

A brief note from the author...

Thanks for taking a moment to read a chapter from
Beyond Borders: Web Globalization Strategies.

I wanted to alert you to a new publication devoted to the art and science of Web globalization: **Global By Design**. In the past year we've profiled companies ranging from **Dell** to **NIVEA** to **Qualcomm**. It is the only publication of its kind and it is really helping companies improve their global Web sites – and their bottom lines. Subscribers now include companies such as Google, FedEx, Lionbridge, Cargill, and Dow Corning.

To download a free sample issue, simply visit:

www.bytelevel.com/globalbydesign.

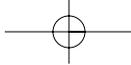
And please keep in touch regarding the key questions and issues you and your organization are facing.

Best regards,

John Yunker

jyunker@bytelevel.com

Byte Level Research LLC
phone 760-317-2001
www.bytelevel.com

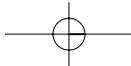
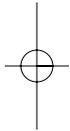
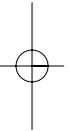


Entrées/Entrées

Visas

Departures/Sorties

| <i>Entrées/Entrées</i> | <i>Visas</i> |
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*Entries/Entrées**Visas**Departures/Sorties*

FIRST STEPS—AND MISSTEPS

You're bound to make a few mistakes when you begin web globalization. Although some mistakes are inevitable, and even necessary, you can avoid a lot of frustration (and costs) simply by avoiding the mistakes of those who went before.

A lot of companies have launched global web sites in the past few years, but most of these sites are far from perfect. For instance, many web sites are not fully translated, others are badly translated, and still others don't make it easy for international users to find their localized sites.

This chapter highlights a few of the more common mistakes that companies make when localizing web sites, and the rest of this book will show you how to avoid repeating them.

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY SITES

Because there are no borders on the Internet, there's little you can do to ensure that your German audience visits only your German web site and your American audience visits only your U.S. web site. Therefore, it's important to convey a consistent image globally, not just for branding but for usability—internally and externally.

Eli Lilly: Before and After

A year ago, Eli Lilly relied on a highly decentralized approach to web management; the branch office of each country managed its own web site, as shown in Figure 3.1. The result was inconsistent, as each office designed a unique site with little relation to its parent site. If it weren't for the Eli Lilly logo on each web site, it would have been difficult to know that the sites were even related.





Figure 3.1 Eli Lilly before: locally customized; globally inconsistent.

Recently, Eli Lilly embarked on a global redesign that enforced a consistent template across all localized sites. This arrangement left each country free to manage local content, but within global constraints. For example, the color palette and navigation system remains the same across all locales, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Beyond Borders: Web Globalization Strategies

The figure displays four screenshots of the Eli Lilly website, illustrating localization strategies across different markets:

- English (Top Left):** Features the Lilly logo with the tagline "Answers That Matter." and a navigation menu including "health info," "alliances," "news," "careers," "about us," and "global contact." The main heading is "welcome" and the text describes Eli Lilly and Company's commitment to creating innovative medicines for various conditions like depression, schizophrenia, and diabetes.
- Japanese (Top Right):** Also features the Lilly logo and tagline. The navigation menu includes "医薬情報" (Medical Information), "最新情報" (Latest Information), "採用情報" (Recruitment Information), "会社概要" (Company Overview), "海外情報" (Overseas Information), and "お問い合わせ" (Contact Us). The main heading is "日本イーライリリーのホームページへようこそ" (Welcome to the Eli Lilly Japan Home Page). The text introduces Eli Lilly as a multinational pharmaceutical company committed to providing medicines that improve quality of life.
- French (Bottom Left):** Features the Lilly logo and tagline "Des réponses qui comptent." The navigation menu includes "lilly en bref," "maladies et traitements," "lilly recrute," and "institut lilly." The main heading is "bienvenue" and the text discusses the company's commitment to providing quality medicines.
- Norwegian (Bottom Right):** Features the Lilly logo and tagline "Answers That Matter." The navigation menu includes "Bedriften," "Terapiområder," "Produkter," "Karriere," "Forskning," and "Lieber." The main heading is "velkommen til Eli Lilly Norge A.S." The text describes Eli Lilly as a research-based American pharmaceutical company committed to providing innovative medicines.

Figure 3.2 Eli Lilly after: locally customized; globally consistent.

Choose Colors Carefully

Colors mean different things to different cultures, so select your global palette carefully. I'll talk more about colors and how to choose and use them effectively in Chapters 4, "Are You Ready to Go Global?," 7, "Internationalization and Localization," and 11, "World Wide Design."

By instituting a degree of consistency across all sites, Eli Lilly conveys a more professional global image. Someone who skips over to the Norway site from the U.S. site will know immediately from the consistent layout and prominent logo placement that these two sites are indeed related. In addition, the global site architecture makes it easier for people who jump from site to site to quickly find what they're looking for.

