

Click2Learn Case Study Making Localization Happen—on Time and on Budget

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The challenge was significant: simultaneous, 7-language localization of Click2Learn’s Aspen v2.1 product with only 11 weeks to get it done. This ultimately meant that over 1.5 million words had to be translated, edited, integrated back into the application, and tested—all within 9 working weeks.

Click2learn is the recognized leader in enterprise productivity solutions for Global 2000 organizations and government agencies seeking to improve business performance and workforce productivity. Its Aspen Enterprise Productivity Suite is a global, scalable, 100% Web-based e-learning application that enables an organization to manage all aspects of learning. Click2learn's clients include such industry leaders as Accenture, American Airlines, AstraZeneca, Century 21, Fujitsu, Microsoft, Pfizer and Symantec.

Click2Learn has always accommodated its customers with multilanguage versions of its products in the past, but their language requirements were rapidly increasing along with the increasing size of their customer base. The company’s distribution channel had previously performed language translation duties as needed but now Click2Learn was looking at a more aggressive objective: Simultaneously release its products into 7 languages in an 11-week timeframe. This workload would simply be too much for their distributors for whom localization was largely an ancillary task. Brad Crain, Click2Learn’s VP of Products says: “We now needed to hire a third party localization vendor whose primary focus was to help us deliver a 7-language release in a short time frame.”

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Fortunately, William Fry, Click2Learn’s Lead Architect of the Aspen Enterprise Productivity Suite, had already successfully dealt with many of the internationalization issues, so the software was able to effectively handle localized text, computations, and other locale specific nuances. However, he had many reservations about choosing a localization vendor. “No development cycle is perfect; there is always last minute changes. One of my biggest fears was, as we got near the end of the product development cycle, that there would be a lot of finger pointing and a lot of added costs and other surprises at the end of the project.”

Click2Learn needed a localization vendor who was truly flexible, understood the unpredictable nature of the software development process, and could work closely with their internal development department as a cohesive team. Welocalize, based in Frederick, Maryland, was chosen to partner with Click2Learn for the localization of its Aspen v2.1 product. The company not only specialized in working with e-learning companies, but it also had an impressive list of successes working with technology development organizations. In fact, over 90 percent of Welocalize’s customer base is comprised of companies that develop some kind of technology product. “Welocalize was chosen for several reasons,” says Brad Crain. “But primarily, they came highly recommended to me as a company that knew how to make things happen and produce high quality work.”

The Planning Stage

To kick off a project, Welocalize typically performs what they call a “Discovery” at the client’s site, which involves all the project stakeholders from both companies. This often includes personnel from development, marketing, technical documentation, executive management and more. It is the objective of these meetings to build a fluid project plan that addresses all the different elements of localization—and each client’s plan is unique.

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A typical Discovery involves acquiring project specifications and determining scope, documenting the entire processes, defining and structuring in-country review plans, defining tools and technologies to optimize production, determining file handoffs, and much more. “It was very clear from the beginning that Welocalize had done their homework for the Discovery,” says William Fry. “I was especially impressed when I realized that they had already gone through our code and figured out the vast majority of our directory structures even before I had introduced it to them.”

Chris Grebisz, Vice President of Welocalize says: “The Discovery also allows us to come away with an exhaustive list of unknowns. Ironically, sometimes the key to a project’s

success may be understanding what you don’t know. It allows for better planning and greatly reduces surprises—on both sides.”

The Project

As a company, Click2Learn was completely committed to the multi-language release, and this mentality was driven from the top down. Any issues relating to the project were answered quickly and thoroughly by Click2Learn, but communication is always a two way street.

William Fry adds: “Any email I sent to Welocalize got an answer within 2 hours—even if it didn’t have a direct relation to the project. This responsiveness made a strong impression on myself and my development team.”

Welocalize’s European headquarters was also intimately involved in production, thereby enabling around-the-clock production. Furthermore, Welocalize was given direct access into Click2Learn’s development environment, so they had access to its source control, defect tracker, and other key areas within the development environment. This allowed Welocalize to do many tasks themselves without having to rely on a Click2Learn resource.

Effective communications between all teams was a monumental task with localization production centers in the USA and Europe to be managed; six translation teams (made up of translators and editors) in six different countries; and six teams of Click2Learn’s in-country reviewers—not to mention managing the communication between all of them and Click2Learn! All told, the project involved over 100 stakeholders, so it is no surprise that effective query management was one of the major challenges. Often times, a question posed by one team member was a concern across many of the teams; therefore, keeping everyone on the same page was a real challenge.

Matt Grebisz, Senior Program Manager for Welocalize states, "The tools and methodologies I implemented for query management basically prevented Click2Learn from having to answer multiple queries about the same topic, which I know is a common frustration among client-side localization managers."

The need of specialized tools was identified early on in the Discovery phase of the project. With over a million words and a very tight timeline, the project needed to move directly from translation to QA, essentially eliminating as much software localization as possible.

The Welocalize engineering team developed custom tools for efficient string management, and then integrated those tools into the build phase of the project methodology—greatly reducing actual localization time.

Chris Grebisz continues: "A high percentage of issues in localization are real estate issues, if you can eliminate most of them on the front-end, it will save time and money on the back-end during production."

The Results

The 7 language, simultaneous release of Aspen v2.1 was successfully delivered on schedule and within budget. Bill Fry, Lead Architect of the Aspen Enterprise Productivity Suite, comments further: "It was

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Welocalize and Click2Learn have since solidified the localization program even further; consequently, the going forward plan for localization is more scalable, repeatable, and cost effective.

Chris Grebisz, VP of Welocalize finally adds: "The infrastructure we now have in place will have a good effect for Click2Learn since their cost per locale will likely go down and our ability to deliver will continue to be maximized."