content be translated, and if so, how will updates be handled?

3) Which languages are appropriate for the target market?

4) Is the content culturally appropriate?

5) After the launch of the new site, how will inquiries be handled when received in other languages?

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**LD:** Is there a way to optimize the potential for the greatest number of people to visit a site?

**VE:** Multilingual SEO tailored to the target region will help increase visitors to a site. Marketing in social media relevant to specific markets is also a way to help drive traffic. The content should be interesting to the people in each country. So it might be helpful to partner with a subject-matter expert. Also, it is important to review the analytics to assess where web traffic is coming from and adjust tactics and web content appropriately.

**LD:** What are the biggest challenges facing companies that are new to web globalization? Can they be overcome? How?

**VE:** It’s not enough to just translate a website, companies must be prepared to field the inquiries they receive as their business expands. They must have a process in place to reply to inquiries and manage business with non-English speaking clients. A company might consider setting up customer service and response teams able to communicate in the language they’re targeting. It’s also important to consider how web updates will be handled after the launch. The localized website should not just be a translation of the English site, but should include information that is relevant to the people in each market.

A language service provider can be an excellent resource for companies as they begin to develop the materials needed to work with new markets.

**LD:** Does it cost a lot of money to translate a website into another language?

**VE:** The cost, which is determined by the number of languages and the volume of text, is small relative to the gigantic opportunity for growth.

**LD:** What can companies do to get started on web globalization?

**VE:** Companies must first determine which markets they want to target, then develop a business and marketing plan to do so. Before beginning the process of website globalization, a company must have a website that can support multiple languages. They must also make sure their English-language site is well written, clear and grammatically correct, and free from colloquialisms and idioms. A site must also be structured to accommodate expansion. Once this framework is in place, it is best to partner with a translation company that can help ensure the content is culturally appropriate for the target audiences and develop a plan for translation.

**LD:** How do you see the future on web globalization? What’s around the corner that will help businesses prepare accordingly?

**VE:** People are getting more comfortable buying online, and this presents a huge opportunity for businesses of any size to sell around the globe. While English is still the No. 1 language spoken on the web, countries like Brazil and China are growing rapidly and may soon replace English. As more and more companies expand into non-English speaking markets, the need for web globalization will continue to grow.

**LD:** Can you give us one or two examples of companies who have great global websites?

**VE:** Starbucks and Nestlé are both great examples of companies with great global websites. They maintain their brand across countries while keeping the content relevant to those markets.

**LD:** Thank you so much Vigis for sharing your experience with us. Now, more than ever, we feel empowered to take on the world!