Best Practices for *Translating a Website*

WEGLOT

Abstract

Translating a website helps you reach new audiences, launch in new markets and establish an advantage over your competitors.

On average, **brands see a 30% increase in website traffic** and a 20% increase in conversions 6 months after making their website multilingual.

For global brands, getting website translation right is important as your website is the first point of contact many potential customers have with your business. It not only helps secure a sale but also builds a longstanding relationship and develops a high degree of brand loyalty in new markets.

Website translation is often looked at as expensive, time-consuming and usually a task given to marketing departments already low on resources. **But could things be done differently and efficiently?**

The purpose of this guide is to walk you through the process of website translation, taking a look at what's needed to complete a thoroughly translated and localized website without relying on an outdated traditional translation method.

Table of *Contents*

The *Website Translation Process*

To give you a clear understanding of what's involved in the website translation process, this guide will be split to address the following:

1 | Website internationalization

How to prep your website for displaying multiple languages. We'll take a look at how your content will be displayed, taking into account translated word length, URL structure, and so on.

2 | Website translation

Choosing a translation method that works for you. We'll look at professional translation, machine, and human editing, whilst looking at the benefits of using a website translation software.

3 | Website localization

Taking a closer look at what else you could consider 'translating' on your website, such as imagery, videos, nuances, and idioms. You might often see website translation falling under the topic of website localization, however, for the purposes of this guide, we have chosen to split the sections so we can cover the topic in more detail.

The second part of the guide will look in more detail at translation quality and international SEO to further enhance your website translation project.

Note: For the purpose of this guide, when we mention website translation software, we'll be referencing the features and benefits of **Weglot**. Note that not all website translation software has the same features.

Chapter 1

Website internationalization

How to Prep Your Website for *Handling Multiple Languages*

What is *Website Internationalization?*

Website internationalization is the process of ensuring your website is set up to handle different languages and your overall website architecture is able to accommodate multiple languages. Apart from that, it also encompasses the following:

Website internationalization includes:

■ Adapting your website architecture to be able to display the content in different languages while keeping a good user experience on the website

■ URL structure such as creating language subdomains (de.mywebsite.com), top-level Domains (www.mywebsite.de), or subdirectories (www.mywebsite.com/de/)

■ Technical SEO - this is a key part of internationalization and we'll discuss it at length in the last part of this guide

Deciding how you'll display the content of your website is your first step in translating your site. There are two options to choose from.

Duplicate websites / web pages

This means either creating a new website for each new language you want to add or duplicating the pages of your website for new languages and displaying multilingual content under one URL (for example **site.com** in French becomes **site.com/fr**).

Already you may feel the pressure of managing and updating one website, let alone handling each website for each new language. It's no small task from a website management point of view but also consider the developer costs and time involved in adding new pages over time.

So, it's not a great solution if you need your whole website duplicated into a new language. There are many limitations to this one, even if you're just going for the basic option of translating selected pages. You'll need to consider the upkeep costs of managing a second, third, fourth...website.

One website displaying multiple languages

We've seen how time-consuming it is to create multiple websites for multiple markets. However, with a website translation software like Weglot, you'll be managing one website, displaying multiple languages.

This solution means you don't need a minute of time from your developer and you don't manage your content in your CMS admin. What you'll get is one website with all the content translated and displayed under SEO-friendly language subdomains or subdirectories (another part of website internationalization ticked off), making managing multiple language websites easy.

You'll still always be managing just one website, your original site. What Weglot then allows you to do is manage the translated versions of your website through your own translations management dashboard.

The translations of your website and any new content added thereafter will be handled here. That goes for editing the translations, inviting your own translators, ordering professional translations, making translation rules through a glossary, excluding certain pages from translation, and so on.

So, no multiple websites needed. Using a website translation software is also beneficial for those that haven't planned for going multilingual from day 1 as it sets you up to accommodate different languages and allows for complex design considerations such as RTL languages.

