Developing Effective Localisation Tools Strategies

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Introduction:

Organizations that execute a localization strategy must decide whether they wish to internally develop their localization technology or license it from a third party vendor. This "build vs. buy" decision can be challenging because it requires organizations to balance easily quantified factors with strategic and emotional factors that are difficult or impossible to quantify. The decision is important, however, because it typically impacts both the nature of the strategic initiative as well as its ultimate success in enabling companies to penetrate new markets quickly and accelerate revenue growth opportunities. While internally developed solutions will always play a role in meeting their initial localization requirements, recent surveys reflect a strong preference for third-party applications over custom solutions. A recent Gartner survey, for example, found that only 26 percent of respondents planned to develop their own eBusiness application and that 74 percent preferred a packaged application or suite. Not surprisingly, within the software publishers industry, similar preferences also exist when it comes to implementing localization technology and workflow solutions.

This paper explores 2 perspectives relating to this prevalent theme in our industry:

Client Side/ Language Service Provider Perspective:

How do ISV's develop their strategies and perform needs analysis to determine whether to build or buy their own tools? Why do some companies completely outsource their tools strategy and related selection/developmental decisions to companies such as Alchemy or

environment. Industry standard tools allow for concordance searching across various reference materials to assist with maintaining consistency of translations, which is paramount in achieving a high quality translated product. They incorporate relevant QA functionality to reduce the effort in checking the files during the localisation process.

By creating a requirements list and a test matrix, tools can be evaluated on an equal playing field, and we can be sure that we place value only on those features and solutions that directly meet our requirements. In addition to the technical capability of the tool, cost of ownership, return on investment and ongoing support and maintenance overheads should also be considered, i.e. after my initial selection of a technology, how quickly and how expensive will it be for me to implement, support and maintain? What resources will be used to do this, and how can I reflect this in my team structure and my management budget?

It is also important to establish open communication with the vendor of the tool, as it is valuable to understand and possibly have an influence on its future development. Once a tool is chosen it is natural to want to protect your investment, tools developers need to constantly address the needs of a wide audience and a changing software industry so it is important to understand the direction that the development team are taking and consider any potential value add to your organization. CLS has found that in establishing an open line of communication with the tools suppliers we can engage in discussions about our particular requirements. With this exchange of ideas it is then up to the development team to seek to implement either a generic or specific solution that may differentiate their tools from their competitors. This also takes the onus away from the time and effort necessary for CLS to develop an in house solution.

Where gaps are identified the decision then has to be made if it is worth investing time and effort in filling this with a tool that is developed in house. This can only be decided by assessing the return on investment for the company. The gaps identified in this tools analysis need to be considered in line with other requirements that have been identified in the business as a whole. At CLS our approach is to create a task force, which is a virtual team made up of a member from each team within the division. The Task Force team members take the responsibility for capturing the requirements from their individual teams and presenting them at the Task Force meeting for

discussion. The Task Force is then responsible for grouping and prioritizing requirements, agreeing which are to be addressed and then taking this information back to their teams. Once the Task Force has reached this agreement for the requirements the technical implementation, be it creating new tools or a process change, is managed by the Task Force. Its findings and recommendations are presented to the Management Team for approval and once this is gained it is the responsibility of the Task Force to manage the implementation to its conclusion.

When deciding to develop in house tools it is equally important to not only address the immediate gaps but also to take a holistic approach to the problem. In this way, the tools that are developed fulfill a more generic purpose and may add value to the organisation as a whole rather than one team. We have found that investment in design is key and could take up to 80% of the project timescales while coding the tools takes the remaining 20%. As an example, at CLS automation has long been discussed as a mechanism for replacing repetitive tasks in the localisation engineering and product release process.   It was thought that by linking industry tools and internal localisation processes together with an automated solution valuable time could be gained to use on the manual elements of the localisation process. By carrying out analysis on localisation project schedules and potential resource cost savings the project to develop the tools was initiated and implemented. Analysis of data since the implementation has proved that the investment was justified.

