

## **Documentation Goes Global**

April 2008



## Executive Summary

Aberdeen Group's October 2007 report *Profitable Design Chains: Global Product Design Comes of Age* identified the need to expand sales into global markets as the third pressure driving manufacturers to globalizing their design processes. With more companies selling products in global markets, the need for improvements in localization of product documentation has come to the forefront. Companies must not only launch quality products, they must also translate and localize associated documentation. In many cases, the ability to launch high quality localized documentation quickly and cheaply can make or break a successful product launch.

### Best-in-Class Performance

Aberdeen used four key performance criteria to identify Best-in-Class companies, including the percent of products meeting revenue targets, percent of products launched on time with localized documentation, percent of localization projects where the localization budgets is met or under-spent, and percent of localization projects meeting desired documentation quality. These companies enjoy significant performance advantages over their competitors. For example:

- It takes Laggards almost three working months longer than the Best-in-Class to launch products with localized documentation. As a result, they are four times as likely to miss their original or regional product launch dates.
- Laggards are 2.4-times as likely as the Best-in-Class to overspend their localization budgets. They have seen a 32% increase in localization budget spend over the last five years, compared to a 7% spend increase seen by the Best-in-Class.

### Competitive Maturity Assessment

Survey results show that the firms enjoying Best-in-Class performance shared several common characteristics. When compared to the Industry Average, the Best-in-Class are more likely to do the following:

- Manage and automate new term approval, term compliance, and localization processes with project management and workflow technologies
- Reuse existing localized content by leveraging translation memory technologies, and incrementally localize new content using structured content and translation management technologies
- Standardize the outsourcing process and have secure means of sharing terms and translation memories with Language Service Providers (LSPs)

### Research Benchmark

Aberdeen's Research Benchmarks provide an in-depth and comprehensive look into process, procedure, methodologies, and technologies with best practice identification and actionable recommendations

### Required Actions

In addition to the specific recommendations in Chapter Three of this report, to achieve Best-in-Class performance, companies must do the following:

- √ Formalize and standardize new term approval, term compliance, localization, and outsourcing processes
- √ Deploy structured authoring and translation memory to increase reuse of localization content
- √ Deploy structured authoring and translation management technologies to incrementally localize content
- √ Securely share approved terms and translation memories with LSPs

*Send to a Friend* 

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## Chapter One: Benchmarking the Best-in-Class

Of all the challenges in authoring technical communication, consistently hitting localization budgets and quality targets are two of the toughest, as found in recent Aberdeen Group research [Next-Generation Product Documentation: Getting Past the "Throw It over the Wall" Approach](#) (December 2006), [Publishing Technical Communications to a Multi-Channel World](#) (May 2007), and [Dynamic Publishing: Smart Documents Streamline Technical Documentation](#) (December 2007). This challenge is further complicated by the globalization of business, requiring documentation to be translated and localized to the target regional markets. The necessity for producing product documentation in multiple languages draws attention to a whole new set of challenges.

### **Drivers to Improve Localization: Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

What is motivating product manufacturers and software developers to change the way they are localizing? Aberdeen Group's [Tailoring Products to Customer Preferences: Configuring Profits to Order](#) (March 2008) benchmark report identified the top pressures driving manufacturers to develop and sell customized products. Third in this list was increased customer expectation for products meeting individual preferences. These tailored strategies are growing the number of products offered by each company, and with increased product, companies must also create and localize an increased volume of associated documentation. Not surprisingly, the top two pressures faced by companies localizing their product documentation are increased volume of products and associated documentation, and shortened development and documentation schedules (Table 1). The convergence of these pressures results in a difficult operating environment, where companies are faced with localizing more content in less time.

**Table I: Top Pressures Driving Companies to Improve on Localization of Product Documentation**

Pressures	All Respondents
Increased volume of products and associated documentation	37%
Shortened development / documentation schedules	36%
International regulatory requirements	32%
Customer intolerance for poorly localized documentation	19%
Competitors expanding into new global markets	16%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

International regulatory requirements also pose a challenge for companies attempting to launch new products into the global market. For example, a

product cannot be launched into the European market without corresponding documentation in local languages. These types of stringent regulations are becoming more common, and companies can't take shortcuts anymore. Regardless of how successful or accepted a product might have been, regulatory requirements now mandate that they be accompanied by localized documentation. In addition, customer intolerance for poorly localized products, combined with the increased volume of work, means that companies can no longer rely on in-country offices to provide the necessary level of support. This is particularly true when internal resources, while bilingual, are not trained translators and have other primary responsibilities within the company. Keeping skilled translators on the company staff is also expensive, and inefficient when considering that the work is more costly than outsourcing.