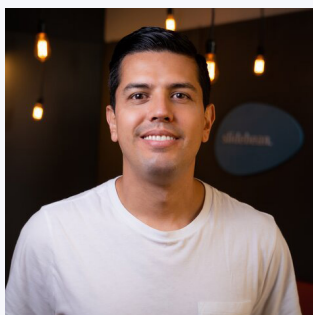Understand how a website translation solution works **here**.

Slidebean

How a Growing Tech Company
Said Goodbye to Multiple Websites

slidebean.

+200%
Spanish
speaking
visitors

+30%
Overall
conversions

+20%
Traffic to main
website

"Weglot allowed us to effortlessly add Spanish to our website leading to a 200% increase to the Spanish version and a 30% increase in overall conversions."

Gustavo Paniagua
Head of Marketing, Slidebean

AI-powered online presentation tool Slidebean wanted to enter new markets quickly and efficiently. Having chosen the Spanish-speaking market as its new target market, the team at Slidebean set out to create a Spanish website.

Their first thought was to create two separately managed websites, their original site and a new Spanish website. What they hadn't initially realized was just how time-consuming and challenging it was to manage two sites at once.

Naturally, this meant their Spanish website was often neglected, with fewer services added and outdated content. It quickly became impossible for the team to manage.

This frustration quickly led to them looking for new solutions which is where they came across Weglot.

Weglot immediately stood out as it took away the need for multiple websites and allowed them to easily manage the translated content under one interface.

The benefit of Weglot was clear – no multiple sites to manage, automatic content detection when adding new content, plus the overall ease of installing it.

The only area the Slidebean team had concerns about was the accuracy of the machine translations given by Weglot.

However, they were pleasantly surprised on the initial accuracy, and even better, they could use Weglot's user-friendly post-editing features to review the translations to ensure everything was perfectly translated.

The result?

Without Weglot, the team at Slidebean would have ultimately got rid of their Spanish website. They've now seen a +200% increase in Spanish-speaking visitors and a 30% increase in conversions.

