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Global Marketing Playbook



Introduction

There are few things more rewarding than seeing your company grow beyond borders. But let's face it—**global marketing isn't for the faint of heart**. It's complicated, with many moving parts.



These days, the world moves at a fast pace. Thanks to the internet and social media, collaborating with brands and reaching customers all over the planet is easier than ever before.

If you take a moment to think about this, it is actually an amazing concept. **Your business can help make an impact in someone's life thousands of miles away on a different continent.**

There's never been a time in history where this was so easy to achieve, and taking advantage of it is an excellent way to grow your brand beyond the borders of your geographic region. Technology is the main facilitator here. According to Statista, as of 2022, there are 5 billion smartphone users worldwide. That means billions of people browsing the internet everywhere who can reach your brand message no matter where they are.

While companies can do international expansion faster than ever before, many companies underestimate how hard it is to break into a new market. There's quite a lot that goes into getting it right, as each country has its own unique set of quirks and challenges.

In fact, you need to adopt a mindset that going international isn't just a way to enter a new market, but a primary consideration when it comes to succeeding in the new global economy.

While global commerce is growing at a slower pace than in previous years, the COVID-19 pandemic showed us that if you're not online, you're nowhere. More businesses are operating on a global scale, and this trend is only set to continue. Companies must think from a global perspective in order to stay competitive and succeed, especially in this volatile environment.

The payoff for acting in a bad economy is higher than for waiting. Here's why:

- **Expand while competitors are cutting back**. Bad times mean less competition. It's the right time to gain market share by attracting customers from competitors with a better customer experience as they cut down on customer services. More than **seven in 10** consumers bought from the competitor of their go-to brand between 2021 and 2022.
- **Acquire top talent in more countries.** Talent is global and more available now than during an expansionary phase (especially with the massive layoffs in the tech sector).
- **Buy assets and companies on sale.** From 2008 to 2010, companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Facebook acquired **over 150 companies**, and thousands of new IPs from smaller tech companies were forced to close due to the recession.

International consulting firms can help your global marketing efforts, but are out of reach for most budgets. Learning by trial and error is always an option—but it's too risky and time-consuming for most organizations to effectively deploy.

What can you do instead? To help with this challenge, HubSpot, Rock Content, and Lokalise gathered some of the best global marketing advice into a single handy guide.

Whether you're new to global marketing or a veteran who wants some pro tips, the Global Marketing Playbook will set you up for success.

In this guide, you'll learn how to:

- Develop a global marketing strategy
- Create a plan of action
- Assemble your global team
- Build scalable processes
- Prepare for localization
- Choose technologies wisely
- Balance local and global needs
- Lead your company to global success

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CHAPTER ONE

Preparation



Prepare for success by planning your international marketing strategy with a comprehensive approach.

Determine your focus and review available resources.

Before opting to take your business global, it is important to determine your focus and look at all available resources.

- Does your company have the mindset to approach an international expansion?
- Do you have the personnel, tools, language education, and budget to make this happen?

Expanding your business in this capacity is about far more than just finding a few people to hire that speak a different language. You need to be prepared to do research about the local culture, history, and how the people have typically responded to a product or service like yours within their local market.

This takes time, money, and personnel to happen—which means you need to be ready to spend a portion of your budget to complete this process.

You'll also need to decide if there's room for your organization in this new market—whether that be for economic reasons, competitive reasons, or just cultural translation. Some items and services are very specific to a certain region of the world. While bringing them to other countries sounds like a good idea, it doesn't always end well for some businesses. Knowing your target market and ideal buyer persona on a localized cultural level is vital to your success.

Finally, it is important to develop a focus as to why the expansion is happening in the first place. If your product or service is highly niche, there might not be a reason to go global.

Need an example? Let's say your company makes widgets for the manufacturing industry. If that specific industry is banned in a foreign country, then expanding to that region simply would not make sense.

However, let's pretend that region is the biggest exporter of a specific type of item made by a machine your widget fits on. This would be a good thing. If your business could attract a target market overseas, then it might be good to forge ahead with a well-developed strategy.

Decide on traditional versus digital globalization.



It is vital to realize that there are two types of global expansion: traditional and digital.

Traditional focuses on creating offices in the area, media advertising, and a localized focus. These more traditional strategies imply a greater demand for financial investment, and the ability to overcome the political and commercial barriers of different countries.

These characteristics of traditional internationalization are important for any expanding company. But thanks to digital, the rules have changed to allow all types of companies to start building communications and businesses globally.

Because digital globalization is solely online, you could still keep your corporate headquarters in the United States, but reach out to an international audience through social media platforms and your website.

While both include benefits and drawbacks, the digital globalization model is usually the best to start with before expanding to a more traditional brick-and-mortar approach. Digital strategies mean that internationalization can start with lower investments that allow us to generate a brand, build a consolidated online presence, and explore foreign markets to determine their maturity and relevance to our businesses, before making the decision to physically expand into new territories.

Consider your corporate mindset.

In times of uncertainty, promoting a cooperative and helpful mindset can increase the chances of success. In a recent study with 2,447 global consumers, Deloitte found out that 58% were able to name a brand that quickly pivoted its offerings to better react to the "new normal" induced by COVID-19. Of this set of respondents, 82% said the new, relevant offerings had increased their desire to do business with these brands.

So, you want to pay close attention to your corporate mindset:

- Does the rest of your executive team agree with this decision?
- How does adding a global audience to your business affect daily operations?
- Does the company have clear goals for internationalization?
- Is the product prepared to be consumed by people from other countries and languages?
- Do you have the support team and the languages to correctly manage market and customer problems?
- Do you have technological infrastructure and international SEO strategies that allow you to appear correctly in Google from other geographical territories?

These are just a few of the questions you'll need to explore as you come up with a plan to bring your organization to customers in other countries.

Get to know these important concepts.

You don't want to be that person who can't explain the fundamentals behind a marketing strategy, right? So, if you are going to develop a global marketing strategy, you need to search and deeply understand concepts like digital internationalization and global corporate mindset.

For instance, digitalization has a huge impact on the internationalization process of companies, such as availability of resources and skills and what competencies are required for this process.

A global corporate mindset means that, while the company has to spread a brand message across all the regions and places it operates, it needs to address local issues and particular situations with a specific approach in terms of market maturities, languages, cultural, political, economical and social characteristics.

CHAPTER TWO

Strategy

Companies with highly-successful marketing plans in the U.S. often look toward entering the international playground. Before climbing into the global marketing sandbox, however, there are steps that need to be taken to avoid tripping and stubbing your toes.

A global marketing strategy must be based on the idea of producing relevant content, and, in an organic way, attracting and qualifying leads. This takes shape through a series of interlinked actions.

The internet provides brands with exponential opportunities for reach and interactivity, allowing them to explore new markets and strengthen brand image. However, this also leads brands to deal with a much wider public that doesn't necessarily present the same characteristics as a brand's local audience.

That's why it is useless to simply replicate your content strategy in other regions.

It is necessary for internal teams to recognize each audience's particularities and, from the structure that already exists, **develop a collaborative approach** to achieve business objectives.

This is what we call a global content marketing strategy. It is an initiative to optimize content strategies implemented in different regions of the globe, strengthening the brand image worldwide and creating a much broader and more engaged audience.





The 4 P's of global marketing.

No doubt you already know the 4 P's of marketing, a concept created by marketing professor Jerome McCarthy and widely spread by marketing author and professor Philip Kotler.

To help you understand what global marketing is, we will show you its 4 fundamental P's, introduced by Pam Didner in the book "Global Content Marketing: Plan, Produce, Promote, and Perfect."

Planning

Efficient planning is central to any strategy's success. Thus, it is especially important to **start with planning** in your global strategy.

This means that teams from different countries and regions must be involved to align goals, target audiences, define KPIs and priorities, and plan editorial calendars.

When developing a worldwide strategy, it is critical to consider cultural, linguistic, and market maturity differences across the locations where the organization wants to expand.

To maintain brand consistency, the organization must have a overarching content guidelines with clear goals, workflows, and brand voice and image definitions. Then, each team can have the freedom to customize buyer personas, content calendars, and distribution plans to meet the needs of each location.

Producing

After planning, it's time to **produce content that really impacts** the buyer persona.

Beyond producing materials that take into account the variances in each region's features, it's critical to understand which content types capture the attention of buyer personas and generate more leads.

A keyword study is essential to lead content development, and this is followed by market research. Discover what other companies are producing and how these materials are meeting the needs of your persona. Then, build assets to add additional value. Providing multiple forms of content and ways to interact with your company can also make a difference.



Promotion

There's no point in producing rich content if people can't find it. Therefore, the third P stands for promotion.

It is important to use an **omnichannel approach**, integrating social networks, blogs, email marketing, and whatever else is relevant to the brand.

In some cases, it can be difficult to achieve organic reach in the initial phase of the strategy. For this reason, you might consider using sponsored links and paid advertising campaigns to boost the business' promotional efforts.

Perfection

The last element described by Didner is perfection. To maintain and achieve good results, a global content marketing strategy must always aim for perfection, which demands constant monitoring of results.

Although perfection is difficult, if not impossible to achieve, it may motivate your team to do their best. Of course, there is always space for improvement. If the plan isn't producing the desired outcomes, it's time to review process, conduct tests, and determine which measures will lead to genuine progress.



How can you create a global content marketing strategy in your company?

Now that you know what a global content marketing strategy is and how important it is, we'll give some valuable tips for implementing this concept in your company. Keep reading!

Assemble Your Team.

Your marketing teams must all be on the same page when it comes to the strategy's goals and stages. Maintaining contact with sales teams can also help to coordinate and strengthen your approach. Using project management tools makes it possible to ensure clear and efficient internal communication, engage team members, and encourage collaborative work.

However, as previously mentioned, your standard strategy cannot be applied in all your regions of operation. Therefore, it is important to designate people responsible for adapting the approach according to the country's culture in question and the public's behaviors.

It is also recommended to hire a manager specifically to guide and oversee operations between global teams. Through collaboration, you will create an internal environment conducive to the generation of valuable feedback to optimize results.

Use Specialized Tools.