"We sell globally in a regulated industry - localized content is a requirement to be in these markets. We partner with regulatory teams to understand what we must have to sell in a particular country, then ask what we need to have for business performance to be successful."

~ Amy Friend,  
Manager, Worldwide Technical  
Communication & Localization,  
Care Stream Health

### **Challenges of Localization: Pains Everywhere in the Process**

Product manufacturers and software developers have no choice but to be more productive to get more done in less time. The issues that bar the way to an efficient localization organization show up at a wide variety of points in the localization process (Table 2).

**Table 2: Top Challenges in Localizing Product Documentation**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>All Respondents</b>
Keeping up with changes to the product	26%
Costs associated with localization are high	23%
In-country reviewers are non-existent or unavailable	18%
Slipping product development schedules	16%
Wide variety of similar but different terms used	14%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Challenges in localizing product documentation are not limited to a single bottleneck, but appear in a variety of places throughout the localization process. The biggest challenge cited by respondents was the need to keep up with product changes. Even when development schedules slip significantly or product specifications change at last minute, the localization team is driven to meet the original schedule. This puts tremendous pressure on the localization team and quality often suffers. Managing a localization project timeline efficiently is invaluable when considering the high associated costs.

The third most common challenge in localization was the lack of in-country reviewers. Some of this challenge comes from the fact that offices distributed across the world often act semi-autonomously, so participating in corporate localization work isn't always a priority for regional offices.

Other localization challenges are more within the control of technical communicators. For example, translators are faced with a wide variety of similar but different terms that must be uniquely communicated.

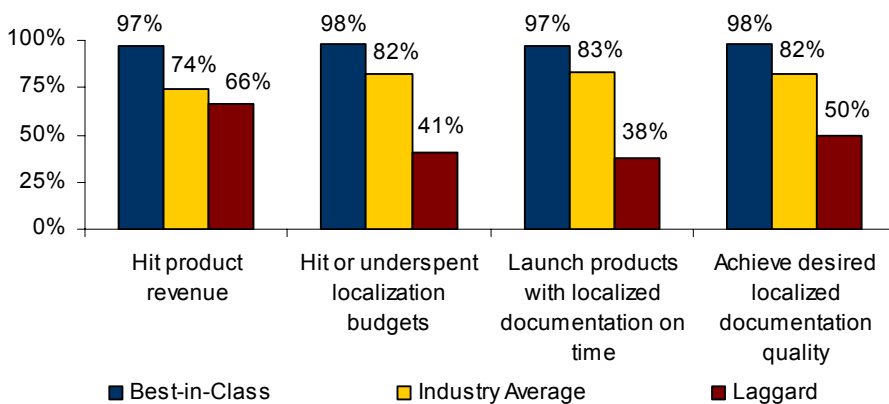
## The Maturity Class Framework

To gain a clear understanding of how companies successfully manage these challenges in localizing product documentation, Aberdeen used four key metrics to identify the companies that operate at the highest levels of performance. These metrics drive profitability and include:

- Percent of products meeting revenue targets
- Percent of products launched on time with localized documentation
- Percent of localization projects where the localization budgets is met or under-spent
- Percent of localization projects meeting desired documentation quality

Based on their performance in these metrics, respondents were placed in one of three categories: the Best-in-Class (the top 20% of performers), Laggards (the bottom 30%) and the Industry Average (the remaining 50%). Figure 2 displays the aggregated performance of these enterprises.

**Figure 1: Best-in-Class Meet Performance on a 97% or Better Average**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Best-in-Class companies are clearly managing localization challenges at higher rates, hitting their performance targets 97% or 98% of the time. Their performance is most differentiated in areas such as launching products on time and hitting localization budget targets, both metrics which the Best-in-Class are more than twice as likely as Laggard companies to meet. Designations of Best-in-Class, Industry Average, and Laggard performance did not depend on how long a company had been localizing documentation or on how many languages are being used. All three performance groups reported localizing into an average of 10 or 11 languages, and have been doing so for an average of four to five years.