Read more about how we worked with Slidebean **here**.
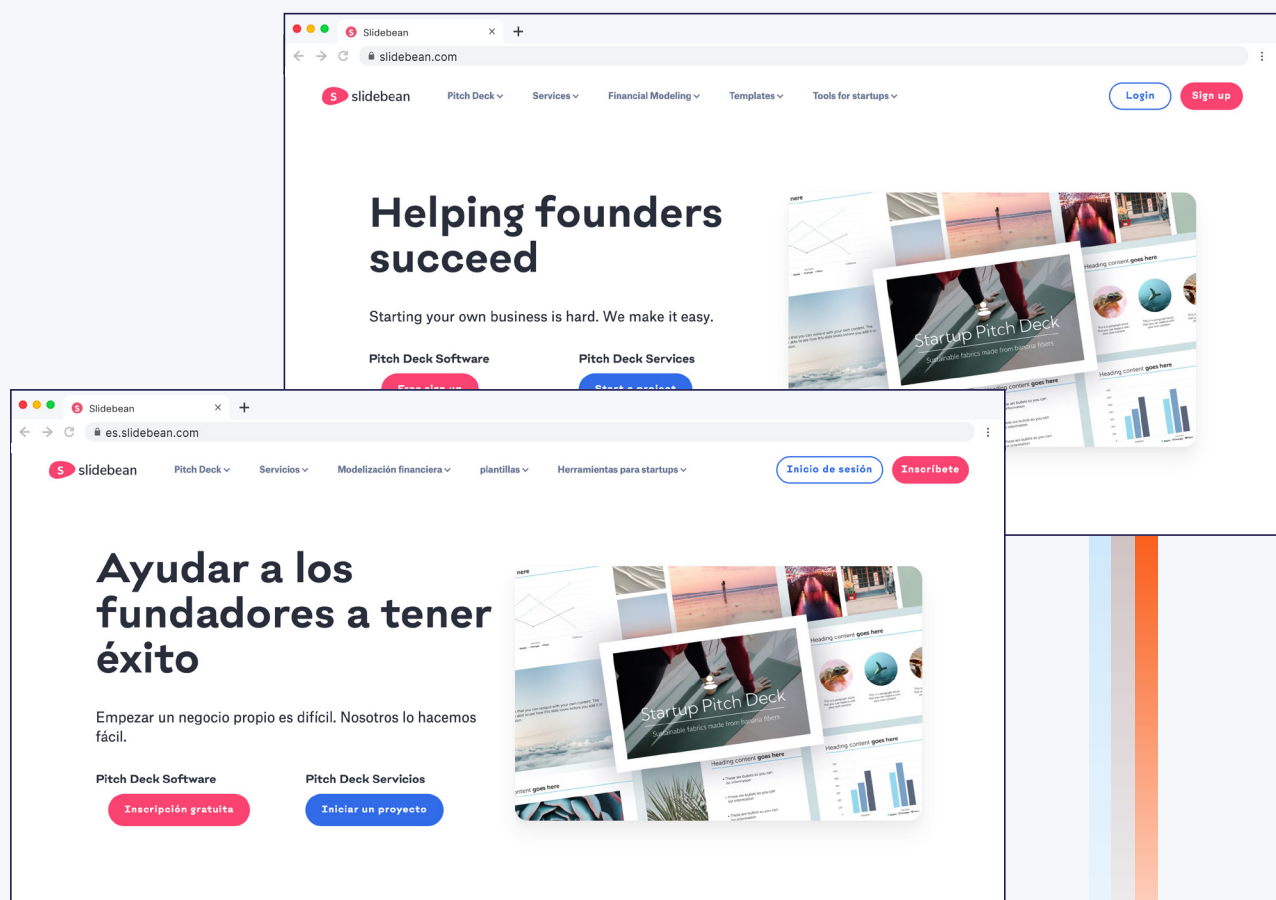
Website translation

Understanding the Translation Process and the *Solutions Available*

The next step is to actually translate the words on your website. After understanding how those words will be displayed, translating them can take you down 2 different paths.

Professional translator

There are varying costs associated with hiring a translator, and you're looking at an average cost of $0.08-$0.25 per word. The variation in costs comes down to:

Translation costs depend on:

■ The difficulty of content translated – e.g. a hotel website vs a medical site would have a different cost due to the complexity of the content being translated

■ Language – English to French, Spanish, or German will be less expensive than say English to Japanese or Icelandic (there are simply more professional translators on the marketplace for European languages than there are for more complex languages)

■ Time scale – the faster you want/need the translated content, the more expensive it will be

That's the cost side of things, however, don't forget to take into account the management of such a project when using a professional translator.

Hundreds of excel files or word documents and back and forths later and you'll have the translated content of your website, but bear in mind the process will be completely manual.

Discover the number of words on your website with our **Word Count Tool** to get accurate website translation cost estimates.

Machine and human translation

The various pain points associated with using only a professional translator for website translation are luckily removed when using website translation software, Weglot.

As we've seen above the number of words on your website and the tricky aspect of actually displaying that content can lead to significant costs and a longer time to market.

Let's take a look at the website translation process using a website translation software.

One of the biggest pain points of traditional website translation is content detection and managing a coherent workflow through exchanging files with a professional translator.

If you're using a translation software like Weglot, translation is done automatically (through a first layer of machine translation) and a translator can then edit directly on the platform.

Once **installed** on your website your content is detected and translated instantly.

The only thing you need to then take care of is the quality of those translations which we talk about in-depth in the next section of this guide.

Just to briefly mention it, we are by no means saying launch in new markets with a machine translated website, rather benefit from the first layer of machine translation to make your translation process more efficient.