Content planning can be a complex process. So you will also want to assemble some tools to make things easier.

Consider an **online marketplace** that connects businesses with expert writers for high-quality written content. You can order as much content as needed on this type of platform, using content briefs that you create yourself.

Stock photo images, photo editing software, interactive content software and website SEO tools may also be required.



Define Local and Global KPIs.

Working with metrics is the only way you can map the progress of your strategy and find room for optimization.
However, it is important to differentiate local from global metrics. That is, performance in different markets should be interpreted in different ways.

If your content strategy is already successful in the U.S., the rate of leads converted to purchase may be your most important KPI. However, if you are investing in another country — and still don't have much authority there — the number of visits to your website is a metric that should receive great attention.

Working on a Global Content Marketing strategy is the best way to ensure positive results in the different markets you want to reach.

In this process, it is essential to consider the cultural and behavioral differences between audiences in different locations.

For example, due to cultural and linguistic differences, Japanese website design differs significantly from western design. This may have an impact on usability and, as a result, the outcomes of an American company seeking to enter the Japanese market.



Align global initiatives with business priorities.

Define success.

For any company-wide initiative, it's important to begin with a clear sense of purpose. Before you do anything else, go straight to the **why**. Start by gathering answers to these questions from your organization's leadership:

- Why are we developing a global marketing strategy to begin with?
- Is the company just testing the waters in other countries, or are there longterm goals for the markets that our company should have a presence in?
- Is there a specific revenue target?
- Are there some countries that are a higher priority than others?
- Is the goal to diversify the revenue to mitigate risk?

Flag aligned and competing priorities.

Every business has to do many things at once. What are the top burning issues that are truly on the CEO's radar at the moment? What issues are most critical for the company? Before you make a big commitment to global marketing, you need to ensure that it will be worth your time.

What are the priorities for your executive team or board at the moment? Also, what are the issues that least important? Make sure you tackle only the top priorities and avoid the ones that are not on anyone's radar.



Here are some common examples:

Customer retention

Many companies start getting serious about global marketing in order to quickly boost retention or reduce their customer churn. When this focus becomes a priority, you should pay attention to globalizing your customer marketing, advocacy marketing, and your user interface.

Growth

If growth is your company's primary concern, you'll need to focus more on the top and eventually the middle of the funnel. Ensure that you're orchestrating campaigns with a global mindset, adding plenty of local campaigns with **original content into your mix**, and possibly localizing content into other languages.

Market Share

Is your company focused on taking existing market share from competitors? If that's the case, you might find yourself gravitating toward bottom-of-funnel content and campaigns, competitive differentiation (including relevant market research on global competitors), and sales enablement.

Profitability

If your company's main objective is to boost profits, you'll be taking a closer look at the average revenue per customer for specific geographies to see if you can double down activities in your most profitable markets. This may require working more cross-functionally with your operations and finance teams.

Diversification

Often, businesses reduce risk by diversifying revenue streams, much in the same way investors want a diverse portfolio. To do this, they often think about diversifying by adding products or acquiring businesses. Sometimes, acquiring a small competitor is a fast way to increase global reach. Or, you might identify niche international markets with zero competition and ripe opportunity.

Once you have identified the primary corporate focus area, write up a strategic mission statement or a sentence that encapsulates, in general, what you hope to accomplish and how it aligns with the overall company objective. Keep the statement high-level until you learn more and can refine it.

For example:

- Boost client retention by delighting our customers in international markets.
- Drive increased revenue by generating demand in emerging markets.
- Increase global market share by growing our international customer base.

In short, nearly any corporate goal can be supported with a global marketing strategy. Flag the current priorities now because they can and will change over time.

Likewise, your plans will evolve alongside the corporate goals. Use global marketing as a strategic lever to accelerate momentum toward your company's overall goals.

Identify and engage your executive champions.

Who at the executive level is most likely to champion the global marketing cause? Localization needs to have a seat at the table for it to be approached strategically. So, who at the executive level is most likely to champion the global marketing cause? Make a list of your top executive influencers, then find a way to build relationships with them. It's influencer outreach at its finest, but within your company.

Furthermore, it is important to seek out those who see internationalization as an aligned mindset. Going global is about far more than just translating websites and content into a different language. Your ally leaders must also see the importance of embracing individual cultures, dialects, preferences, market maturities, research, ways of creating businesses, and both political and economical moments of the target country. Everyone must be aligned and have an international mindset.

Another problem arises when an international mindset hasn't been developed: the mandatory Lingua Franca. In the Western world, English is the language that rules the entire market and the language with which all countries prepare themselves for global transactions. This causes a challenge because markets should be approached in their local language with their local characteristics.

Even if English is present in all of your business decisions, the reality is that the markets themselves use their native languages to find information on the internet. Even Google understands the importance of this and insists on building custom site domains to meet countries' needs in their own languages. English is used when technical information is needed; but this is not the case of a common information consumer. That is why it is so important to build, inside a company, the international mindset of being multicultural and multilingual.

Look for top leaders in your organization who meet any of the following criteria:

- Were born in another country
- Have parents or spouses from another country
- Worked in another country
- Lived in another country
- Speak another language
- Travel frequently for business or pleasure
- Worked at a global company previously
- Currently do international work
- Manage employees in other countries



If you don't have relationships with these folks already, review their social media profiles and make a note of anyone who seems to have international experience or interest. Ask around to people who work on their teams. Usually, you'll discover that your executive team is already more international than you may realize, and you'll hopefully have more support than you expected.

Now, take your list and find ways to connect with these individuals. Will they accept a meeting with you, or is there someone else on their team who might be willing to? Are there projects they are working on where you can lend a hand? What are their top priorities, and how can you be of help to them? Find good excuses to meet with them, and figure out how you can support them in meeting their goals through global marketing initiatives and how you can collectively support the company's objectives.

Map out your cross-functional stakeholders.

While finding an executive champion is important, it's equally important to figure out who else in your company is affected by global marketing initiatives, or lack thereof. Your first order of business will be to make a list of all the marketing stakeholders that have any dealings with international marketing.



This is likely to include:

- Regional and local marketers
- Campaign / demand generation marketers
- Sales enablement teams
- Public relations teams
- Channel marketing
- Customer marketing
- Product marketing
- Creative teams
- Marketing operations teams
- Social media marketers
- Market researchers
- Localization teams
- Content production teams
- SEO teams

Next, here are some common places to look for stakeholders outside of marketing:

- Sales: Focus on in-country and regional managers.
- Services and support: Identify those who support international customers.
- Product team: Look for product managers dealing with internationalization.
- Finance and legal: Often they, too, are dealing with international concerns.
- Human resources: This team will be especially relevant if you have offices in other countries.
- IT/engineering: These teams can support with technical aspects of localization and International SEO.

Make a list of all the people who are "touched" by international marketing. You'll be surprised at how many people in your company actually have a vested interest in global marketing success.

Take time to meet with them, learn about their challenges and pain points, and how you might be able to better support them from a global perspective.

Seek to understand naysayers and roadblocks.

As you meet with people, you'll hopefully hear negative viewpoints about going global and the troubles of dealing with international customers.

While this might sound like the opposite of what you're looking for when you hope to rally support, it's actually helpful when people share their inevitable concerns about going global with honesty and transparency.

Lean into their pains to learn more. It will help you build a better plan, one that ensures you mitigate risks and take into account what are likely some very real issues.

If you find someone who is very negative and vocal about international marketing or just doing business globally in general, go out of your way to spend time with them and get to the root of the issues.

Were there bad experiences that you should know about from the past that might taint people's perceptions going forward? Have certain things been tried in the past only to fail? Document these issues as potential roadblocks that you'll need to work around.

If nothing else, just by listening, you'll reassure people that you're receptive to their feedback and that you take their concerns seriously.

Remember that for many companies, going global can be a scary proposition, especially if they don't have much experience with international business. It's normal for people to feel under-prepared. Business can be complicated, even in just a single country. Reassure them that such views and feelings are actually quite common and that many companies experience global growing pains on their road to success.

So, what's the true answer to dealing with those who feel globalization is a bad prospect for your organization? Lots of research. Just like in sales, when you've covered every possible objection with a valid answer, it can be difficult for anyone to say no.

That said, you'll want to pay specific attention to areas surrounding the culture, politics, economic level, and market maturity of any country you're considering expanding to. Make sure you're focusing on a specific country and not just a language.

Countries give us information on how a language is being used in a market. Without the country, a language is just a tool to send messages that won't have the force to make a consumer feel represented.

This means that not all the countries with English as their primary language have the same languages, uses, and needs. The same happens with countries that speak Spanish, Portuguese, and other languages.

Even if we can find many countries that speak the same language, the uses of it will be affected by political, economical, social, and cultural issues that will make every country develop their own ways of communicating. That's the importance of the country over the language in an internationalization process.



Invest in global branding.