### **Time is Money: How Schedules Affects Top-Line Revenue**

The high performance standard of Best-in-Class companies is also reflected in the shortened schedule they require for taking a product launch and readying it for the global market. Best-in-Class companies reported an average 20-day gap, a working month, between original language product release and localized product release (Table 3). These 20 days represent the average time Best-in-Class companies are taking to finish localizing the product and all associated documentation, in addition to the work they have already been doing concurrently with original language authoring. By quickly following original language product releases with localized releases, Best-in-Class companies are able to avoid potential problems with breached intellectual property and go to market faster to a larger audience.

**Table 3: Documentation Schedules**

	<b>Best-in-Class</b>	<b>Industry Average</b>	<b>Laggard</b>
Time between original language release and localized release	20 days	40 days	73 days
Initial product launch is delayed due to incomplete documentation	10%	17%	40%
Subsequent product launches into regional markets are delayed due to incomplete localized documentation	10%	24%	43%

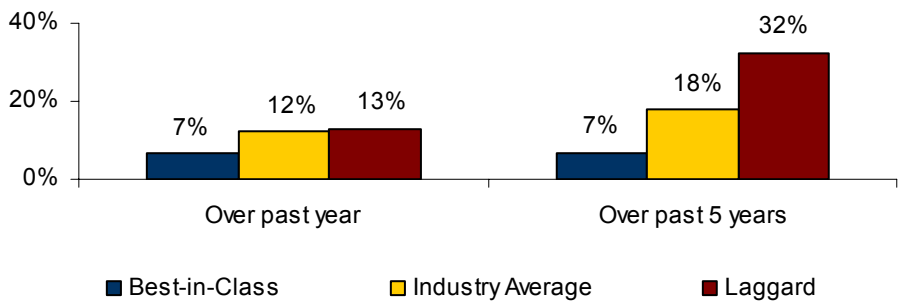
Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

By comparison, Industry Average companies are taking twice as long to launch localized documentation, and Laggards are seeing a gap of almost four working months. This is true despite the fact that Best-in-Class, Industry Average, and Laggard companies are localizing into approximately the same number of languages, 11, 11, and 10, respectively. What is the effect of that gap? It means that Laggard companies are four-times as likely as Best-in-Class companies to miss their product launch date not only in the original language market, but also in subsequent regional launches around the world. Being late to market means Laggard performers are left with a smaller market share, and can lead directly to missed revenue targets.

### **The Ballooning Localization Budget**

The Best-in-Class are not only seeing more revenue based on on-time product launches, they are also managing the process with less localization spend. As seen in Figure 1, they are 2.4-times as likely as Laggard companies to hit or underspend on their localization budgets. Figure 2 illustrates a trend of Laggard overspending.