An ongoing activity is to stay aware of new industry standard tools as they become available and evaluate if these can replace in house solutions. At CLS our preference is to adopt industry standard tools so that our investment in creating our own solutions is limited to our internal specific needs. In using industry standard tools we also ensure portability of our translation assets so that they can be used across product ranges and across different translation partners. We prefer not to have support our tools off site at our translation vendors so we reduce this risk by using off the shelf packages. In blending together off the shelf packages and internal tools CLS are constantly adapting to meet our customers changing needs.

The Alchemy Software Development Perspective:

What are the major influences upon Localization Tool Vendors in their developmental strategies?

- Need to react swiftly to changing influences?
- Identify new opportunities?
- Alignment with new technologies & trends?
- Always keep client/ user at the forefront?
- Build on existing strengths?
- Need to innovate and achieve excellence, to avoid stagnating and becoming vulnerable to competitors?

The fundamental issues affecting many of the readers have been discussed above - i.e. identifying your business needs, equating these with practical translation and localization and delivery requirements, and weighing up both the pros and cons of investing in out of the box localization solutions, and in calculating the ROI of developing, implementing and maintaining your own custom solution.

It has been stated that probably one of the most successful ways of implementing a successful tools strategy is to take a holistic approach in order to add value to the entire company or group, as opposed to an isolated translation or engineering team - this is an approach we share with Canon - it's essential for a client to reduce the TCO of the technology by allowing multiple groups to benefit from the initial investment

Predictably, and of course logically, the major influences in the developmental strategies of today's tool vendor, are those of their clients, regardless of vertical, size, or role. The work of the tools vendor consists of addressing the same questions, albeit from a different angle: how to maximize the ROI of our clients, by simultaneously addressing their needs, lowering their expenses and providing the maximum functionality and flexibility in one localisation or translation environment.

Firstly, let's look at some of the major issues that Alchemy try to bear in mind when providing solutions to clients as diverse as Canon, Yahoo, Lionbridge, HP etc.

Alignment with Business Needs

It is sometimes said that internally developed localization technologies fit an organization's business needs better than packaged applications because they are designed and developed specifically for the particular business in which they are deployed. This can often be the case, and certainly, in view of the strategic and emotional factors surrounding the design, development and implementation of internal tools, an easy claim to understand.

In reality, however, packaged applications are often better aligned with a company's current and future needs than even the most robust internally developed applications. The reason for this, is that many internally developed localization technologies are designed and developed with little input from business (translators and Localization Service Providers) users. Identifying and specifying the business requirements are time-consuming tasks that are properly performed by the business users themselves. All too often, however, business users are not 100 percent dedicated to the internal development project and spend a mere fraction of their time working with the development team. Facing aggressive project deadlines, the development team does its best to identify and develop the required functionality. Without the appropriate business experiences and requisite knowledge about the business processes, however, it is severely at a disadvantage in its ability to develop an application that meets current business needs, let alone future needs.

In contrast, packaged solutions are designed and specified by professional product managers that gather business requirements from a broad customer base and then work with software engineers to incorporate those requirements into the application.
This approach is a benefit in and of itself, but it leads to a second benefit that is perhaps even more important. While working with prospective and existing customers to gather requirements, product managers document the practices of, and feedback from, a large number of organizations. They then identify best practices and incorporate them into the commercially available application. Organizations that internally develop localization technologies benefit from neither professional product management nor the experiences and practices of other companies. While such applications are sometimes well-aligned with business needs, they can fall short of the mark and/or impair the very business they are intended to improve.

Scalability and Performance

Performance and scalability are highly dependent upon an application's architecture, data model, and overall design. An inflexible architecture, for example, might meet current business needs, but struggle in its ability to bear changes as the company, its customer base, and the industry evolve. This point is critical because determining future needs at design time is among the most vexing challenges for organizations. Many companies that are currently saddled with inflexible architectures did not believe they were inflexible at design time; they discovered this fact when new business needs arose, and they were unable to address them. This uncertainty regarding future needs results in significant risk for organizations.

Packaged applications enable companies to minimize performance, scalability, and deployability risks that arise out of uncertain future business needs. Alchemy Software Development remains on the cutting edge of evolving technologies and business needs through their broad customer bases and are far better equipped than any one organization to anticipate, and prepare for, future market needs. Their applications are designed to scale and perform for the largest enterprise customers and offer market-proven architectures and data models.