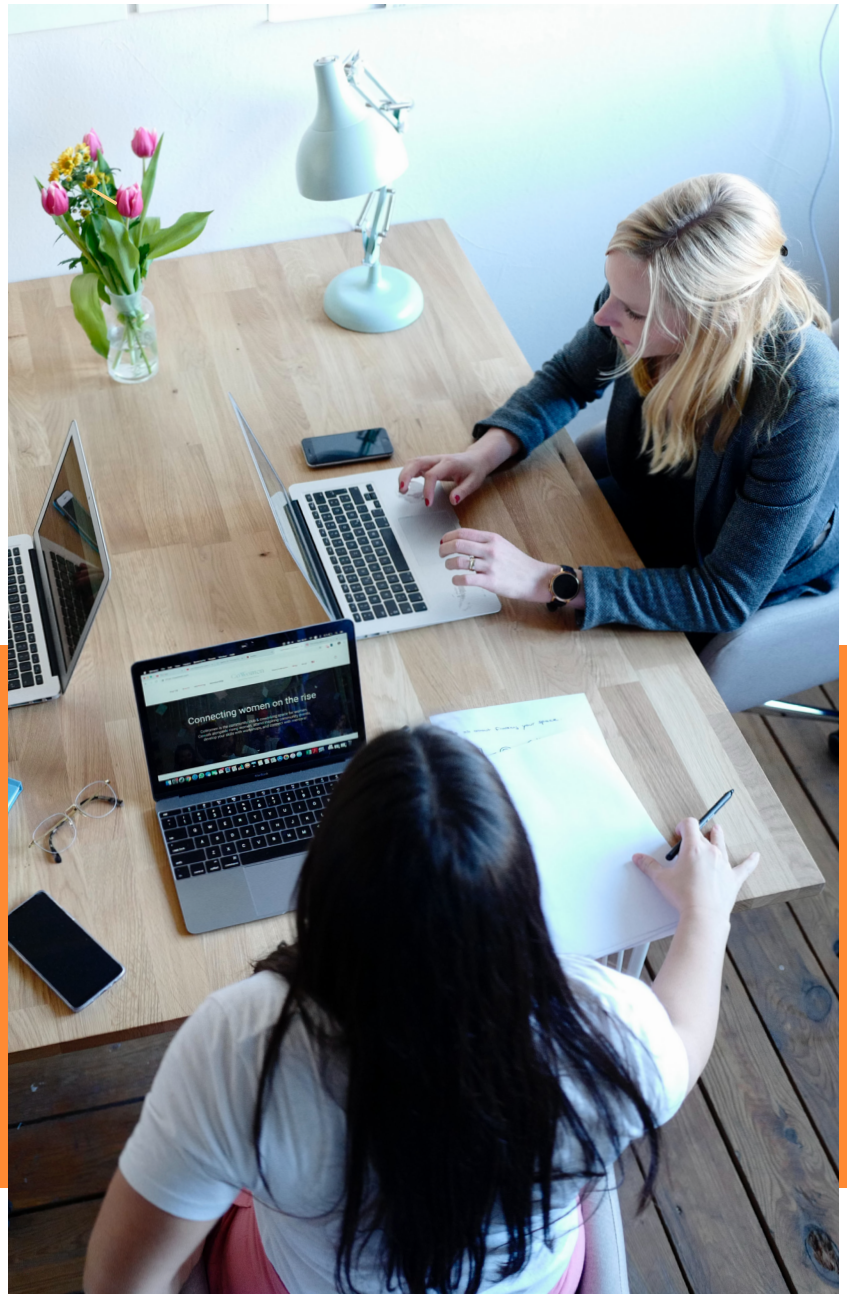
Ideally, you'll also consider the global branding aspect of expanding operations into a different country.

Take a look at any major corporation in the United States. Think big, like McDonald's, Apple, and others. **These companies understand that the look, feel, and voice of all marketing materials must translate cohesively across international markets.**

However, they also know that localization and giving consumers in those areas a voice is important. That's why they offer certain aspects that are granularly localized to specific markets.

For example, the menu you enjoy at McDonald's in Tokyo is often far different than what you might see in Dallas, Texas. Even the menu in Canada, is often different from the U.S.. Have you seen their McLobster Sandwich?

That being said, never damage your own brand culture because of regional aspects. For example, in 2006 Google launched a self-censored search engine in China because the Chinese government subjects new media to firewalls. That damaged the central aspect of Google: information anytime, anywhere, which resulted in a backlash from the public.



Do not forget about global logistics.

Going global doesn't mean only thinking about how to broadcast your message in different regions of the world. That is important, but you have to be pragmatic as well.

For example, how does transportation of goods work in a specific country? Do they have an established rail network? Or a river network? Or maybe trucks are the primary shipping solution, as it is in Brazil.

The same happens with personal documentation. What are the document names, what information do they carry about a person, and which ones are mandatory for a money transfer? This varies enormously among countries. What about address formats and types of bank accounts? These are very localized too.

Payment options often vary from locale to locale. Instant transfer systems, like Real-Time Payments (RTP) in the US, or PIX in Brazil, are similar but do not function the same.

Furthermore, your marketing efforts have to take into consideration the time zones from each region. This is important for email marketing and social media because success is highly influenced by the time of the day communications are sent or published.

CHAPTER THREE

Planning

Now that you've come up with your strategy, it's time to outline your plan.

To start, focus on creating the shell of your plan based on what you have learned thus far in the process. You can add detail as the picture becomes clearer.

Crunch those numbers.

Data is a global marketer's best friend. You'll need it when it comes to creating a plan with clear results that are measurable and achievable. Here are some basic numbers you'll want to look at, each broken down at the country, sub-region, and regional level.

- Amount of revenue
- Number of customers
- Average deal size (or average selling price)
- Average sales cycle length
- Average retention rate (or churn rate)
- Number of opportunities (open sales opps)
- Number of marketing-qualified leads
- Number of leads / contacts
- Number of visits / traffic

Assess the difficulty.

Here are the top considerations for market expansion (grouped into four areas) that will give you a better grasp of how difficult it will be to enter the markets in question.

- **Go-to-market path.** Launching in a new market and attracting customers needs a go-to-market strategy. What channels are available to you? Think of how you can leverage partners, direct sales reps, search, and PR activities for awareness.
- **Ease of business.** How easy will it be for your company to actually do business in other markets? Definitely use the ease of doing business scores above to get the broader picture of each country. Also take into account local regulations, data privacy issues, and cybersecurity.
- **Economy.** Do some homework on markets you're considering. This includes payments but it also extends to the broader economy. Is it stable? Is there solid growth? What about currency fluctuation?
- **Localization & Internationalization.** While language is a core component of localization, you'll have to take into consideration the degree of localization that is needed. Will you need straight translation or transcreation? You may have to invest in local content that accounts for cultural differences and other requirements. And if you're building digital products, you'll need to ensure your products are internationalized to easily localize them without writing additional code.

Next, look at the conversion rates between these various elements focusing on what is most important for the goals of your company. Go back to the "why" of your strategy. Are there some countries with a higher average selling price? Others that tend to close at a faster or higher rate?
Do you see growth in top-of-funnel indicators, such as traffic and contacts, in certain parts of the world? Pull out the metrics that you know will matter most for your team. Avoid information overload — focus on just the things that people will find valuable.

Before you invest too much time crunching the numbers, run your ideas by your other counterparts, especially from sales, and ask them — what data would be most useful to you? Don't be afraid to get feedback early in the process. People generally like having a say early on, and knowing that their input will be helpful in shaping the outcome. Pay attention to it at the planning stage.

Use overall marketing goals to fuel international goals.

You're armed with both corporate goals and international marketing metrics. See how these two items align with your overall team's marketing goals. Perhaps some of your findings will line up nicely with other, broader goals for the marketing team at large. On the other hand, maybe you'll find potential areas of conflict. For example, perhaps a global blog subscriber goal conflicts with regional blog subscriber goals that are critical to local audience development.

Keep an eye out for marketing goals that you can bolster with international marketing efforts. For example, is the team working toward boosting leads from organic search? Perhaps this is something you can help drive with global support. Figure out what the core metrics are for marketing, if you don't already know them, and look for opportunities to ensure that your international marketing goals are supporting those too.

If your marketing team is already aligned nicely with your corporate goals, and you feel that this step is redundant, take it down one level. Look around at the other teams within your marketing department, to see how you might be able to align your goals with sub-team goals, especially any that are of critical importance for the company or seem to be on the radar of executives.

Create your long-term objectives.

Now that you've done all the necessary pre-work and have found your executive champion(s), taken a close look at all of your stakeholders and their needs and concerns, determined which objectives are top priorities for your company, and identified how these line up with your overall marketing goals, it's time to translate all this information into specific, quantifiable objectives.

For example, let's say that the strategic mission statement you identified previously was the following:

Drive increased revenue by generating demand in emerging markets.

Give that goal some color by turning it into a more specific objective:

Drive increased revenue by generating 25% more demand in our top three emerging markets (Brazil, France, Germany) over the next 12 months.

Similarly, perhaps you have a client retention goal, such as the following:

Boost client retention by delighting our customers in international markets.

Give it some clarity by adding a timeline and a specific metric that you can track:

Boost client retention by 10% over the next two quarters by delighting our customers with customer marketing campaigns in our top five international markets.

The definition of "long-term" may vary significantly from company to company, but as a general rule of thumb, you should plan at least two quarters out, if not a year. In general, the bigger the company, the further out you'll want to plan. You'll want to avoid longer-range planning since priorities at most companies frequently change.

Break into smaller SMART goals.

Now, you're ready to divide up the longer-term objectives into smaller goals that line up with the way your company measures progress. It might be quarterly or monthly. For example, let's say you set the following objective:

> **Drive increased revenue by generating 25% more demand in our top three emerging markets (Brazil, France, Germany) over the next 12 months.**

Break this into smaller goals, such as:

	Current # of MQLs per Month	End of Q1 Target	End of Q2 Target	End of Q3 Target	End of Q4 Target
Brazil	20	22	25	28	30
France	30	32	35	38	40
Germany	50	52	53	54	55
TOTAL	100	106	113	120	125

Fill out your starting point and end point first, and then fill in the milestones by quarter or month that you'll need to hit in order to get there. Use what you know about the existing markets in order to set realistic goals. For example, in this case, we set a goal of 50% growth in Brazil, since the starting number was smaller and growth can be assumed to be higher. However, we set a lower target in Germany, perhaps due to existing company plans to hire fewer salespeople for that market.

Why should you set your goals by country, as opposed to by region? It makes them more specific, and when you choose a country-led strategy, you're improving your level of focus and prioritization. If you make the mistake of lumping countries into a bigger regional category, you'll often dilute the impact of your overall marketing efforts by failing to narrow your focus. If you're already seeing a large amount of volume from a sizable number of countries, it's OK to assign a goal for a bucket of countries that you label "other," so long as you remember to examine the data on a country level prior to setting a group goal.

Lastly, when you bunch countries together as opposed to separating them out, it's easy to overlook country-specific trends and opportunities to invest more in high-yield regions. Remember to put the "nation" in international and design your marketing activities with a country-first mentality.



Resources for getting started.

Rock Content, a company founded in Brazil that localized its operations to the US and Mexico, is always looking for new ways to help companies create solid strategies for marketing. A few of our favorite tools you can utilize to start planning your global expansion include:

Marketing calendars

These calendars will help you plan your marketing strategies according to the most important dates, events, and seasons of the year.

