# Multilingual Product Content:

## Transforming Traditional Practices to Global Content Value Chains

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**The Gilbane Group**

## Extract: Hewlett-Packard Best Practices Profile

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# Hewlett-Packard

Founded in 1939, Hewlett-Packard (HP) is a among the world's largest IT companies, focused on simplifying technology experiences for all its customers – from individual consumers to the largest businesses. The company's offerings span IT infrastructure, software, services, business and personal computing, and imaging and printing. Ranking #9 in the 2009 Fortune 500, HP revenue for 2008 totaled $118.4 billion, up 13 percent from fiscal year 2007.

HP serves over one billion customers in 170 countries on six continents. The company strives to make it as easy as possible for these customers to do business with HP. The company's content globalization strategy is specifically designed to provide HP customers with the right information, at the right time and in the right way. These goals include a strong focus on multilingual product content to convey a single, consistent corporate voice that adapts to global customer expectations.

One of HP's most successful product lines is HP ProCurve, with an industry-standards-based Adaptive Network that represents the fastest-growing business unit within the company. Providing a full portfolio of wired and wireless infrastructure solutions, HP ProCurve reported year-over-year worldwide revenue and port growth for Q3 2008 that outpaced the growth rate of the networking industry.[1]

As is the case with HP worldwide, the HP ProCurve commitment to multilingual product content is deep. Exceptional performance on a worldwide scale is paramount, as global expansion in areas such as Europe, the Middle East, China, and Africa is critical to sustaining the unit's position as the world's second largest enterprise LAN networking vendor.[2]

## Focus on Global Education Services

Two core beliefs define HP's holistic approach to content globalization and, in turn, to global product content. One, that content (including images and rich media) is a core corporate asset to be shared and reused regardless of its final destination, i.e., technical documentation, training, marketing collateral, or web and print product catalogs. And two, that localization and translation processes are of equal priority and value within content authoring, management, and delivery.

For the HP ProCurve unit, this approach is exemplified by the fusing of traditionally separate subject matter experts (SMEs) under one "roof." Global Education Services (GES) Manager Rebekah Harvey's team of 11 technical writers (5 fulltime, 6 contracted), 8 program managers, and 4 courseware developers sits within HP ProCurve's marketing organization. Team outputs include technical documentation (web and printed), online help, training materials, and customer support information. Ensuring content quality, consistency, and accuracy is an overarching mandate.

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[1] Dell'Oro Group, "Q3'08 Switched Ethernet Report," December 2008.

[2] Dell'Oro Group, "Q1'08 Switched Ethernet Report," May 2008.

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GES has direct linkages to engineering, sales, marketing, and global partner learning through their participation in cross-functional project teams, service level-agreements, and direct deliverables. Team members are viewed as critical to product launch success, with technical writers participating in agile development processes and often contributing critical usability feedback to project team leads. In this unit, collaboration and product content repurposing is achieved in multiple directions.

## Content Globalization Challenges

Like most operational champions, Harvey's goal is to "get to that gold ring of single sourcing." Her mission is bolstered by the fact that the team creates and owns a full range of product content, providing the foundation for the inevitable emergence of the "cross-functional" champion role, defined earlier in this report. Harvey's challenges include issues that many organizations can relate to in terms of strengthening the unit's Global Content Value Chain (GCVC):

- Migrating from unstructured to structured content creation and management processes to enable single sourcing and remove redundancies in content creation and publishing.
- Transitioning writing approaches from procedure-based book paradigms to user assistance-driven topics and learning guides. As she noted, "It's not about what the product does anymore, it's about how to use it."
- Improving strategies for increased multilingual product content volume.
- Reducing the cost of post-sales support.

The GES team produces product content that is translated into seven core languages, with a greater emphasis on training materials than on technical documentation. Additional languages are sometimes added based on business requirements. Traditionally, a significant portion of HP ProCurve's localization/translation requirements have been managed regionally, without the benefit of balanced centralized and regional decision-making. Knowing this is not scalable in the long run, Harvey's team has initiated transition planning with the help of HP's centralized Translation and Localization (T&L) department.

## The Solution

There are three critical principles embedded in the HP ProCurve Global Education Services team's approach to content globalization challenges – simplification, leverage what's available, and focus on scalability.

