

Localization Checklist

While widely used, the term **localization** actually refers to adapting a product to one specific local market. However, companies increasingly prefer to **internationalize** or **globalize** their products so they can be easily adapted to many markets.

Use this checklist as a reminder of the steps involved in preparing and launching a product in any or many overseas markets.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the eventual international market for your product early in its development cycle. Design your product with internationalization in mind.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involve your product documentation and marketing staff from the outset.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get management approval for the extra cost and time internationalization will involve.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how users in each target market will use your product. Remember that you might have to provide either online or telephone help in each target language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Begin the process of choosing your localization partners early. Give a project manager the task of contacting, evaluating and negotiating a fee with a partner specialized in the market where your product will be launched.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be aware of local differences such as date, time, currency and number formats. Make each of these selectable in your product.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check with your localization partner or legal department to see if there are any legal issues in your target market(s) that would affect localization. In some countries it is illegal to sell a product whose documentation or displayed text is in any other than the local language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have all warranties and license agreements written and approved by a lawyer in each target market.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If your product is software, make sure there is no hard-coding of displayed text. All text must be in translatable text strings. If your product has text stamped or printed on it, consider changing to an internationally recognized set of symbols.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Allow for possible text expansion in software strings and documentation. Expansion may be as great as 30% between certain languages.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write all original product documentation with eventual translation in mind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid long, grammatically complex sentences and very specialized terminology. Write as if your reader was not familiar with the subject. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using symbols instead of words wherever possible. But check to make sure the symbols or colors you choose do not have any unintended meaning in a target market! <input type="checkbox"/> Allow plenty of extra white space on each page, in tables and around graphics to allow for text expansion in another language. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that reformatting a complex index in a different language can be a formidable and time-consuming task.