**Figure 2: Net Increase in Localization Spend**



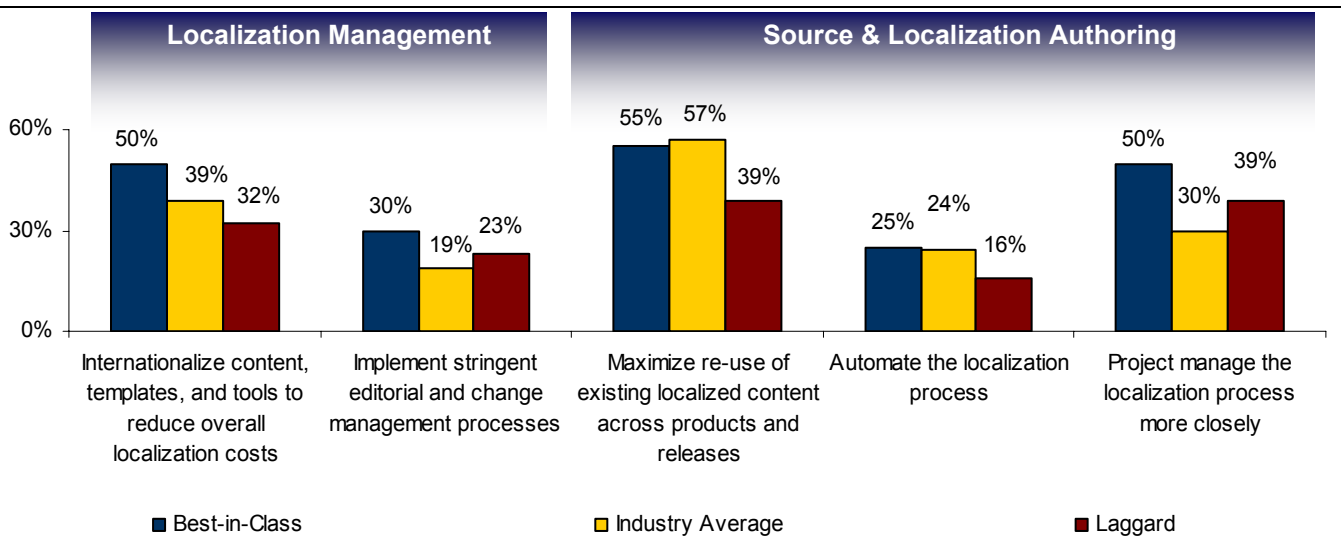
Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Over the past year, Laggard companies have seen almost twice the increase in localization spend as the Best-in-Class. Even more significantly, their localization spend over the past five years indicates a net increase of almost five times that of the Best-in-Class. A plausible explanation would be if the Best-in-Class had been translating for a much longer amount of time compared to others in the Competitive Framework, since the first few years of localization are typically the most costly. However, the number of years that these companies have been localizing product documentation is roughly equivalent. Best-in-Class companies have been localizing product documentation for an average of five years, as compared to Industry Average and Laggard companies that have been doing so for an average of four years. The overall effect of overspending is simple. Lower revenue and increased budgets means shortfalls in profits.

### Best-in-Class Strategies

The Best-in-Class have a plan to address the many pressures and challenges of localizing product documentation. Figure 3 shows some of the strategic actions taken by the Best-in-Class, in comparison with their peers.

**Figure 3: Strategic Actions**

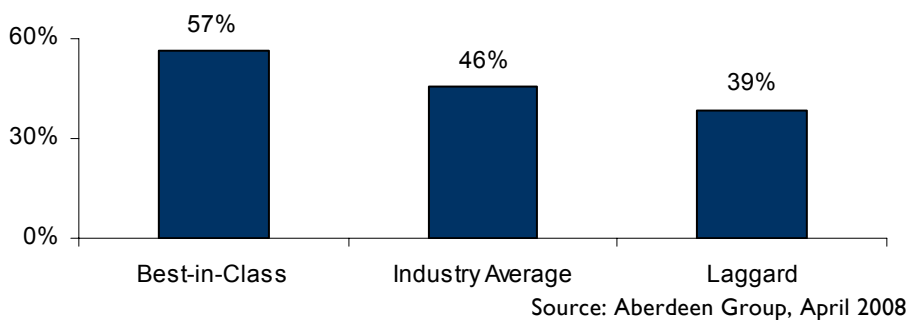


Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

The Best-in-Class are differentiating themselves most by standardizing processes and tools. For example, they are 67% more likely than Industry Average companies to implement project management of the localization process, and 28% more likely to internationalize content, templates, and tools. These actions are the starting point for improving the overall efficiency of the localization process. They affect the amount of time that the localization process takes, allowing Best-in-Class companies to minimize the time gap between original language and localized documentation release dates.

What are the greatest improvement opportunities for Laggard companies? First and foremost, they are not as aggressive in pursuing a single-sourcing strategy for localized content, and it shows. The Best-in-Class are 56% more likely than Laggard companies to automate the localization process, and 41% more likely to maximize the re-use of existing localized content across products and releases. Figure 4 shows that the Laggards have an overall rate of reuse of localized content that is 32% less than the Best-in-Class.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Localized Content that is Reused**



"We are in the midst of a multi-year project to move to DITA based content management. We want to reduce the time between releases to North America and the rest of the world, while also reducing the cost of localization through reuse."

~ Arthur Orchel,  
Technical Publications  
Supervisor,  
Johnson Controls, Inc.

