Multilingual Product Content:

Transforming Traditional Practices to Global Content Value Chains

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The Gilbane Group

Extract: Adobe Systems Best Practices Profile

THE GILBANE GROUP

Adobe Systems

A leader in design and publishing technology for over 25 years, Adobe Systems has $3.5 billion in revenue and over 7,100 employees. It offers business, creative, and mobile software solutions that focus on how the world engages with ideas and information, including the well-known Flash® Professional, Adobe® Reader®, Photoshop®, Dreamweaver®, FrameMaker®, InDesign®, and After Effects® products.

Adobe generates over 50% of its revenue from outside the United States. Its products are in use on 98% of the world's Internet-enabled desktops. With its large, global customer base, and long commitment to localization and translation, Adobe has developed a truly global infrastructure – with the people, processes, and technology – for multilingual product communications.

Focus on the Globalization Team

Globalization is a team of 100+ people around the world responsible for the internationalization standards and best practices across the company. The group delivers Adobe's localized products, and the corresponding marketing, operational, and support information, including global product and brand content (packaging, collaterals, web & interactive). The Globalization team has the distinction of playing both tactical and strategic roles for Adobe.

The group leads efforts to promote corporate-wide global thinking, improve product "world readiness", and support Adobe's geographic expansion strategy, ultimately enabling Adobe to grow and scale to address the needs of all customer types in the global marketplace.

In its work with engineering, the Globalization team drives the development of Adobe's localized products through a unique offering of localization/ translation tools and services. Major deliverables from the Globalization team include operations and best practice guides. Additional deliverables include global product content for Adobe websites, online help, and customer support materials, as well as specialized materials like scripting guides and product release notes.

This team is part of the larger Adobe Experience and Technology Organization (XTO), which authors technical documentation in addition to managing web content, digital imaging, design layout, and video production. All of XTO is tasked with ensuring a high level of quality and accuracy for product communications.

Content Globalization Challenges

Underlying all Adobe activities are the key corporate drivers of reducing costs, increasing customer satisfaction, and improving quality. These drivers are common to many large, multinational corporations, all of whom must figure out how to build efficiencies into their operations as they continue to innovate.

Because the Adobe brand and reputation is directed at "creative" users around the world, the Globalization team faces major challenges in delivering these creative applications for use in the local languages. In this context, the team must add new languages to their portfolio at the same time they are tasked to address a greater number of geographic markets at varying levels of maturity and financial health – and they must do this (like most other global enterprises) in an environment where there's increasing pressure to reduce resources and expenses.
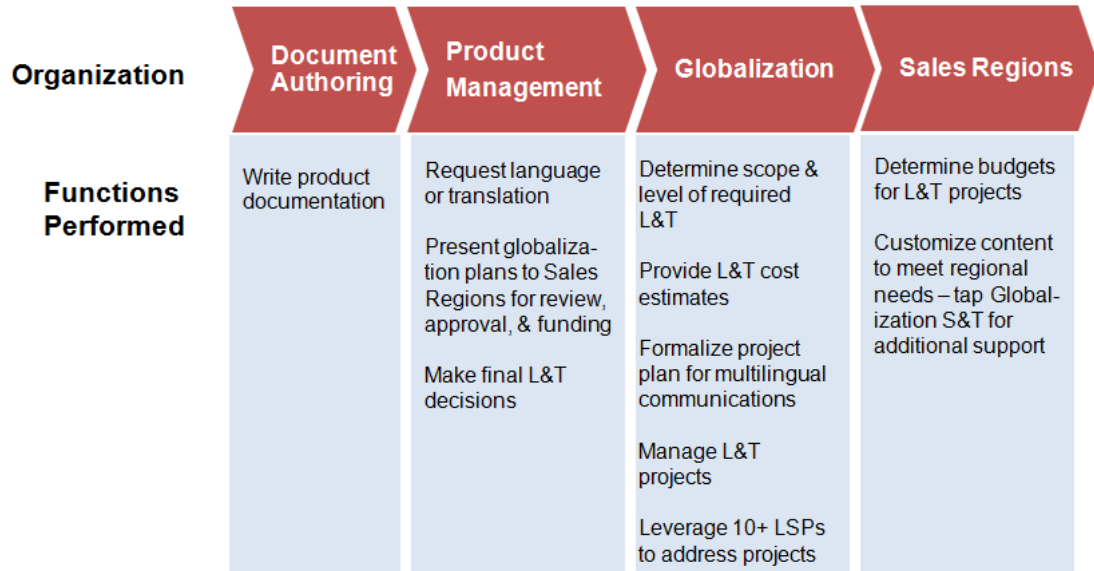
The Solution