Buyer's Journey Bundle

This bundle contains a content strategy planner, a guide on how to use interactive content for the buyer's journey, and an assessment of your content. Everything you need to start building your global journey.

2023 Marketing Planning Bundle

Inside this bundle, you will find a marketing plan template and a marketing budget assessment to help you get organized while you plan your global marketing strategy.

CHAPTER FOUR

People



Now that you have concrete goals and a skeleton plan, it's time to engage the people who can help you execute.

Assemble your team.

Who is your team exactly? What internal employees do you have on the team who focus on international marketing, in each region? If you don't have dedicated employees for this today, take stock of the current team to see if there is anyone who jumps out as having the curiosity to lead initiatives in other countries. Ideally, this person will be a growth marketer who is either from that region or located in that region.

If you're lucky, you might also have a marketer who speaks the language in which they'll be marketing, but this is not always the norm. When in doubt, always choose a fantastic marketer over one who is just mediocre but happens to speak the language. It's easy to train a marketer to work with a freelancer (or several) to overcome the language barrier. It isn't nearly as easy to train a bilingual person to become a great marketer, especially when it comes to growth marketing and entering a new market.

Whatever you do, resist the temptation to get your non-marketing staff overly involved in translation and other language-related activities. The reason? Opportunity cost. Chances are, you have salespeople in the local market who are selling to people in their language, and sometimes this actually occurs prior to marketing getting involved. If that is the case, don't think you can "leverage" these salespeople for their language skills, because every hour they spend reviewing a translation is an hour they aren't selling, which can actually slow down your marketing efforts. In the long run, ironically, this will lower the return on your investment in programs and translation.

One thing you should do? Keep an eye out for people with a hunger for global marketing. They might not currently work on your team, but they might show great promise for evolving and growing into a new role as your international efforts scale.

Look around the company for localization team members. Who in your company currently helps manage projects to convert content into other languages? Make sure to meet with this person or people, because they'll often be important allies for you, later on, to support the marketing team's localization needs.

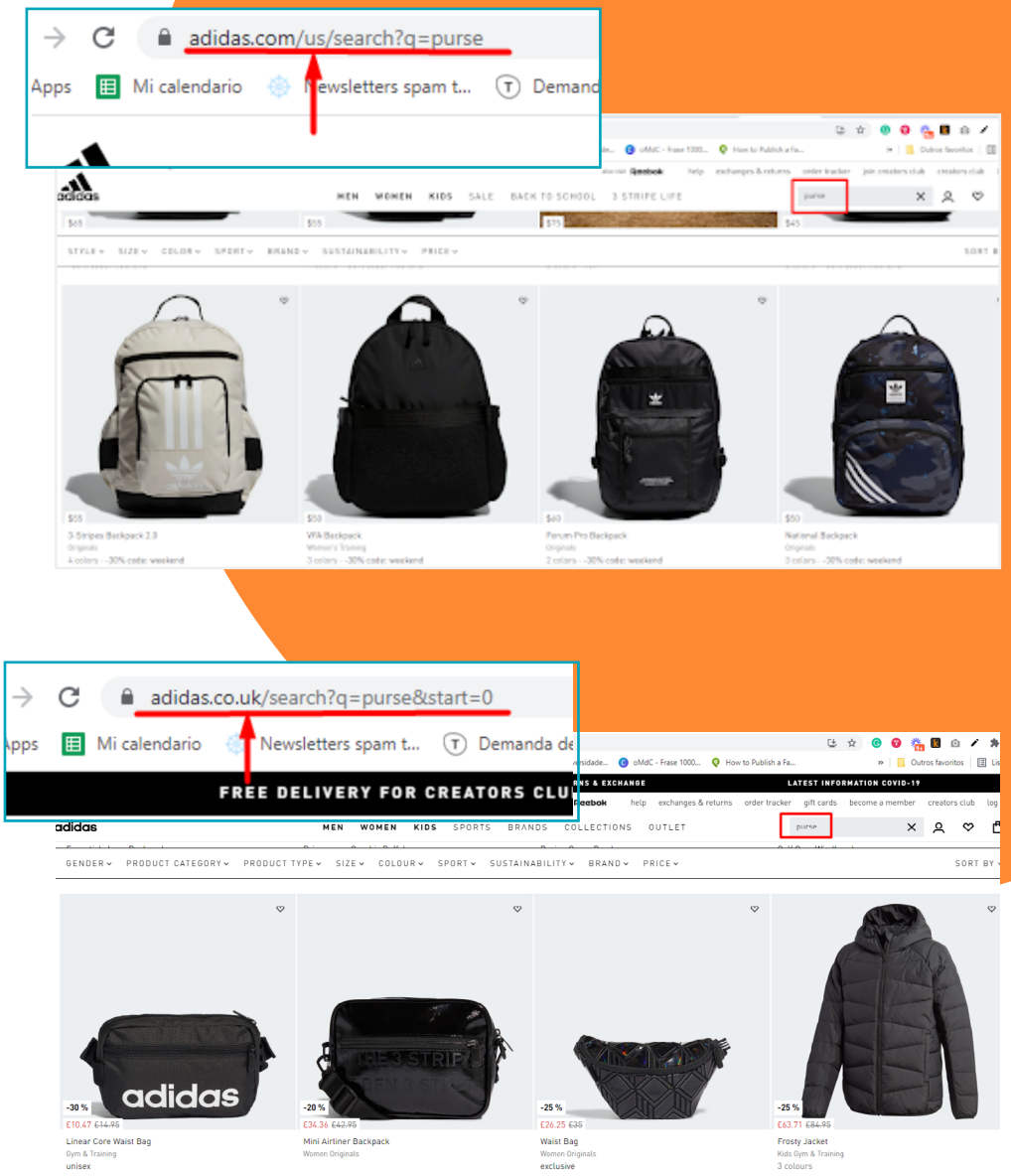
Finally, remember that adding a bilingual team member to lead a global expansion effort is not enough. Just because someone knows how to speak the local language doesn't mean they understand the needs, wants, and desires of consumers.

For example, Spanish is the primary language in both Mexico and Colombia. But their culture, history, and socioeconomics are far different from one another. This is also true with the United States and UK.

Both countries speak the same primary language, but both uses are divided into different historical, socioeconomic but also grammatical characteristics.

In the end, which one is correct: color or colour?

Or if we are selling purses in e-commerce, are we talking about the handbag (for the USA) or about the wallet (in UK)?



We don't even need to go so far to find examples like this one. Let's ask ourselves what we call this type of drink: soda, pop, coke, and fizzy drink or other?



The answer will always depend on the market with which we are communicating.

One thing we know for sure — if this happens with the English language, it happens with all the languages that are spoken in different countries.

This is why it is wise to find a team member who has lived in the expansion area and knows the local voice at a native level, or has a huge capacity for doing good market research and a genuine desire for having a cultural approach.

Engage your partners.

If you don't have marketers who speak the language, how can you execute global and regional marketing campaigns? Enlist help from third parties. Remember, it's quite common these days for marketers to market in languages they don't actually speak themselves, relying on local marketing agencies, partners, contractors, and translation agencies.

Here are four groups of partners you'll want to consider getting involved:

CONTRACTORS

If your marketing team is small, or you're just ramping up a single market, this is likely where you'll begin. If you don't have anyone to create content or get campaigns created, you may need to rely on a carefully selected contractor to help. You can pay them for a batch of hours each week or month, and evolve the relationship from there. The great thing about contractors is that they offer scalability, which is especially important if you're ramping up in several markets at once.

MARKETING AGENCIES

Many marketers rely heavily on agencies to supplement their work and outsource certain tasks. If you're one of these companies, look for local agencies to support your work in different countries. Again, think "country-first" as opposed to trying to find agencies that can cover a broad region — usually, they specialize in the country where they are headquartered and are struggling themselves to grow their own presence overseas. When possible, choose agencies specialized in each market, even if it means managing more than one.

RESELLERS AND REFERRAL PARTNERS

If you're lucky enough to have a network of partners, you may be able to get them involved in your global expansion plans by having them help in a variety of ways. Consider co-marketing activities, as well as getting them involved in helping to create original and locally adapted content in your target languages. Talk to partners to ensure that the benefits to them are clear and that the activities will be mutually rewarding.

TRANSLATION PROVIDERS

You'll be creating content as part of your strategy for entering new markets, and for this, you will want to work with one or more translation providers at some point. Do you already have translation partners that other areas of the company are using? Depending on the diversity of your needs, you may work with freelance translators, small boutique agencies, or large multi-language vendors. Generally, the larger your company, the more likely you are to require the services of an agency because you're likely to have more diverse needs for desktop publishing and design work, voice-over work, subtitling, website localization, video adaptation, and internationalization testing services on top of just text translation.

Rally the extended team.

Beyond just your direct employees and partners, think about who else on the marketing team is involved in international efforts. Use the stakeholder list you created previously to identify all the direct contributors who can help you execute on your plan, along with what roles you think they can help with and whether it currently is covered in their job description and interests.

Once you have identified this network, start meeting with them to lay out the bones of your plan and get their feedback. Start with direct reports on the marketing team, proceed to other marketing team members, then internal non-marketing stakeholders, especially sales, and incorporate their input. Next, consider your partners.

Get views from your third-party vendors. Getting this feedback doesn't have to be time-consuming or overly formal — you can invite people to lunch or have quick conversations over coffee. Just make sure that they feel included and have the chance to participate, so they also start to take ownership of the plan.



Create an internal communications plan.

While an internal communications plan might sound like overkill, where global marketing is concerned, communication is absolutely critical to ensure that all stakeholders are aligned and functioning well on both local and global fronts. Your plan can be very simple, but it's important to flag the audiences you need to reach internally as well as the options you have for getting the word out about plans and progress toward goals.

Here are some important communication vehicles you'll want to make sure exist:

A place to give local successes global visibility.

How do local teams share their results and get visibility? Make sure they have an easy way to convey their successes — and their needs — to global stakeholders. Consider giving the local teams multiple ways to share this information. For example, at HubSpot, every local marketing team has a dedicated space on the company Wiki where they can share highlights, progress toward goals, and other information with other teams. In addition, many regional teams also produce a monthly newsletter sharing their highlights too.