Interactive/ collaborative technology

The Alchemy CATALYST architecture provides a highly interactive interface combining a distributed workflow model that spans the entire globalization team. Organizations achieve considerable cost savings by deploying Alchemy CATALYST, and they also enjoy a rich, interactive, productive experience not previously available from any localization technology vendor. Unlike classic Translation Memory technologies, Alchemy CATALYST provides tools that localization engineers, project managers, quality assurance engineers and translators will use in their daily work schedules. These individuals all work in the same highly visual and interactive environment reducing the complexity of the localization workflow, avoiding multiple file conversions and re-conversions and share common terminology and translation memory databases throughout their corporate enterprises.

Strategic direction

Like Canon we too need to pinpoint where our development team will invest their time, energy and experience in order to best meet the needs of the client. Furthermore, in theory Alchemy has little or no influence on the source files developed or written by our clients. With a client list of over 700 individual companies, composed of Software and content providers, Consumer and industrial manufacturers and language service providers - the spectrum of file formats to support is vast. One way of addressing this decision would be to take the lowest common denominator - what file formats would appeal to the masses? When we look at the global translation and localisation market, we will see that those working using electronic formats translated software, documentation and help. Analyzing the existing tools usage patterns we observed the large market share of our colleagues in Trados, and the overwhelming tendency to use the Trados technologies to translate the traditional paper-based documentation formats. In terms of software localisation tools, we were pleased to observe we held 4 times as much market share as all of our competitors combined. Indeed the perception of Alchemy, and of CATALYST, the flagship tool, was traditionally and resolutely that of a software solution. Trados for Doc, Alchemy for software...

So we made a conscious decision at Alchemy - to stick to, and build on what we do best i.e. support the newest, most demanding, software formats, more efficiently and more comprehensively than any other player in the market. This decision consequently revealed an interesting synergy in our existing marketplace. Many of our established and new clients are similarly technology leaders in their fields, the early adopters who like to be on the cutting edge of available software development platforms. By fulfilling our commitment to be the industry leader in terms of supporting challenging platforms, not only do we retain our kudos for innovation etc. we also assure the continued collaboration, investment of the world's top software companies.

Innovate or Evaporate!

Much of our tool development is influence by a constant sense of momentum within the development team, the fact that we have to

respond to new development technologies, industry standards, and demands from specific clients and users means there is a constant sense of dynamism which is coupled by agile software development techniques, in a development team composed of industry veterans, experienced software developers and the brightest whizkids on the block which creates a creative mix of experience and innovation.

Technology is evolving at a breath-taking rate - and so too are the challenges. The world's leading software and content companies are the fore-runners and early adopters of the newest platforms and innovative practices that will become the standards of the future. Necessarily, we need not only keep abreast of the new technologies coming on-stream, but actually anticipate the needs of our extended client-base before they begin to roll out their development and localisation implementations.

Consequently, our track record shows our ability to do this:

Proud history of innovation and thought leadership

1st to develop concept of free tools for translators

1st Visual .NET Solution

1st Secure XML Solution

1st Comprehensive Database Localization Solution

1st Runtime Validation Technology

1st industry implementation of XLIFF, including visual XLIFF

1st Integration with Content Management System

1st Visual HTML Solution

1st to introduce AI algorithms into L10N industry

Our objective also consists of maintaining the first leap advantage over any competitors in the marketplace, Usually by about 12 months. For example in October 2006, Alchemy released full support for the .NET 3.0 platform, in advance of any other product on the market, most of whom are currently releasing the .NET 2.0 support. Key to this new platform will be support for XAML - the new declarative XML-based language optimized for describing graphically rich visual user interfaces, which will become more and more commonplace with the release of the VISTA platform in 2007.

Industry Collaborations

Apart from a commitment to new technologies, our other large driver in terms of solution development is collaboration with other industry leaders. Supporting an industry that is collaborative, crossfunctional and inclusive by nature, we are cognisant that while we are pioneers in terms of developing our own products, true value for our clients can also be delivered and enhanced through strategic collaborations with other industry leaders. To date, our product offering has developed through 2 distinct strands of collaboration, those with Independent Technology Providers, and those driven by specific client-side needs.