Adobe's Global Content Value Chain (GCVC) addresses a solid set of the people, processes, and technology required for a flexible, scalable infrastructure. The technologies deployed by Adobe are evidence of the breadth of capabilities and competence residing within Adobe:

GCVC Function	GCVC Technologies
Create	• Structured authoring software • Terminology data base
Localize/Translate	• Translation Memory and Machine Translation • Multilingual terminology management • Language Service Providers (LSPs) for translation and value added services
Manage	• Web content management software • Document management software
Publish	• Multi-channel publishing software

In addition, the Adobe GCVC is enriched through feedback from customers - derived from surveys, as well as input form blogs and wikis - which helps ensure that product communications are clear, timely, and effective.

What's more, Adobe has personnel spread across the globe, with particular organizations headquartered in different locales. Managing their GCVC with a global workforce is a challenge unto itself. To ensure success in this context, Adobe has formalized and institutionalized the GCVC as it relates to different organizations, clarifying the ownership and expected deliverables from each organization, as highlighted in the graphic below.

Organization	Document Authoring	Product Management	Globalization	Sales Regions
Functions Performed	Write product documentation	Request language or translation Present globalization plans to Sales Regions for review, approval, & funding Make final L&T decisions	Determine scope & level of required L&T Provide L&T cost estimates Formalize project plan for multilingual communications Manage L&T projects Leverage 10+ LSPs to address projects	Determine budgets for L&T projects Customize content to meet regional needs – tap Globalization S&T for additional support

Globalization, then, apportions out the work to its distributed team. The group that does all the product internationalization, for instance, has two international group program managers in the United States (not at the headquarters location) supported by engineering/program management teams in the U.S.A., China, Romania, and India, and vendors and outsourcers in many countries.

Results

Adobe's GCVC evolved significantly when the Globalization team focused on departmental goals that supported higher level corporate goals:

Corporate Goal	Division Deliverables
Cost Savings	• Increased revenue/customer base • Decreased localization/translation costs • Increase in translation volume without cost increases
Customer Satisfaction	• Improvements in "simship" for product information • Improvements in customer experience
Quality Improvements	• Single sourcing • Better alignment with product design, development, and manufacturing • Improved content consistency and accuracy

In terms of localization and translation, the team has also achieved excellent results through the innovative use of LSPs. They tapped Jonckers Translation & Engineering,

for example, because of its in-depth knowledge of Adobe requirements and additional expertise in localization engineering. Jonckers assumed a major role in localizing Adobe's digital video products, and then was able to carry the translation memories and term base forward for reuse in the localization/translation of product documentation.

The team also keeps track of globalization performance through metrics on localization and translation from their translation management technology. They also conduct surveys to obtain feedback from many sources, including physical product packages (enclosures), trade conferences, customers, and user and translation communities.

Gilbane Group Perspective

The GCVC utilized by Adobe's Globalization team is durable and robust enough to accommodate a wide variety of geographic, market, and economic requirements. There is a working balance between central and regional resources in both decision making and project execution. There is sufficient alignment between executive sponsors, sales regions, product management, Globalization, and other XTO departments.

The GCVC includes a complete infrastructure with technology covering core GCVC functions; processes driving enterprise interaction and collaboration; clear polices for governance; and sufficient resourcing of internal and external personnel. Most impressive is that the infrastructure is not only robust, but also scalable, and can handle increased volumes of translation, new languages, and product introductions without buckling under the strain.

One key factor in making this possible has been the "stratactical" nature of the Globalization team, which has succeeded at both its strategic and tactical charters. Strategically, the team has been pivotal in communicating the value of product globalization across Adobe (as cross-functional and operational champions), and in architecting the infrastructure necessary to achieve good outcomes. Tactically, the team has provided localization and translation services and for delivering localized product content. It's a remarkable accomplishment.