

# Author for Translation

## or Don't and Pay More

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For people in the language translation industry, the concept of controlled authoring is probably not new. It is a simple concept: if you can become more efficient and consistent with the source content that you produce, not only do you reinforce key messages to your audience, you also reduce new translations.

To some people, controlled authoring means restricting or eliminating creativity. For others, though, it means quality improvement and time reduction. If you save yourself even one phrase or sentence in the source, it equates into one or more saved phrases or sentences in every target language. The more languages, the more savings.

So in this context, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

For those companies who offer language translation services, this concept might seem counter to what drives financial growth within their companies. However, the concept provides such added value, it is worth a detailed look.

Each language service provider (LSP) should be continually seeking new and innovative ways to create value for their clients. This approach to business will position them among the more prominent service and technology providers. It also begins to fuse what have historically been disparate business functions: development (authoring) and translation.

#### MAKE YOUR BUSINESS CASE

The impetus for any new change is generally value or gain, as in the form of sales or revenue growth or cost reduction. Once the case for potential value has been made, you can begin to evaluate methods for achieving the value: What is the cost of the method? Does it outweigh the value that will be derived?

The value case for controlled authoring (or authoring for translation) can apply both to single-language and multilanguage scenarios. Even businesses that do not translate their source content can find significant value when repurposing previously authored content. Consistency in content is important. If the content reinforces key messaging, customers are more likely to remember the message.

Of course, it is also beneficial when writers can produce documentation or other types of content more efficiently. Therefore, the time associated with editing or creating new content should also be considered.

These same benefits are compounded if the content will ultimately require language translation. For each source segment that can be reused, it can save numerous translated segments. In other words, it can prevent unnecessary new translations through reuse of existing translations.

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to complement that philosophy in a more interactive, granular, and process-specific sense.

#### **METHODS FOR RESOLUTION**

After analyzing the current business process and successfully constructing the value justification, you need to consider the best methods to achieve the targeted goals. Begin by considering how content producers create or edit material. What software programs do they use? Are documents and content centrally managed currently? Who are the contributors in the process? What is the sequence of events in the global-communication supply chain?

If any type of content centralization exists, be it a formal CMS or even a consistent network storage location for files, begin there. This content, which is generally encapsulated within physical documents, must be converted to a data format that allows

for advanced indexing, to enable the retrieval and reuse demands that will be imposed.

So as not to make this a specific product endorsement, I will declare that, at the time of this publication, I'm aware of only two products that were designed specifically to work interactively with authors: AuthorAssistant™ from SDL International and Authoring Coach TMX (AC) from Sajan. My examples will focus on the capabilities and applied use of Sajan's Authoring Coach TMX.

Data may be imported into Authoring Coach in a number of ways. If you have any TMX-compliant translation memory file, you are free to use it. Or if you have any text or delimited file format that holds your source content, this too is easily imported. If you are dealing with a translation agency or translator, these two formats will be available to you.

However, in many cases, these particular formats do

This reuse adds a layer of cost savings that quickly justifies the authoring technologies that are needed to accomplish such control.

Once the content is in the language translation process, it is too late for a translator to identify a fuzzy match. Not because it's technically impossible. Indeed, it's most common. But ideally, such match opportunities should be identified and remedied at a more logical time in the process—content development.

Lastly, there is strong evidence to suggest that fusing the content creation and language translation processes also provides for less overall project taxation. Enabling authors to interact directly with a centralized content repository serves as a common denominator for interaction within the global-communications supply chain.

This approach is not meant to compete with content management systems (CMS). Rather, it is intended

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not exist. Customers will often have a vast array of PDF files or Microsoft® Word files. When using Authoring Coach, these file formats can be imported directly. The files are stripped of textual content, converted to the XML-based TMX format, and indexed for use. This enables users to begin working with an authoring product without having to have direct access to their translation memories or past multilingual data.

With the data now safely indexed and ready for use, we move our attention to the application that authors prefer to work in. Again, at the time of this article, no single standard is in existence, so authoring-application autonomy is also critical. Because Authoring Coach works with the operating system, it works with any Windows-based authoring or editing application.

Authoring Coach also accommodates variances in search methods and data storage. Users may organize data in a manner specific to them. They can turn on or off data, so the authoring memory is specific to the subject matter in which they are working.

As each author works within his or her editing environment, Authoring Coach operates in the background and presents selections from past content that are similar to the content at hand. This helps drive consistency. The author might also enter key terms in a search window to retrieve complete segments from past content. This enables efficiency-driven writers

to easily and quickly use content from previous documents.

Beyond legacy-content retrieval, it is also important to use some level of terminology management within the authoring environment. Terminology evolves. Terms that were used previously are not necessarily correct today. It gets even more complicated when you consider that product or brand content is altered globally.

With Sajan’s Term Director built directly into the Authoring Coach product, terminology management is integrated into the authoring process. Any term, phrase, or segment may be tagged as the search criterion whenever the application is being used.

An associated rule is also created. When content is found that has an associated rule, the rule is presented to the user, who then may adhere to it or disregard it. This is a method of establishing greater compliance with content creation rules and terminology.

Finally, as writers edit and create new content, it is likely that the data requires periodic updates. With proper credentials, a user may save updates to the repository, so future versions will reflect the revised content. These database files may be stored on the user’s local machine or centrally on a network.

#### **MANAGING GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS**

This process and technology has been put to the test in many large-scale corporate authoring environments. The original prototype that led to a patent filing three years ago was designed for writers that cared primarily about effectively managing single-language content production. This quickly evolved into technological features that were designed to create value for customers for one language or for those translating into many languages. Usability and product research provided a list of process efficiencies, consistency gains, and direct cost savings when rolled up over the global-communications supply chain.

As we all strive to innovate and establish new value opportunities for our clients, controlled authoring should be considered. Regardless of what tool you use or how it is applied, the base practice will result in value. In many cases, this may present new opportunities for LSPs to become more tightly integrated with their clients.

We are operating in an age where the pure service vendor is too easily displaced. It is highly likely that you will realize business growth or client retention by broadening your solutions offering and making your client’s life easier. Value always prevails.