Best-of-breed Technology Partnerships:

Microsoft

Microsoft .NET is perhaps the most significant development platform to be released into the ICT sector in the past few years. Most if not all development companies are today investigating their .NET strategy inline with their future product strategy. While initial product offerings may not be wholly .NET applications, these hybrid applications will contain C++ and C# components. Alchemy's partnership with the Microsoft Visual Studio team allowed us to become the leading localisation environment for this increasingly popular platform, thereby leveraging all of our development experience and product features for other platforms for what is essentially the fastest growing platform in the world.

Oracle

Alchemy worked with oracle Corporation to bring the Alchemy Database Localisation Component to all users and translators of Oracle databases worldwide. Through this strategic partnership we simplified and accelerated the localisation processes used and ultimately unlocked the value of thousands of such databases worldwide.

Trados (SDL)

Alchemy signed an agreement with TRADOS Corp., later renewed and signed by SDL whereby all past, present and future versions of TRADOS desktop and enterprise technologies will seamlessly inter-operate with Alchemy CATALYST, thus providing optimal value to the wider translation and localisation community. For example the current Alchemy products contain fully integrated lookup, concordance and fuzzy matching with

TRADOS Translator Workbench, TRADOS TM Server and TRADOS MultiTerm Server.

Other Custom Client Solutions

Philips Medical Solutions
XLOLA Localization Component v1, v2 and V3
80% improvement in time-to-market

Siebel CRM (now Oracle)
XLIFF Localization Process
Process 48m words nightly

Veritas (now Symantec)
Full automation of CM
SimShip is the norm, not the exception!

Siemens AG
SDL Teamworks Integration
To be commissioned Q1 2006

Corel Corporation Ltd.
Custom handling of GUI
All languages are now SimShiped

Conclusion:

The creation of effective localisation tool strategies must be seen as a process as opposed to a task. This paper has examined the perspective of 2 distinct players - both user, and tool provider, and explored the primary concerns and drivers relating to their tool strategies.

From both a client and service provider perspective, Canon, advocates taking a holistic approach to the exercise. This includes clearly identifying the current starting point, aligning both business needs and practical considerations to the evaluation criteria, developing active and mutually beneficial communication channels with the tools vendors, creating a multi-disciplinary team to lead the evaluation process, and to quickly establish where developing internal solutions is necessary in order to develop high value services and solutions to the company as a whole.

As a tools provider Alchemy outlines both objectives and influencers on their own dedicated tools development strategies. Like CLS, fundamental to this is aligning requirements with real business needs. Strategic direction and the provision of scalable and innovative technologies become the starting point for the tools strategy, while a commitment to technology partnerships and industry collaborations further drive and refine the development of industry-wide, practical solutions.

Biography:

Canon Localisation Services (CLS) is a dedicated localisation division that operates as part of Canon Technology Europe Ltd a wholly owned subsidiary of Canon Europe Ltd. CLS is responsible for localizing products for various worldwide Canon companies.

Beverley White is the Engineering Manager at CLS. She has 5 years experience in the localisation industry and is responsible for setting the strategy and direction for the CLS Engineering Team. Beverley is also responsible for the terminology management function at CLS.

Tim Swales is the Localisation Technology Engineer at CLS. He has 10 years experience in localisation and has fulfilled various roles within the organization including 3 years as a Lead Localisation Engineer. He has been in his current role for 5 years and is responsible for assessing off the shelf localisation engineering tools and developing bespoke solutions where necessary to suit the CLS localisation process. Tim advises CLS customers on best practices with regard to localisation engineering and assists in setting the development strategy for the CLS Engineering Team.

Robert Martin is International Sales Manager at Alchemy Software Development Ltd. He is responsible for driving Alchemy's International sales and bringing their leading technologies to the ISV and LSP community. He has previously held Business Development roles on the LSP side in SimulTrans and worked in content creation and translation on the client side for Nortel and other companies. Robert has over 7 years experience in the L10N industry developing a keen insight into the changing needs of clients and their L10N requirements in Europe