The global web team also benefits from a consistent site architecture. Should a new product category need to be added to all country sites, the team can simply update the shared navigation bar and then localize it for each country. The process is much easier to implement than asking each local team to make the change and being unsure of what it would look like or when it would happen.

For more information on creating globally consistent web sites, see Chapters 7, "Internationalization and Localization," and 13, "Global Content Management."

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OVERWEIGHT SITES

Nobody likes to wait for a web page to display, yet most of us do just that, day after day, because companies have built "overweight" web sites. An *overweight web site* is one that uses too many graphics or too much complex scripting (or both). Put simply, the greater the weight, the greater the *wait*.

And although overweight web sites can be a mild frustration for users in the U.S., they are a major obstacle to users outside the U.S., where high-speed Internet connections are often few and far between.



Have a Coke and Some Patience

The Coca-Cola U.S. web site, shown in Figure 3.3, is a bandwidth hog. It makes extensive use of Macromedia Flash, a software development tool used to create animated sites. The home page looks more like a commercial—with music and animation—than a static web page. Although Flash can be used to create highly engaging web sites, animation does not come without a price.



Figure 3.3 The Coca-Cola U.S. home page relies on extensive animation, putting a drain on even high-speed Internet connections.

The Weight and the Waiting

Based on the measurements of more than 300 home pages of the most popular web sites, the average web page weighs 89KB, but this number is just the average. Web pages run the gamut from Yahoo!, at 36KB, to General Motors, at 547KB. Using a dial-up modem, an 89KB web page takes roughly 14 seconds to display—a long time to expect people to wait.

You should strive to keep your web pages well below 89KB so that your users don't perceive your site as loading more slowly than average. If you compete against Yahoo!, you need to keep your site a great deal lighter than average.

The Coca-Cola U.S. home page weighs 198KB, more than twice the average. Had Coke not included animation and music, it could easily have saved 100KB in weight. Losing weight does not imply losing all entertainment value, however. Animation can still be included on a web page, but it should be used selectively. The problem with the Coca-Cola page isn't just the animation, but that so much animation was used. And when you localize a page of this weight for other countries, the problem gets that much worse.



The Coca-Cola Japan home page weighs 268KB, even more than the U.S. home page. Ironically, Japanese web users have slower Internet connections, on average, than American web users. You should never build a web strategy that relies on the patience of your audience.



Figure 3.4 The Coca-Cola Japan page also relies on animation, but most Japanese web users do not have high-speed connections.



At the other end of the spectrum, the Yahoo! Japan page weighs in at only 37KB—a much more user-friendly page weight (see Figure 3.5). Not surprisingly, according to Nielsen/NetRatings (www.netratings.com), Yahoo! Japan is consistently the most visited Japanese web site.



Figure 3.5 The Yahoo! Japan home page uses no animation and few graphics. It is just as lightweight in Japan as it is in the U.S.

For more information on creating web sites that load quickly—globally—refer to Chapters 7, “Internationalization and Localitation,” 11, “World Wide Design,” and 12, “Creating Multilingual Content.”

Creating an overweight site for an audience who can’t enjoy it is like inviting people to a party and not letting them near the bar. Not only is it frustrating, it’s alienating—the last thing an American company wants to do to the world.

SITES THAT PLAY HARD TO GET

Navigation can make or break a web site, particularly when you are trying to help users who don’t speak English find their localized web pages. Many companies simply don’t plan ahead when building localized sites and then find themselves inserting a link to the localized sites at or near the bottom of the English site. This link, often called a *global gateway* or *language gateway*, is a critical component of generating traffic to your localized sites.

See if you can find the global gateway on the General Electric home page, shown in Figure 3.6. It’s not easy to find if you don’t speak English. Even if you do find it, a pull-down menu is not the ideal gateway, as the languages and countries are hidden from plain view.

Taking Your URL Global

Every country has its own domain address, like .jp for Japan or .no for Norway. Have you registered your country domains? And are you aware of multilingual domain names? I’ll cover this topic in Chapter 14, “Mastering Your (Country) Domain.”





Figure 3.6 The global gateway on the GE home page is located near the bottom of the left-hand column—not easy for non-English speakers to find.

People who manage web globalization projects want to see positive and measurable results from their localized web sites. But if you haven't taken the necessary steps to help users find these sites, you probably won't get the results you expected.

The Search for Sears

The U.S. Sears site is easy enough to find; just type in www.sears.com. Getting to the Spanish and French-Canadian Sears sites is a little more challenging, though (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 The Sears home page, with the Spanish and Canadian links circled.

The links to the localized sites are oddly set apart from one another. To further complicate matters, the link to the Spanish site is labeled “Todo para ti” (“Everything for you”). A simple “Español” would have sufficed. The phrase is the slogan for the Spanish Sears site, shown in Figure 3.8; it’s also the URL: www.searstodoparati.com. Using your slogan as a URL prevents you from easily changing your slogan in the future.