And, remember this method also ensures that 100% of your website content is detected and translated so you won't miss any content from pages that aren't visible in your menu. You'll then have the option to exclude any URLs that aren't relevant to your new target markets.
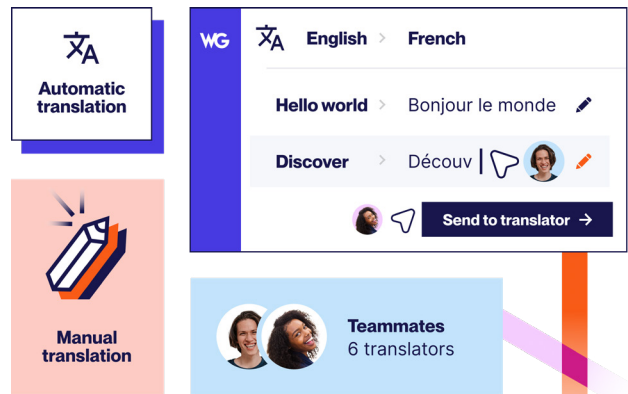
Website translation workflow

When working on a website translation project, you're already gaining time and being more efficient by using website translation software.

Using it to your advantage and making the most of its features will see you launch an accurately translated website in days rather than months.

You'll likely be working with external professional translators and teammates to fine-tune your content.

So there are still a few best practices to follow.

Determine team roles

Seems like an obvious one, but a website translation project can quickly get out of hand if you don't give certain people certain roles. Whether you're handling translations in-house or outsourcing, you need a project manager to handle things.

Having one project manager who can oversee the whole website translation project from start to finish ensures there'll be consistency and someone accountable for delivering the project on time.

The project manager needs to:

1 Identify all the new content that has been added.

2 Assign new content to translate to different translators or internal team members.

3 Make sure that translation deadlines are met.

Good to know: Translation guidelines & workflows

An efficient workflow

Automating tedious tasks is the key to a successful website translation project. Since with a good website translation software you get rid of file exchanges through email with translators or internal reviewers, make sure you also set up a good content management process.

If you add content constantly, determine a specific day of the week in which you assign new translations as well as a deadline.

Style guide

It's more than likely you have a content style guide at your company to ensure that you and your teammates are following the same standards in terms of writing, formatting, and style for brand consistency.

This guide should also be shared with your professional translator.

This way they can understand how to edit your website translations to best convey the same energy and messaging displayed on the original version of your website.

Capturing the intended style, tone and intent of your content in your newly added languages means your new website visitors get the same experience as your original ones.

Glossary

A glossary is an absolute must-have and an easy way to quickly modify translations in bulk. Creating a glossary of terms that you never want to be translated (or that you always want to be translated) on your website is important as it will save you time as you won't need to manually edit certain words or short phrases.
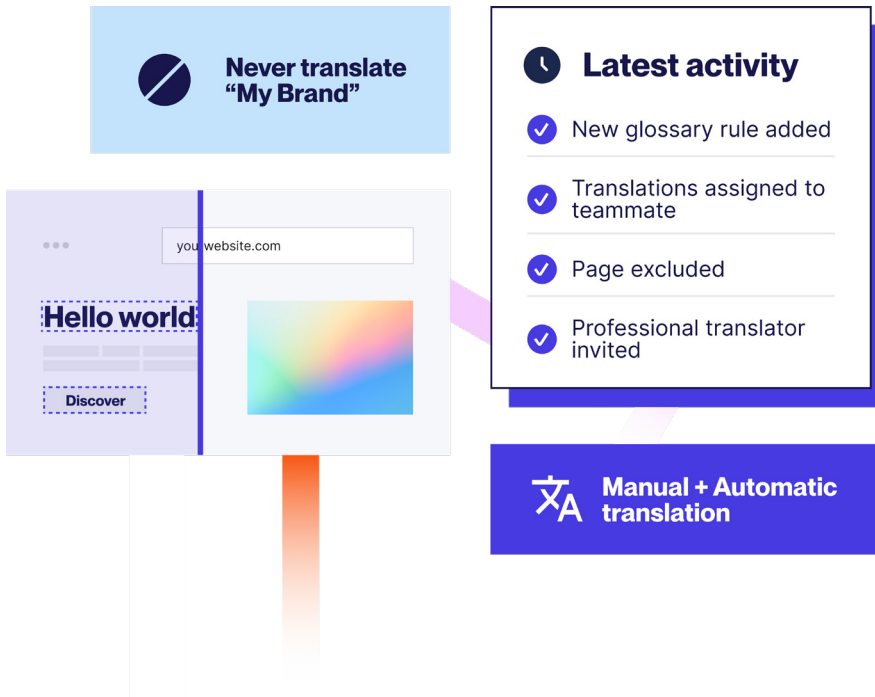
One of the ways to gather this information is to create an excel where you can ask different teammates from different departments what absolutely shouldn't be translated and then upload it within your translation software dashboard.