A place to highlight global sales and marketing alignment.

Perhaps you have a monthly meeting between sales and marketing to ensure alignment. Make sure to include time to let regional efforts shine within the global context, and be sure to show off local partnerships and collaboration between sales and marketing.

A place to highlight progress toward regional goals.

Look at your corporate reporting options to see where this kind of information can be showcased. For example, at HubSpot, we send out daily lead generation dashboards to all members of global sales and marketing teams featuring regional goals and progress toward goals, to ensure transparency and accountability.

A place to discuss local and global campaigns.

As your marketing teams grow globally, you'll need to hold campaign team meetings every so often, to discuss campaigns that can be "globalized" and used across multiple regions. Regional marketing teams might also take inspiration from the work that other local teams are engaged in.



What does the internal communications plan consist of? Here is an example:

Vehicle	Audience	Frequency
Regional marketing team space on company wiki page	Global stakeholders	As often as needed; recommended monthly
Dedicated section in company-wide newsletter	All company employees	Monthly

Vehicle	Audience	Frequency
Regional marketing newsletter	Regional marketing, sales, services and support team members	Monthly
Sales and marketing alignment meeting (one slide in deck per region)	All sales and marketing team members	Monthly
Lead generation daily report	All sales and marketing team members	Daily
Company all-hands meeting (one slide for international)	All company employees	Quarterly



Be human-centered.

Any corporation that wants to go global needs to deeply understand people, societies, and their emerging needs. The most important thing a company needs to have in mind is how they can support their employees and customers as humans. We all have fears, expectations, tastes, and world visions and we expect that enterprises acknowledge these traits and address them accordingly.

Political and economic issues are more global than ever. We are seeing how much we are connected with the pandemic, and how much local issues can impact the globe. That's why companies need to provide market solutions that are value-based. To bring a difference to the world, you need to address the fears and expectations people have. It's not just about profit anymore, it's about solving your customers' problems and providing a humanized workspace for your employees.

Don't rely only on translation and localization.

We've touched on this a couple of times within the guide, but we want to stress it even more. **Going global is about far more than translating content and adding a localized website.**

It means getting to the heart of your target consumer in their native country, understanding their needs, and using your brand position to address these concerns.

If all you're thinking about is changing a few words on a website to an additional language, then you should rethink your overall intentions in going international.

Instead, focus on research of the needs within that marketplace and how the content you create, products you sell, and services you provide accurately include those details.

Creating trust with your target market and building brand awareness in a new region can be tough if you aren't focusing on your ideal buyer's needs and wants at a cultural level. Taking this extra time to do your research and have a plan for the overall expansion that includes localized elements is crucial to your global success.



CHAPTER FIVE

Process

Now, it's time to set up the processes that will ensure both consistency and scalability as your company continues on its global growth trajectory.



Given that the universe of potential processes to cover here is enormous, we'll focus primarily on processes for inbound marketing, especially content creation.

Find out where your content lives.

Hopefully, the content your company relies on — for attracting new visitors to your website and converting them into leads and then to customers — is located in a centralized place, using standard file naming conventions, and easily accessible to all. Sound like a dream? It is, especially if you have a high-performing marketing team that has mastered content creation because they are more likely to prioritize the speed of publishing over making sure that every item has been saved in the right place and named in a standard way.

The good news is, your very first step is relatively easy — document all the places that your content lives. Conduct a content audit.

Answer the following questions:

- What types of content do we currently create?
- Who currently authors content?
- What end formats do we publish content in?
- What programs do we use to create content?
- Where do we store the finished product?
- Where do we store the source files (if created in another program)?
- How do we currently translate content?
- Where do the target language files live?
- What systems and programs are “captive” — not easy for others to get access to?
- Who has access to these programs?
- How easy is it to share content with our vendors and third parties?
- How do you translate content?
- How do you localize content?
- What are the main gaps between languages?
- What are the main gaps with the technical programming of channels?

Write up the processes used to create it.

Before you can globalize any of your content processes or adapt them for different markets, you need to first document the process by which you’re creating content today. Using the list you developed above, choose the most common types of content you create repeatedly — for example blog posts, ebooks, videos, and case studies.

Now, ask for volunteers to write up the steps involved in creating, publishing, and disseminating this content. If you have multiple regional teams, ask each team to document it separately -- you may be surprised to learn that each team does things slightly differently.



Identify differences and common ground.

Once you have mapped out the processes used throughout your marketing team, it's time to compare and contrast in order to identify areas of overlap as well as differences. Have a meeting for each type of content to encourage team members to share what they're doing differently and what they have in common. As opposed to pushing people to embrace a standard process, first invite them to discuss the pros and cons of different methods. Ask them for their feedback — if it's necessary or desirable to have common ground, it's likely that someone on the team will flag it.

After you have done this exercise for one type of content, do it again until you have a clear set of processes mapped out along with regional variations that are agreed upon by all teams. During this process, you're likely to encounter many questions about how content is created, stored, and published. All of this is a healthy discussion that will help align the regional teams and will get them to collaborate more closely going forward. Aligning regions is a job that is never finished, but discussing shared processes and evolving them together helps it along.

Starting with content is helpful, as those processes are relatively easy to document, but the pay-offs for teams leveraging each other's content can be massive. Once you have mastered this, you will be ready to move on to other areas of marketing, such as demand generation or lead nurturing.



Set up a regular cadence for improvement.

Once you've done an exhaustive process audit, you may be tempted to never think about it again. In reality, you'll need to tackle your process improvement one day, one project at a time. When you're "done" improving, make sure to revisit your processes on a regular basis. This might be every six months, every year, or every time you are ramping up a new market.

Encourage your regional teams to self-audit and drive improvement from within their own teams. Help them develop relationships across regions, so that the desire to improve and innovate will stem more naturally from their interconnected mindset, as opposed to one that is driven from "corporate" and feels forced. The best improvement plan for regional teams is one that is collaborative and self-initiated.



Master international SEO.

Search engine optimization on an international level is also a consideration you'll want to make when planning your global expansion.

Since Google shows websites differently in each country, it is wise to purchase coordinating domain names with the proper country extension. You should also focus on content surrounding keywords in different languages and having a native speaker translate any articles or copy you currently have. And by a native speaker, we mean a person that knows a country very well and not just a language. As we saw previously, countries can have the same language but have different cultures, slang, economics, and politics.

Besides that, your content has to generate value according to the specific market needs in each country. Knowing the public well is key to understanding their problems and desires. You can create and publish content that directly addresses emerging needs. Therefore, you gain strength, relevance, and authority in your industry locally and internationally, while you build your rankings on Google.

There's also the technical side of using specific sub-sections of your website to attract users in varying countries. Doing this allows search engine crawlers to identify that this page is specific to a certain area or global region.

But there's one extra challenge: search results always show information related to the place you are, and not the place you want to market. So if you search for a keyword that's not in the local language, Google will still bring relevant results according to where you are, no matter the language. That's why it's important to use VPNs to simulate searches in every place in the world and to make good use of platforms such as SEMRush or Ahrefs to identify real opportunities worldwide.

Even if you are working in the digital space, where geographical distances don't seem to matter much, you still have to consider where your website is hosted. A page hosted somewhere in the United States won't have the same loading speed in California compared to someone in South Africa that wants to access it. Investing in hosting technologies is a must if you want to impress Google and their new **Core Web Vitals**.

Learn how Google works in each country.

It's crucial we point out not everyone uses Google.

For example, Baidu is China's leading search engine and has lots of rules and regulations that businesses need to follow, and if you don't speak Chinese, it's pretty tough. Also, the ranking factors are entirely different from Google, so you need to ensure that you're optimizing for Baidu, including major technical optimization as opposed to just having some Chinese web pages.

Then, you have Yandex, which is used in Russia, Naver in Korea, and you'll need a mix of Yahoo and Google in Japan.

Focus on different languages and adapt between locales.

Thinking about language is a great first step, but as your international customer base grows, locale becomes more important.

For example, both the US and UK use the word "trainers", but they have quite different meanings. In the US, a "trainer" is a professional hired to train you to exercise. In the UK, trainers are shoes similar to sneakers, which can be worn during exercise (or on a walk to the pub!). And you can see vast differences in SERP results to reflect this.

This applies for French in France vs. French in Belgium, German in Germany vs. German in Austria, etc.



Know how to translate and localize your content.

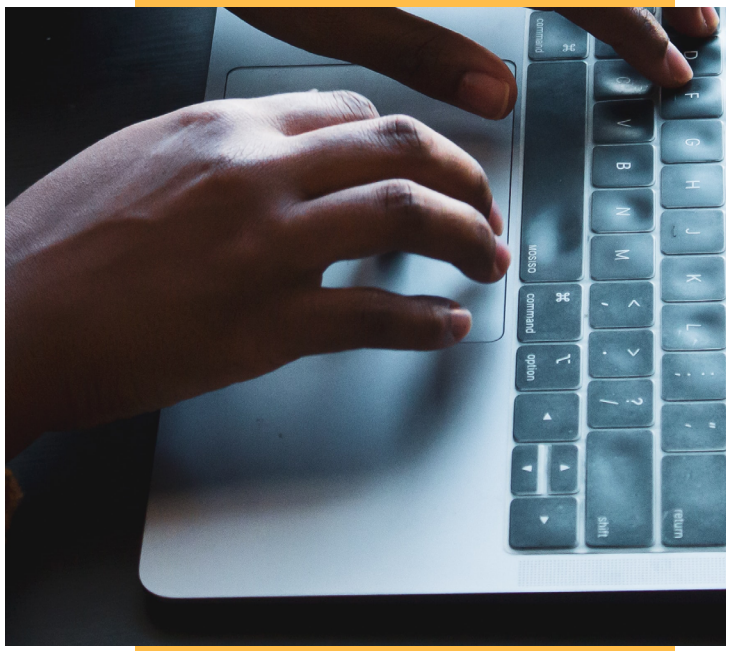
Translation and localization are two separate things. While translation is writing the same sentence in another language, localization means giving that sentence a meaning that takes into consideration the culture, format, and usage in a locale.