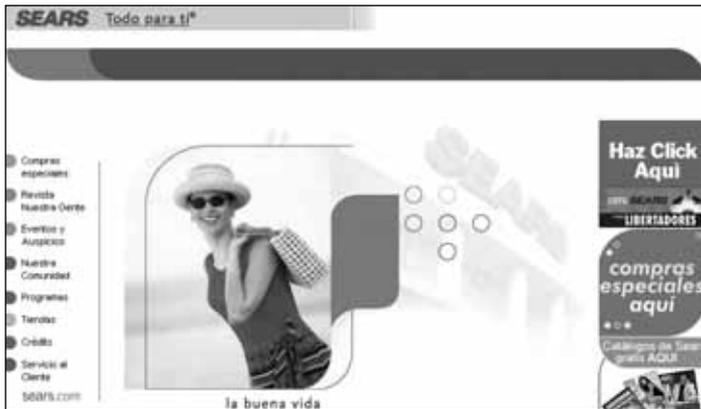


Figure 3.8 The address of the Sears Spanish home page is www.searstodoparati.com—hardly an intuitive address.

How would someone find the Spanish site if he or she doesn't know the slogan and doesn't see the link on the home page? A language that is not country specific, such as Spanish, is more challenging to find because you can't simply use a country-specific address, such as www.sears.com.mx. Many sites follow a more standardized directory structure, such as adding the language code to the end of the URL: www.hrblock.com/es or www.oracle.com/es, for example. Although this system isn't foolproof, it's much more predictable for users than the Sears approach.

The Sears Canada site is much easier to manage because it's located under the country domain www.sears.ca. In Canada, companies are required by law to offer both English and French translations on their sites. In Figure 3.9, note the location of the French link on the site—this one is easy to find.

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Figure 3.9 The Sears Canada page, unlike the U.S. page, makes language selection easy to find.

For more information on creating web sites that international users can easily find, see Chapters 11, "World Wide Design," and 14, "Mastering Your (Country) Domain."

The random organization of the localized Sears sites suggests that Sears did not have a clear localization strategy from the beginning. As a new localized site was added, the link to it was squeezed into the home page wherever there was room—a common problem with localization projects. Companies need to place a priority on their global gateways from both a design and usability standpoint; the navigation must be simple and consistent across all locales.

SLOPPY SITES

Badly written sentences, mistranslations, oversights, and inconsistencies are all too common in localized web sites. Because many web developers don't speak the languages of the sites they're developing, mistakes are bound to occur. Examples of common mistakes include the following:

- **Using the wrong icons.** For example, the U.S.-style mailbox icon is not a globally recognized icon, nor is the shopping cart.
- **Using the wrong models.** Many sites translate every word of text, but fail to use models that reflect the target market. Some cultures are more sensitive to the models a company uses in its advertising and web sites. For example, on a Japanese web site, you'll want to use Japanese models, not the same American models you used for your U.S. site.



- **Using dated content.** Localized sites often are not kept up to date because the initial translation budget is depleted, and no one was ever given the responsibility of keeping the content current.
- **Using untranslated content.** A lot of companies don't go far enough when localizing their site, leaving some of the pages in the source language. Perhaps the obstacle was the budget or design, but in the end, the site looks unfinished. Unless your target audience consists of only bilinguals, this approach is bound to leave people feeling left out.

Novell France: Errors of Omission

On the Novell France page, the navigation buttons on the left side of the page have been translated, but the buttons at the top of the page remain in English. The design of Novell's global site, shown in Figure 3.10, is such that these top navigation buttons always remain in English because they always link to English-language pages.



Figure 3.10 Nearly half the text on the Novell France home page is in English.

Nevertheless, the visitor who doesn't understand what these buttons mean should at least be told somewhere that they refer only to English content. Better yet, the buttons could just be removed to free up space for localized content. A simple "English" link in the upper-right corner would have sufficed for users in need of English-language content.

Finally, the search engine is apparently designed only for English speakers because both the pull-down menu and "Advanced Search" options remain in English. Once again, it might have made more sense to leave this feature off the page altogether if a fully localized search engine wasn't going to be made available. At the least, the search engine should warn users of its limitation.



For more information on creating high-quality web sites, see Chapters 5, "Web Globalization Workflow," 7, "Internationalization and Localization," 8, "Translation Management," and 15, "Supporting International Customers."

Even if you speak only English, you can successfully localize web sites—but you can't do it alone. You need experts who can proof your work and you need a dependable, repeatable workflow.

WEB GLOBALIZATION IS RELATIVE

The majority of companies are in the early stages of web globalization, so missteps are inevitable and quite common. And because most companies are doing a poor-to-average job at localization, you can gain a competitive edge by simply *not* repeating their mistakes.

Your competitive edge is relative, however. After you localize your site for a new market, you need to do as good a job, or better, than others in that market. If someone in France can choose between your web site and the sites of several local competitors, your site is going to have to be much more culturally relevant to stand apart. Web globalization is a long journey, but the following chapters will help you get off to a good start, one step at a time.