Sometimes it's more than just brand names that need to be left out of translation as product names, other sub-brands or even legal terms often need to remain in the original language.

Compiling an approved glossary is a great way to save time and is helpful for everyone involved with the website translation project.

Website localization

Deepening Your *Website Localization Knowledge*

We've looked at the possibilities of making your website translation process more efficient in full, so is that it? Not really! There are many parts of website translation that shouldn't be neglected and one of them is localization rather than translation only. You might be asking yourself what's the difference between website translation and localization, aren't they the same thing?

Well, actually website translation sits under the umbrella of localization. So whilst website translation is concerned with the words on your website, website localization looks at other areas where the adaptation of your website is necessary to appeal to different audiences and markets.

You could say that translating the words on your website is step one and working on several other localization elements will make your website translation project all the more professional.

Elements to localize typically include:

1	Imagery
2	Colors
3	Punctuation
4	False friends, idioms and slang
5	External links

Let's take a closer look at each element that will ultimately help personalize your website even further than just the words on your site.

1. Imagery

When you want to engage with new audiences, sell products or services, and raise brand awareness – translating aspects such as imagery and video content helps achieve that.

In the same way that you translate your text so that foreign audiences can understand it, the same goes for imagery and video content as it shows you're sensitive and appreciative of cultural nuances.
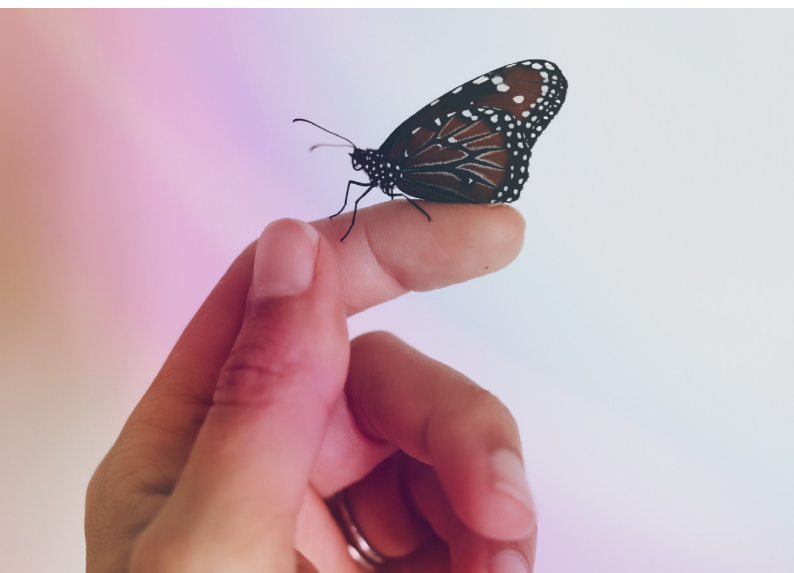
Video content can also be adapted in the same manner, or perhaps you've recorded different voiceovers for different markets.