Simplifying content creation and management processes is an ongoing, phased initiative. Historically, GES training materials were created separately from technical documentation, leading to double-expenses for the same product launch. Completing a full redesign of the curriculum for HP ProCurve's Sales and Technical Certification programs is enabling courseware developers to leverage 70-80% of existing technical documentation for repurposing. As a whole, the GES team is moving quickly to redefine which content chunks are created by training and which are created by the technical documentation SMEs, thus ensuring that single-sourcing is achievable.

Harvey estimates that 71-80% of the *entire* GES product content foundation can be reused or repurposed.

Simplification also includes a shift to XML-based authoring for technical documentation. Understanding that structured authoring is an established best practice, the GES team is determined to make the move to XML as per their 2009 strategic development plan. Based on strong templates in place for the team's unstructured authoring environment and past collaborations with Lasselle-Ramsey and other external and internal resources on business content development strategy, the team has a strong foundation. And with an average technical writer tenure of 22 years, Harvey notes the team has a "depth and wealth of knowledge in product content development."

Here's where the team's second principle, "leverage what's available," will ensure success. There are many teams within the larger HP organization that are well on their way to XML-driven single-sourcing.  Harvey's plan is to leverage the in-house knowledge that exists in other business units to shorten the learning curve for the GES team.  "There are in-house tools and best-practices already in existence" Harvey says. "My team's job is to figure out how those can work for us."  This effort will include a focus on existing implementations of component content management (CCM) solutions to determine their applicability to GES.

The leverage principle will also include direction from the HP's centralized Translation and Localization (T&L) department on integrating translation memory technologies into CCM workflows. Tapping into centralized guidance and governance will also allow Harvey to develop solid working relationship with 1-2 key Language Services Providers (LSPs) who have been evaluated and assessed by the T&L team.

Harvey's ultimate goal is to gain efficiencies that 1) enable the re-use of source product content across documentation, training, and customer support processes, and 2) support increased demands for multilingual product content. The "focus on scalability" principle will surely come in handy in this regard.

## Results

The GES team has moved from somewhat passive participation to active business ownership through the implementation of new prioritization and committed deliverables processes.  By assessing each new product and the requested deliverables against critical business elements such as revenue expectations, product complexity and strategic value, the team has been able to reduce the number of required deliverables in many cases and increase committed deliverables in others.  This process has not only helped the team grow in terms of individual business knowledge, it has often also pushed product teams to reconsider required spend for launch success.

Consistent collaboration within the team and across domains such as engineering, sales, marketing, and global partner learning have led to an impressive focus on measurement and analytics, a key component within Global Content Value Chain (GCVC) strategy for product content.

Results from both annual and "real-time" GES surveys provide the team with ongoing customer perspective on areas such as content quality, accessibility, and usefulness. Integrating these results through cross-domain feedback loops, GES will have metrics on distinct content chunks that drive decreases in customer questions or problems and increases in customer satisfaction. An initiative to measure ROI on the effectiveness of internal sales training reveals that sales personnel that have completed training and certification programs realize significantly more sales than those who have not.

As the team delivers more product content to technology-enabled post-sales support systems, the level and volume of customer feedback will increase through online surveys accessible from individual web pages. The plan for continuing to secure product content metrics is strong. As Harvey notes, "We will be ahead of the curve when our call centers begin to request this data on a regular basis."

## Gilbane Group Perspective

The GES team is extremely aligned with its divisional and corporate-level goals. While it benefits from an organizational hierarchy that fuses product content roles and deliverables, hierarchy alone does not define success or create vision. The team's commitment to internal and cross-domain collaboration is what sets it apart.

As a whole, the HP ProCurve unit also boasts a strong use of internal shared workspaces for collaboration and external online communities for customer support, including country-specific social networking accounts. Again taking a proactive approach, GES team members are often contributors to the unit's wiki and Facebook pages. However, as Gilbane notes in the *Beyond the Research* section, it is not unusual that their contribution is not yet a formal team responsibility.  As social media emerges as a product content channel, Harvey expects a growing number of product content SMEs to play an "official" role in community content creation and monitoring. As Harvey noted, "The primary challenge in this area is on here is tracking contribution against ROI to sustain resource commitments."

GES clearly needs – and is working toward – a stronger GCVC technology infrastructure. Harvey's strong understanding of the need for CCM to support XML-based authoring will likely avoid the alternative path, hitting the "source control ceiling." Plans to prioritize GES' specific requirements into "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves" will also minimize the CCM investigation and implementation. Finally, the team will undoubtedly benefit from a stronger relationship with HP's centralized T&L team, whose best practices are profiled in Gilbane's 2008 *Multilingual Communications as a Business Imperative* report.