Sometimes just a translation works, but in the majority of cases, the real deal is localizing your messages about your products, services, and solutions. Localizing your global brand makes the local audience feel that you tailored your entire company for them. That's the way to build engagement and trust around your brand anywhere in the world.

For example, did you know "popcorn" has many different names throughout Latin America? It's palomitas in Mexico, canchita in Peru, pororó in Paraguay, and so on. There's more than 10 variations! And it's just one example! This is common with a lot of objects in different countries.

While translating or localizing your brand message across many regions, give special attention to the main gaps between languages. Such as the use of "o" or "ou" in words like "color" and "colour" and "z" or "s" in words like "localize" and "localise" between American and British English.





CHAPTER SIX

Localization

If the word “localization” gives you goosebumps, you’re definitely not alone.

Many marketers dislike dealing with markets where they don’t speak the language, and some go out of their way to avoid them entirely. Move past the “foreign fear factor” that can block your growth in other countries. While it’s good to take precautions to protect your brand and ensure that you make the best impression in another language or culture, localization doesn’t have to be intimidating.

Know the difference between translation, localization, and transcreation.

While we’ve touched on it quite a bit in this guide, it is vital that you understand the difference between translation, localization, and transcreation.

A **translation** is simply taking the content you already have on your website and translating it to a different language. While this is a good way to reuse content across multiple global channels, it isn’t where you want to stop.

Localization means taking into account the needs, wants, and desires of those living within the localized area to which you’re seeking to expand. This means doing your research and understanding what culturally makes sense for the market and how your brand can fit within that niche.

Transcreation is the combination of both translation and localization. It is the process of translating the information you currently have on your website and within marketing materials, while still taking into account the various tone, attitudes, and brand messaging your company currently uses.

The element that makes transcreation difficult for a lot of global companies is that it requires an intimate understanding of how a local target customer perceives the particular industry you are in.

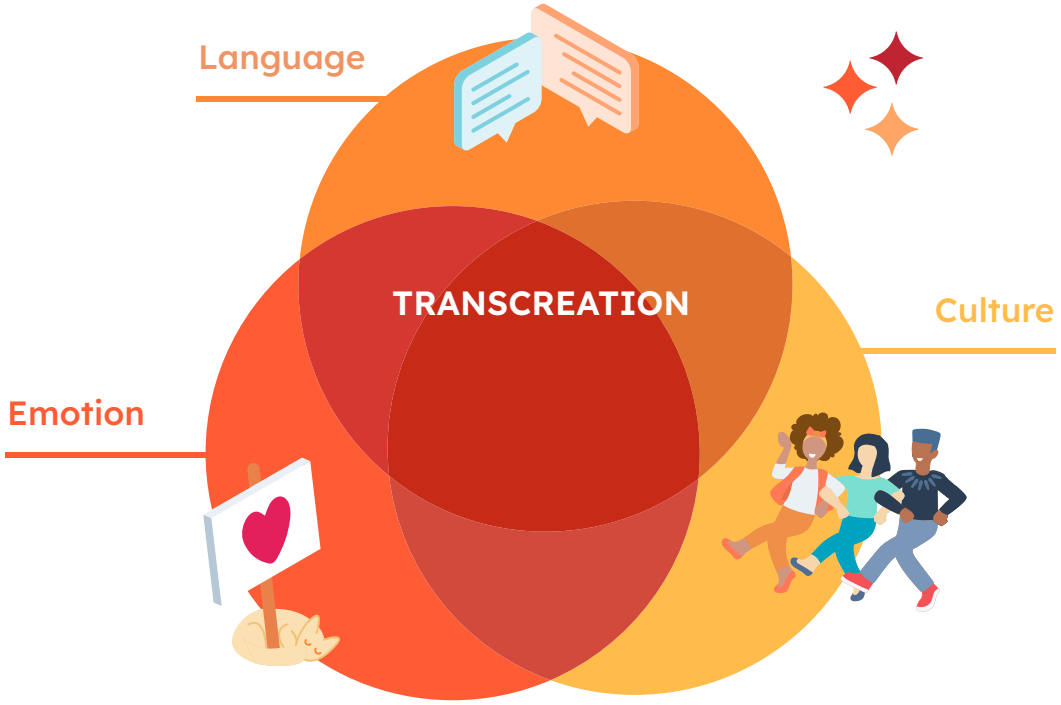
For example, what an American company finds as cheeky or amusing might be highly inappropriate and downright offensive in another part of the world. Transcreation takes this into account and adjusts for such factors.

It is important to integrate transcreation into your entire global expansion process. Each piece of content you publish to the new market should be thoroughly reviewed for both localized accuracy, translation changes, and any transcreation issues.

Why? Well, you don't want your company to start off on the wrong foot in your new expanded area. A few typos or even a big cultural mistake can easily tank your business in a new global market, which is why taking extra care with the transcreation process is so vital.

Further, certain colors and imaging should be updated according to localized standards. As an example, in some areas of the globe, showing women doing specific tasks or wearing certain items can seem off-putting for cultural reasons. Whether your brand believes in those values or not, it is important to conform to the global standards for these new areas of operation.

There is a caveat to this. If your goal is to be a changemaker in these regions on a specific cultural topic and to stand out for doing so, then you might purposefully opt to show imagery with a certain angle. However, this depends on your unique niche, overall goals, and the area in which your firm is expanding internationally.



Prioritize and select your markets.

1. Use real-time analytics.

The obvious place to start your market selection process is your existing data. What are the early signals of interest you're seeing from different markets? Look at the country level data to answer:

- Where are you seeing traction?
- Where are people signing up?
- Where are they trialing but maybe not converting?
- What is your average order value in those countries?
- Do customers in some countries have a higher lifetime value?

Use these key performance indicators (KPIs) to get a general sense of where you should be taking a deeper dive and measuring the broader opportunity.

When looking at these KPIs, pay less attention to top of funnel metrics like traffic volume, and look more closely at metrics that directly impact revenue such as closed-won leads.

2. To plan your international growth strategy, estimate how many customers could buy your product in each country.

According to **Nataly Kelly,** the golden rule of creating successful international expansion strategies is: one market = one country. Here's a handy exercise borrowed from Nataly to calculate the opportunity:

As a simple example, let's assume you're selling a software product that costs $1000 for an annual subscription. Now, let's assume 1,000,000 potential customers could buy your product in your chosen markets.

A simplified way to calculate the opportunity would be to multiply $1000 by your potential customers. You'd have a market size of $1 billion, but it wouldn't account for economic differences.

Now, let's assume that 30% of these customers are in a developed country and 70% are in a developing market. And let's assume you'll have to sell your product at a 50% discount.



Market	Developed country	Developing country
Number of customers	300,000	700,000
Average price	$1000	$500
Estimated market size	$300 million	$350 million

This gives you a more accurate market size of $650 million. But bigger doesn't always equal better – you need to factor in difficulty as well.

3. Assess the difficulty.

In the chart above, we broke down the top considerations for market expansion. Here they are, grouped into four areas that will give you a better grasp of how difficult it will be to enter the markets in question.

Go-to-market path. Launching in a new market and attracting customers needs a go-to-market strategy. What channels are available to you? Think of how you can leverage partners, direct sales reps, search, and conduct PR activities for awareness.

Ease of business. How easy will it be for your company to actually do business in other markets? Definitely use the ease of doing business scores above to get the broader picture of each country. Also take into account local regulations, data privacy issues, and cybersecurity.

Economy. Do some homework on markets you're considering. This includes payments but it also extends to the broader economy. Is it stable? Is there solid growth? What about currency fluctuation?

Localization & Internationalization. While language is a core component of localization, you'll have to take into consideration the degree of localization that is needed. Will you need straight translation or transcreation? You may have to invest in local content that accounts for cultural differences and other requirements. And if you're building digital products, you'll need to ensure your products are internationalized to easily localize them without writing additional code.

Pro tip: Train your developers on internationalization best practices to avoid hard-coded strings so that you have global ready code from the get-go.

First steps, at startup stage.

Now that you understand the opportunity and you have an idea of which target countries make most sense to enter, it's time to go all in. Just kidding. You're not ready to go all in just yet.

You'll want to test the waters first. Perhaps surprisingly, a terrific first step is to run a web campaign in your target markets – to test slogans, key messages, and CTAs. Think of it like a pilot project intended to gain some initial traction. Start simple and solid, with a finite volume of content to localize and then consider localizing entire experiences based on the data.

Run a first ad campaign.

Take a campaign that's worked in your native language and just localize a few key assets – like the highest performing ads, the landing page that won the A/B test, and a couple (not too many) paid social ads. Maybe include that ebook your home audience loved and localize it into the language of your new target audience. Hey presto, you're already localizing!

It's a cost effective way of potentially proving the ROI of localizing your marketing activities and will help you justify any future expansion into the market concerned. But it'll also open your eyes — early on — to some of the biggest challenges when localizing.

Take an example of a Google Ads campaign. The simplest text-only ads are strictly limited in character count, with a few sections of 30 characters (headlines) to 90 characters (body text). If you're filling that character count in English, you've got some work to do just translating into German, which takes up a little more space. And that's a related language! What if you're targeting Japanese or Korean, which are more compact? Or Chinese, which isn't just a conceptually different writing system; your channel choices will have to change? (no Google Ads in the PRC.)

You'll come across these, and other biggies, from simply localizing a single text-based web ads campaign. That's why we recommend you do it.

Localize some landing pages.

Of course, a web campaign needs a landing page or two. And the text on it needs to go a lot further than the brief teasers in your ad campaign. Your existing landing pages for your native-language customers are a good place to start because you'll see the problems above.

You've seen how different languages take up different amounts of space. But as you chunk up to a whole web page, the challenges grow. Does your web design have a fixed size for its "Submit" buttons, but the translation for "Submit" in other languages doesn't fit? What about your maximum word counts, or even the width of a typical column? German, for example, has a lot of looooong words that'll break across lines on a short column measure, making mobile web pages readable a particular problem.

Then come your images. Across cultures, some colors signify important concepts like wealth or death, but they're not the same in all countries. Death is associated with black in Europe, but white in China. Researching these differences is a great way to get started on localization because it'll teach you what lies ahead.