Replacing the video content so the right video displays for your audience is a great way to show a seamless website experience no matter where your website visitors come from.

2. Colors

The way different cultures see and interpret color varies dramatically around the world so choosing a global color for your website is a safer bet.

For instance, in western culture, red symbolizes love, energy, passion, and danger.

In Asian cultures, it's a very important color, symbolizing good luck, prosperity, celebration, and long life.

However, in some African countries, red is associated with death and aggression.

When choosing colors for your multilingual website, make sure to do your research and check that your main brand colors have the same positive meanings in your new target markets.

Although it might seem simple, it can end up being what sets you apart from your competitors.

3. Punctuation

Punctuation is an important part of creating coherence in a sentence.

And, whilst you might think you've got nothing to worry about when translating your website, don't forget that different cultures have different punctuation rules! Whilst this is usually taken care of by a translator, it's also good to point out to you as you are the person responsible for managing the website, so you don't get any surprises!

A few such examples: in modern Greek, the question mark is the semi-colon, in Japanese open circles are used for full stops and then all punctuation marks in Arabic are mirror images of the English version due to the language's right to left nature.

4. False friends, idioms, and slang

Now here's one you won't want to get wrong in translation...idioms.

When you translate an idiom word for word the meaning often gets very lost in translation and whilst machine translation will give you a direct translation, they aren't yet intelligent enough to search for the equivalent idiom in your new target language.

This can often be one of the most difficult aspects of translation. But, that's exactly where a professional translator will help guide you. Or, there's always the option to leave them out entirely from even your original content.

However, using idioms in your new target languages is an effective way of showing your audience that you really speak their language. But, as we said, just beware you don't make a fool of your brand with a miss translation!

5. External links

Including links in your content undoubtedly enhances your content, gives more substance and provides more learning for your readers. So, when you translate an article you need to consider that the links you've included will still be in the original language of your content.

Although it can be time-consuming, it offers an enhanced user experience and shows you're serious about personalization. Imagine reading an article in French and finding that all the links are leading to German websites - this is frustrating for your potential customers.

The inconsistency between the language of your page and the language of the link can disrupt the seamless user experience that you worked so hard to provide. So make sure that all your links are in the same language as your translated website.

Localization testing

To complete the localization process and this also takes into account the translation part of your website, you may well also want to consider localization testing.

This is a great way to check your localized version of your website before you launch to ensure everything is exactly how you want it to be.

Ideally, the testing process should be completed before the website is available to users so that you can be confident your site's UI works exactly how it should before it goes live.

Although anyone can test your website it's advisable to outsource the process to professionals who are specialized in this area.

We've given you a quick breakdown of the places on your website where you'll need to consider localization testing.

1 **Test the software functionalities and UI of the website**

Design and functionality checklist:

- Site layout
- Text in boxes
- Pop-ups
- CTA buttons
- Image sizes

Usability and UI quality checklist:

- Measuring units
- Currencies
- Date formats
- Local standards
- Best practices

2 **Check the website content**

Translation accuracy checklist:

- Words
- Grammar and punctuation
- Terminology
- Linguistic context
- List orders
- Fixing typos

Cultural significance checklist:

- Product names
- Images and icons
- Color schemes

Those are the main parts where a localization tester will be beneficial and give you peace of mind that your newly translated site will be a seamless experience for your new site visitors. Read more about **localization testing** to understand the full process.

Chapter 4

Translation quality

Best Practices for Enhancing Your *Translation Quality*

At this point, it's relevant to look a little further at how to ensure your website is **accurately translated.**

That's where professional translators come in and why the role of a human translator cannot be overlooked when you're looking to perfect your translations and brand voice in another country.

Of course, translation quality is a brand decision, and whilst machine translation might work for a smaller brand with a lower budget, if you're committed to translating your website to a higher standard, reviewing the machine translations or translating from zero with the help of a professional translator will get you there.

Human reviewed translation

The benefits of using machine translation to kick-start your website translation project are tenfold.

However, there's a lot to be said for launching your website straight away with only machine translation live. Why?

For those that do want to focus their efforts on using human translation on a majority of their website, it's important to understand that within website translation, there are different ways to translate:

Benefits of a first layer of MT:

- Speed in launching
- Quick conversions - see what pages are most visited in your new languages
- Focus manual translation on most important pages

Translation methods:

1   Raw machine translation

2   Machine translation post-editing

3   Professional translation (from source language)

This will always be a great place to start.

In order to understand what parts of your website to put more effort into the translation quality, there are a couple of best practices to follow.

Segment your website by content types

Not all content is created equal. And by that, we mean on your website you likely have a certain number of pages where you make conversions and others that are less important, such as a blog article that hasn't been viewed for more than a year.

That doesn't mean you won't want to translate all the content on your website (best practices suggest you do unless of course, the page isn't relevant for a certain market) it just means you can rank your content in order of what's most important. So, important content could be transactional pages, your homepage, and any blog articles that are driving significant SEO traffic.

Low priority content might be your terms and conditions, your contact page, etc, and here you can leave machine translation to do its work. Draft a hierarchy of content to define which one needs to be professionally translated.

Define a budget to translate your priority content

Your website should convey your message clearly in all the languages you support, especially when it comes to your priority content. Defining your budget in terms of how much you want to spend on professional translation will determine which pages get reviewed by humans first.

Don't use machine translation for all your website

Machine translation can automate most of your workflow and be very accurate for certain types of content, but it might not get all areas right, especially for marketing text if the text is very creative or has jokes or references in it.

So, even if you've decided that a certain page of your website isn't priority content for initial manual translation, consider what pages do have more complex content and whether these paragraphs will need to be reviewed as well.

International SEO

How to Get Found by Your *New Target Audiences*

The last step of translating a website is to make sure you're set up for international SEO, also known as multilingual SEO or even global SEO.

This is a key step as it will allow you to be found in your new target markets and indexed by Google.

Let's take a look at what's needed to succeed when it comes to your global SEO strategy.

Analyze your target audience

Before you can move forward with your global SEO strategy, you'll need to do some background research.

Competition

Check out the type of content that competitors are offering, especially competitors that already have a foothold in the local market you're looking to expand into.

Look at their URLs, images and offers to get a good idea of what keywords they're ranking for.

Fresh ideas could help drive more organic traffic and if your new content is better than theirs, you have a chance to outrank them.

Search Engines

You'll also want to look closely at which search engines are important in your target market. While Google is the global leader for search, different regions may have search engines that have a strong specific country presence.

To reach customers in China, for example, you'll need to rank well in Baidu. South Koreans use Naver, and Russians love Yandex.

Each of these search engines will have slightly different algorithms, so you'll want to find out how they work and find out what their ranking factors are.

You'll also want to look at keyword research using tools specifically designed for the search engine that you're optimizing for.

Backlinks

Finally, you'll need a backlinking strategy that works in your target market. In order to optimize your **global SEO strategy**, you need to obtain backlinks from sites that have a high authority rating for a particular region, language, and/or search engine. This means you'll need to do some research to find which directories, publications, or websites will provide you with the best backlink opportunities.

Technical SEO

Whilst the points above you are probably pretty familiar with having already carried the steps out on your original content, the next steps are more technical and if you're using a website translation software like Weglot, they will be taken care of for you.

As we mentioned previously, these steps fall under website internationalization.

URL structure

When creating a multilingual website one of the worries is duplicate content. In some cases duplicate content isn't necessarily bad, however content that appears within multiple URLs can lead to lower ranking and in extreme cases, deindexing.

This can be avoided by following Google's best practices recommendation of using dedicated URLs, with a language indicator.

A language indicator helps search engines, as well as site visitors, identify the language from the URL alone.