Finally, take your creations for a spin: launching them in a foreign market and testing them against each other with an A/B split. Just a few metrics – how CTRs stack up against your home market, how long people lingered on your landing page, whether they took any further action – provides great insights into what you need to do next. In fact, you can even run your English campaigns in the same locations and A/B test the campaigns against each other!

So start small, start simple, and learn fast.

Choose vendors with care.

The most important decisions you'll make with regard to localization are the vendors you choose to work with. This can't be overstated. A great vendor can make or break your brand overseas. In fact, a great translator — or the lack of one — can make all the difference between the success or failure of a given campaign. So, how do you choose the best vendors?

Here's what you need to know about how translation happens behind the scenes. Most companies work with a translation agency. The agency in turn farms out the work to freelancers who live all over the world — not just translators, but editors, reviewers, designers, lead linguists, and others. They also employ project managers who wrangle all the moving parts of a translation project — and there are indeed many moving parts. Most companies don't have the time or staff available to take on the project management burden themselves.

But because agencies work with freelancers, you won't usually get the same translators every time you have a project, which means that quality can be at risk. What happens frequently is that translators become familiar with your brand, gaining knowledge over time, and then become busy with other projects and unassigned from yours. This means new translators get assigned, and unless diligent knowledge transfer takes place, you can end up with inferior quality.

Here are some tips to ensure that you get excellent translation quality on an ongoing basis:

Inquire about their process.

If a vendor doesn't proactively ask you for copies of your style guide and any past translation work you've done, it's a bad sign. Good vendors will want to leverage any material you can provide. A vendor that focuses on quality will attend your first meeting armed with a solid knowledge of your brand, a good sense of what languages you translate into, as well as ideas about which translators they would assign to your projects.

Ask other companies which vendors they use.

Referrals are a great way to find good localization vendors, so if you have global marketing contacts in other companies, see if they are happy with their vendors, and if so, find out who they use. However, be forewarned that most companies are not happy with their translation vendors, because quality is so often a struggle.

Working with your translation budget.

While there are other costs associated with localization, one thing is certain: translation costs make up the lion's share of your budget. It's tempting to start slashing the budget with the obvious candidate, but you may quickly find that other problems arise as a result.

Find vendors who have experience with similar content.

It's critical that the translators who will be working on your content have subject matter expertise in it. Most translators specialize in only a few content areas, and what is considered "high quality" varies from one area to another. For example, in pharmaceutical translation where doctors are the audience, translators cannot be very flexible and must stick closely to the source. For marketing content, translators need to have more creativity and adaptation skills.

Make sure project managers are in the right time zones.

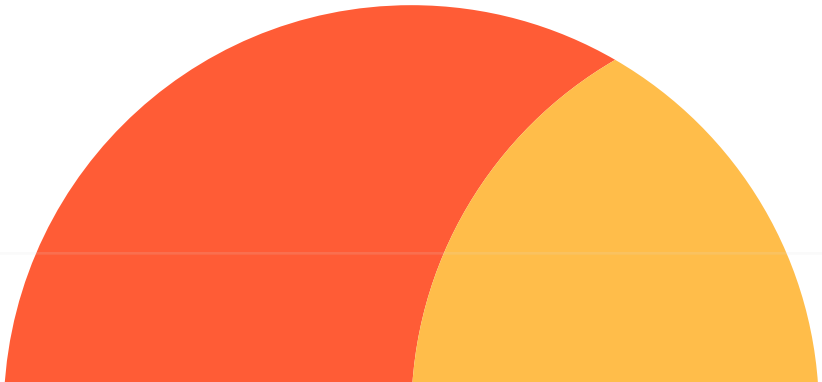
While project managers can be based anywhere in the world, the ideal is to have someone you can reach during business hours. Better yet, find a vendor that has staff in each of the time zones where you have regional marketing teams. Communication is critical to ensuring high-quality translations.

Don't assume that bigger is better.

The largest translation vendors are not always the best, because the supply chain can be longer. Smaller and medium-sized vendors often deliver the best quality, because they tend to have better relationships with their freelance talent. You want to be close to your translators, to the point that they feel like an extension of your marketing team. In an ideal relationship, your regional marketers should view your translators as collaborators and linguistic advisors, as well as cultural advisors in many cases, especially if they don't speak the language themselves.

Consider having multiple vendors.

While there are advantages to centralizing with a single agency, most companies have a handful of translation vendors, simply because not every vendor specializes in the same type of content or the same language set. While you might wish to have just one vendor, it's also not a good idea in terms of risk mitigation. You'll want to have some backup vendors in case of volume surges or urgent needs.





Aiming for the lowest cost is understandable, but you usually get what you pay for. While price isn't a perfect reflection of quality, it sure is a good indicator. However, you might not always need the highest quality; you need what will work for you according to where you are. Being effective means striking a balance between financial prudence and results.

How to keep your translation costs low: quick wins to trim down costs

Most companies can cut up to 10% of their translation costs without sacrificing quality to a point where it hinders effectiveness.

Quick wins

1. Cutting content volume: The smaller the number of words, the less you will have to pay for translation.
2. Reusing existing content: Find opportunities to merge duplicate content and recycle sections that repeat themselves.
3. Keeping terminology consistent: Allow content to be reused and lower the risk of incorrect translations.

For most companies, it's best to start small and test new markets with localized messaging. Work on the microcopy first, such as slogans, key messages, and CTAs, to get started. Do a pilot project to gain some initial traction, then consider localizing entire experiences based on the data.

While the advice above can get you a significant cost reduction, the most important thing you can do is control operational costs with processes and technology.

Arm them with information.

For translators, don't worry about overloading them with information about your company, your products, your target audience, your style, your brand voice, and even your strategy. The more content, context, and background information you can provide to them, the better. Think of them as writers who want to know the subject matter, immersing themselves in a topic and researching it before they dive into the writing. Translators do this across two languages, so the more familiar they can become with your content, the better.



Here are some items you can provide to translators to make their life easier. **In your source (authoring) language:**

Style guide they'll work to emulate it in other languages where possible

Brand voice description including colors, images, and visuals, as these help them to replicate similar characteristics with your verbal style in each language

Glossaries and definitions make sure to clarify acronyms specific to your company as well as any terms that are unique or that you use in specific ways

Company information give translators background information on your company's mission, history, and structure

Product information share any information you have available about the company's products and services so translators can have context

Goals if you have specific goals for a given market, share these with the translators so they can help you achieve them

And, don't forget to share any multilingual resources, such as:

Language-specific glossaries if you already have customers in a given language, find out if any lists of translated terms already exist

Translator-provided glossaries if you work with a translation agency, ask if they have any glossaries (usually in TBX format)

Style guides if you already have style guides in another language, share them

Translation memory files these are databases of past translations and can be incredibly useful for future translations (usually in TMX format)

Language-specific websites don't forget to point vendors to any existing translated content you have available, especially web-based content

It's pretty simple, but so many marketers overlook this simple truth. The more information you provide to the translators to help them, the better quality your translation will have.



Give it time, in every sense.

Often, people expect translation quality to magically happen with the very first project. It takes time for any new translation team to become familiar with your content. Here are some things you should do:

Spend time with your vendors and translators.

Take the time to develop relationships with your translation vendors. Spend time on the phone with them, or meet them in person if you can. Invite them to your offices. Do video conferences between translators and regional marketers. Make sure that you're investing the time required to ensure quality, especially at the beginning of the relationship. Later on, you'll need to invest far less time, but early on, it's worth making yourself, and your team, as accessible as possible.

Don't rush the translation process.

As marketers, we're all in a hurry. But when you force vendors to meet a strict deadline, they can't possibly conduct all the necessary steps in a proper quality review process. Whenever possible, ask your vendors what is possible in terms of delivery time frames while making your expectations clear. If you have a drop-dead date, make that clear, but don't be inflexible or overly demanding. Start by asking them what is reasonable, and if you find the timelines do not work for you, tell them so. If they don't have the right resources in place, look for a different vendor.

Let the relationship evolve over time.

Everyone wants excellent translation quality out of the gate, but that doesn't happen very often in reality where marketing content is concerned, especially at a large scale. Translation quality tends to get better with time. Expect it to take at least six months of working consistently with a vendor to see translation quality reach its peak. If you don't see improvements after the first few months of doing repeated projects, consider switching vendors. Remember, translation quality depends on the two-way relationship between your vendor and your company.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Technology

Now that you've mapped out at least some of the core processes being used by your team, it's time to take a fresh look at your marketing technologies — this time with a global eye.

Do a global technology audit.

Which technologies does your marketing team use on a regular basis, and how well are they able to support your global marketing needs? Make a list of each tool and technology that your team uses, and ask the following questions:

- How many languages does the technology support?
- Are local time and date formats supported?
- Are local currencies supported?
- Does the tool allow me to segment by language, country, or time zone?
- Can regional teams easily clone corporate blog posts and campaigns?
- Does this technology integrate easily with other parts of my global marketing technology stack?
- Can local teams create, for example, interactive content without the need of a developer?

Chances are you'll find that some pieces of your technology stack do not actually support all of your global needs, but you will also likely discover features that you didn't know exist.

What tools do you need?

Many companies find market expansion chaotic because there aren't clearly defined tools and processes. Instead, there's lots of manual work. Scattered files. It's a pain, and your team feels like it distracts them from their core work.

As the person leading international expansion at your company, you're in a position to advocate for and invest in the right tools and processes — the key to driving performance at scale.

If you think about scalability in the context of market expansion, it's clear that you want a replicable process that you can apply to all new markets and languages.

Technology strategy and technical considerations.

When teams are starting out or small, it is common for ad hoc tools and implementations to be used in place of proper procedures and standardized processes. These may work in the short term, but as the team grows, changes members, or experiences unexpected growth, cracks can quickly show in the processes.

The next five items that localization process owners need to consider are the technical fundamentals. Without getting down to brass tacks, it will be difficult to streamline your localization workflow, especially when you add more languages.

1. What format(s) is the content in?

Often, the ways content is being created originally are not yet scalable or are not flexible enough to meet the demands of a global business.