An example of this, say your original website is www.mywebsite.com, the German version would be www.mywebsite.com/fr/ or de.mywebsite.com - depending on whether you're using subdirectories or subdomains.

But, it's worth pointing out that a language indicator can still be misinterpreted so whilst it's an important part of multilingual SEO there are other important steps listed below that should be followed.

Hreflang tags

As well as language indicators mentioned above, Google also uses hreflang attributes to help determine both the language of the page and which region it is intended for.

You may well have come across the concept of hreflang tags when looking into what's needed for a multilingual website. If you did, then you've probably noticed they aren't the simplest of things to implement.

Hreflang tags are inserted in the header section of the original page. Here's an example of a French page intended for readers in Canada:

```
<link rel="alternate"
hreflang="fr-ca"
href="http://example.com/fr/" />
```

If a page is intended for multiple regions, multiple hreflang attributes can be added.

However, the process of adding hreflang tags is time-consuming and not easy, especially if you're a beginner.

Metadata

The final point of your international SEO is to translate your metadata. I'm sure this is something you've paid particular attention to on your original website, so the same should be said for your translated version.

Your metadata is a crucial piece of text that will help you rank better for the new countries you're targeting. Whilst a word-for-word translation might work, carrying out a little more research into keywords of your target markets (that we mentioned above) can help you fine-tune your metadata so it's perfectly targeted for your new markets.

Summary

For a thoroughly translated website that's ready for your new international markets paying particular attention to the steps mentioned above will ensure that you maximize the potential of your translated site.

We've seen that using a website translation software can significantly improve the process and benefit your workflow, allowing you to launch in new markets quickly.

1

Website internationalization

Prepare your website for displaying multiple languages

4

Translation quality

Improve your translations by segmenting content and using a professional translator

2

Website translation

Benefit from machine and human translation to increased accuracy and speed

5

International SEO

Complete your website translation project by setting your website up for being found by your new audiences

3

Website localization

Enhance your international website by translating images, being culturally sensitive

Who are we?

Weglot is a no-code website localization solution that allows you to launch a multilingual ecommerce store instantly. We both translate and display the content of your website removing the pain of having to manage multiple websites for multiple markets.

Manage the translation of your ecommerce website translation project in days not months with a first layer of machine translation for speed and automation, then use our post-editing features to control the quality of your translations.

Easily collaborate with teammates, order professional translators from the Weglot Dashboard or add your own translator.
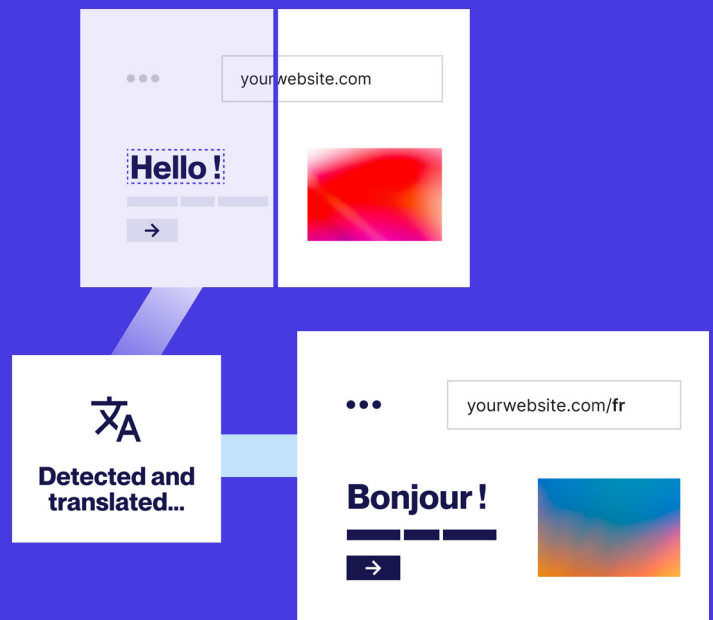
WEGLOT

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Or contact us at **sales@weglot.com**

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