Ask yourself: Where does your content live? Do you have a single source of truth, or is content stored in many systems? Do those systems support import/export functionalities for various file formats?

If you're going to include multiple types of file formats and you have your content in many systems, it's crucial to understand whether the process will require heavy human lifting or be a natural fit into your workflow and existing tech stack.

2. In which systems is content created, stored, and published?

A localization process owner needs to know the answer to each of these separate questions because often these are three completely separate systems.

In an ideal world, the content will live in a **content management system** (CMS) with connectors to a **translation management system** (TMS) like Lokalise.

However, it really depends on what type of content it is, where it's coming from, and how it gets published.

It's fairly common for companies to have multiple systems for managing content. Often, the TMS is one of the only places that is truly "central" company-wide where all of this content gets stored, in multiple languages, along with the English equivalent.

3. Are the systems connected?

As we just covered above, it's ideal for the various systems to be integrated or at least connected in some form. This helps to maximize automation while minimizing manual, human work (like copying and pasting).

This scalability issue is a major focus for localization teams, because a human process that isn't a hassle in just one language can quickly become a major time investment, blocker, and obstacle to speed, not to mention the human costs when you try to scale it into multiple languages.

4. How often is content updated?

Can't you just update content once, deliver it, and leave it at that? The short answer is likely no. But take a moment to think about how often digital/web-based content at your company changes.

How content gets localized in the long term is important because this is where systems, integrations, and your updating cadence will require using the right tools to make continuously updating content easy.

5. What processes can we automate?

If you think about scalability in the context of localization, it's clear that you want a replicable process that you can apply to all new languages. It shouldn't be surprising that building an automated workflow is a key part of optimizing your localization process.

Because localization is a team sport, the more people you require to manually handle different steps, the more it will cost. In light of this, your tools should help you automate:

1. **Transfer of files between systems (e.g., CMS, and design tools)**
2. **Conversion of files to different formats**
3. **Version control to quickly detect file updates**

Fill in training and process gaps.

It's likely that your existing marketing automation tools and technologies offer global and local features that you didn't know existed, especially if you use SaaS products that constantly release new features. Ask your technology vendors which features lend themselves to global marketing, and ask them to train your staff in these specific areas.

Is it possible that the technology you're using is leaving your team with some process gaps? Take a critical look at the content-focused processes you've outlined with your team, and ask yourself if there are any technologies that can help bridge the gap. Look for integrated solutions that will help you more closely intertwine your processes as opposed to having to jump from system to system to follow a single process.

Identify any missing tools.

Are there any features or tools that your global marketing team is missing? Ask them! Get their feedback and find out where their tools are letting them down. You might find that different regions have different concerns. Write up your team's collective wish list. Perhaps these features are already available from a current vendor in the form of an add-on package or bundle. Or, perhaps you need to look at the possibility of finding a more fully-featured, integrated solution.

Are there any teams that don't have access to critical parts of your tech stack? Make sure you get them access to the same tools whenever possible so they can leverage each other's work and ideally standardize on the same systems.



Budget early for technology needs.

Now that you know where the gaps are in your technologies and tools from a global marketing perspective, make sure to get quotes and price ranges from technology vendors to fill in those gaps so that you can build them into your budget.

The most important thing to focus on here is your company's business objectives. You need to be able to demonstrate how your technology strategy contributes to the objectives. You'll need to map to the objectives to demonstrate ROI and get the buy-in you need.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Management

When it comes to managing a global marketing organization with multiple regional teams, there's a lot to know. Managing teams across multiple countries can be a very challenging undertaking — significantly more difficult than managing a team that all works under the same roof.

You'll be dealing not only with remote teams and geographic distance, but with a variety of cultural differences, markets at different levels of readiness for your product or service, and usually, multiple time zones. We won't cover each and every aspect of managing a global marketing team, but let's go over some important tenets.

Empower local teams.

The most important thing you can do to accelerate the success of your regional marketing efforts is to **empower your local marketing teams**. They are the heart and soul of your brand in local markets. Give them breathing room and plenty of latitude to prioritize the issues that matter most for their markets. They need to make decisions based on their local knowledge, which will always be superior to yours. Get comfortable with it.

Far too many companies make the mistake of leading with "global" concerns, which are usually just the concerns of the region they are headquartered in. Instead, listen closely to your local marketing teams, and roll their views into the global strategy. They know their markets best. Global success happens one country at a time.

Global and local requirements sometimes compete with each other. When you have to choose between global and local needs, **give priority to local concerns whenever possible**, so long as you — and your regional teams — don't lose sight of the larger corporate goals you should be collectively tackling and discussing frequently across all regions.

Walk the global walk.

As the global marketing leader at your company, it's extremely important for you to be respectful of all of the different regional teams to set a good example for all of the other marketing teams and others in your company.

Here are some simple ways to turn words into action:

- Visit your local offices frequently.
- Develop one-on-one relationships with as many regional team members as you can.
- Go out of your way to schedule meetings that work in time zones of remote offices.
- Use videoconferencing to see your global team members face-to-face when possible.
- Make sure that if one office gets a special reward, that local offices don't feel left out.
- Encourage remote team members to travel to HQ frequently.
- Encourage top leadership at your company to travel to remote offices frequently.
- Create an award for the marketing team member who goes out of their way to build global bridges, or use an existing awards program to highlight this type of work.



You'll need to promote a globally-minded outlook within your entire marketing department. That takes time and commitment, but it's essential for aligning your teams and ensuring they're working effectively.

One of the best-kept secrets to supporting your global marketing teams? Ask them what they need. Listen to their ideas. Assume they know the answers. Let them lead and get out of the way. Remove their roadblocks. Be a steward to help them become the empowered regional leaders who can help your company achieve amazing success in each market.

Keep raising global visibility.

You'll need to work hard to fly not just the global flag, but the flags of all of your various regions. While working toward global objectives for your company, within the marketing department your end goal is to integrate regional teams with other teams and make sure they are fully supported. Not just in marketing, but throughout the entire company.

Work with your sales teams to ensure solid alignment exists in each region. Collaborate with your services team to ensure that they feel supported with customer marketing. Reach out to the product team to see how you can support them as well. Continue building relationships across the company and encourage them to engage the global "lever," highlighting how it can help your company reach its goals.

That means expanding global visibility to your audience as well. **Deloitte found out that**, through the pandemic, 67% of organizations worldwide increased their presence on social media and 49% increased the number of virtual events and workshops. Your internal efforts to go global have to be reflected in how you market your company to the public.



CHAPTER NINE

Mastery

You've got the basics of global marketing now. How do you take it to the next level?



Lead your company to global marketing success.

If you're tracking well toward your global goals, managing regional teams successfully, and seeing your international business thrive, you're ready to think more aspirationally. As your program matures, lead the company to adopt a mindset of "every customer matters," independent of geography. In fact, once you see global marketing success at every area of your marketing funnel, make sure that you roll in advocacy marketing to close the loop and turn those customers into fans and promoters.

Watch out for one big red flag — people who start to talk about one region as if it's somehow privileged. It's one thing to prioritize growth in a given market, but it's important to be very sensitive to any internal biases that might spring up at your company. If you start hearing things like, "that market isn't that great," or "people in that country don't renew at the same rate," be sure to explore those issues, but make sure no one is sending a message that one regional team matters more than another. All of them matter for global success.

Help the rest of the business globalize.

Another mastery step, once you have the marketing house in order, is to support teams in other areas of the company that are trying to go global. Sometimes this will happen naturally as you bring in more global leads that become customers. But in other cases, some departments lag behind — often because they lack globally-minded resources, or specific goals around internationalization. As you take your marketing global, share lessons learned with others in your company. The best practices you're creating may prove essential for other departments.

Remember that marketing often leads companies into new markets, since leads come before sales do. As a result, your insight into global growth will be important. You and your team are pioneers. Help others in your company benefit from your experience.



Embrace agile marketing globally.

Customers' needs and expectations are changing more rapidly than ever before. This comes along with an increasing awareness of digital technology as an important business driver. So it's important to design your own path to agile marketing if you want to succeed and master your global marketing strategies.

Agile marketing can help you unify your organizational view of customers globally. Adopt or develop a platform that can connect data from various channels (ecommerce, social media, blog, website) and devices (laptops, mobile, desktops) to map your customer's journey and create a holistic experience worldwide, but localized to each region.

For that, be customer-centric to map a unified vision for your company and to help identify the needs locally. Developing a channel strategy and prototyping new offers while customers' needs unfold can keep you ahead of the competition.

Create your next generation of global marketing leaders.

The best way to ensure global growth at your company is to keep your regional marketing teams motivated and growing. Give them ambitious challenges, but not without the proper support in place. Cultivate leaders who become true experts in their local markets. Find opportunities for them to demonstrate thought leadership, achieve media citations, and otherwise help them develop their careers. You might be afraid of them outgrowing your company, but if you let them become leaders, they'll often do the opposite and be some of the biggest drivers of your company's growth. You'll also build loyalty with employees, which is contagious. When you don't sit in the same office as your team, their morale and commitment are priceless.

In addition to creating local leaders at the regional level, pass on the global baton, and get young team members excited about the company's international growth. Keep an eye out, always, for talented "next-generation" global marketers. Look for people who naturally gravitate toward other countries via travel, background, or simply by expressing an interest. Set up master classes and lunch and learn sessions, create an internal Wiki page, or find other forms to share your knowledge with others in your company to ensure that you're constantly creating the globally-minded marketers you know your company will need in the future.



Share what you learn with the world.

Give back to your broader community. The ability to lead global growth is both a gift and an honor for any marketer. Be generous by sharing the lessons you've learned (even some of the embarrassing ones) through industry events, webinars, blogging, guest articles, and mentoring programs. Don't be afraid that competitors will copy you — share liberally and let them follow you. Be a thought leader as you take your marketing efforts globally, and watch as the markets follow the mindshare you build for your company.

About the Contributors





In a world where businesses are no longer bound by geography, marketers need to adapt their content so it resonates with customers in their new target markets. Lokalise is a platform which brings content and global teams together in one place, so your teams can deliver multilingual content that's always on point.

Learn more at www.lokalise.com.



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