What's the business impact from a lower rate of reuse? Unfortunately for Laggard organizations, it directly affects the bottom line. The time needed to translate the additional content can affect initial and subsequent localized product launches, as discussed previously, and lead back to the missing revenue targets. In addition, localizing more content directly affects the ballooning of localization budgets.

### The Best-in-Class PACE Model

Aberdeen analyzed the actions Best-in-Class companies have taken to address these pressures and challenges, as well as the capabilities and technical enablers they have adopted to improve their business (Table 4). These actions, capabilities, and enablers allow the Best-in-Class to enjoy top performance and highlight opportunities of improvement for Industry Average and Laggard companies.

**Table 4: The Best-in-Class PACE Framework**

Pressures	Actions	Capabilities	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased volume of products and associated documentation</li> <li>▪ Shortened development / documentation schedules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize re-use of existing localized content across products and releases</li> <li>▪ Automate the localization process</li> <li>▪ Internationalize content, templates, and tools to reduce overall localization costs</li> <li>▪ Project manage the localization process more closely</li> <li>▪ Implement stringent editorial and change management processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New terms are reviewed and approved through a formal process</li> <li>▪ New documentation is checked for compliance to already approved terms</li> <li>▪ Terms are managed and approved by specifically designated individual(s)</li> <li>▪ Documentation topics are checked to see if similar or exact matching content has already been localized</li> <li>▪ Documentation is localized incrementally, as soon as the original language content is complete</li> <li>▪ Original language topics and resulting localized content are associated with one another</li> <li>▪ Dedicated project / program management role tracks and manages localization projects</li> <li>▪ Outsourcing process is standardized</li> <li>▪ Content to be localized is securely shared to outsourced companies</li> <li>▪ Approved lists of terms are shared with localization providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spreadsheet applications</li> <li>▪ Terminology management system</li> <li>▪ Centralized system to automate and manage term approval process</li> <li>▪ Centralized system to automate and manage term compliance process</li> <li>▪ Documentation-specific XML authoring applications</li> <li>▪ Translation memories and translation management systems</li> <li>▪ Centralized workflow system to track and manage localization review process</li> </ul>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

**Aberdeen Insights — Strategy**

Best-in-Class companies show clear business differentiation in their performance with regards to localizing product documentation. For example, they average only 20 days between launching an original product release and subsequent localized product releases. By contrast, Industry Average companies typically take two working months to release a product with localized documentation, and Laggard companies take almost four working months. Their quick turnaround allows the Best-in-Class to be 17% more likely than Industry Average, and 2.6-times as likely as Laggard companies, to launch products with localized documentation to market on time. Getting faster to market can mean greater market awareness and market share, and thus, increased revenues.

Controlling localization spend is another area where the Best-in-Class are able to get ahead of their competition. While the localization spend of Industry Average and especially Laggard companies are spiraling out of control, Best-in-Class companies are seeing a controlled spend growth. Over the past five years, Industry Average companies have seen a net increase in localization spend of 2.6-times that of the Best-in-Class. Laggard companies have seen a 4.6-times increase compared to the Best-in-Class. Keeping localization spend under control is essential in being able to hit localization budgets, something which the Best-in-Class are able to do 98% of the time.

How are the Best-in-Class getting faster to market while hitting their localization budget targets? The top strategic actions employed by the Best-in-Class support reuse of content and process automation. In addition, top performing companies are project managing the entire process and implementing standardized templates and processes to simplify localization tasks and control costs.

In the next chapter, we will see what the top performers are doing to achieve these gains.

## Chapter Two: Benchmarking Requirements for Success

### Competitive Assessment

Aberdeen Group analyzed the aggregated metrics of surveyed companies to determine whether their performance ranked as Best-in-Class, Industry Average, or Laggard. In addition to having common performance levels, each class also shared characteristics in how they support and optimize the process of localizing product documentation. These characteristics (identified in Table 5, Table 6, and Figure 5) serve as a guideline for best practices, and correlate directly with Best-in-Class performance across the key metrics.

The capabilities and enablers common to successful companies include capabilities and enablers in the following three thematic categories:

- **Term management.** Centrally managing content terms and implementing formalized approval processes
- **Lean localization.** Identifying reusable localization content and automating translation processes
- **Managing the localization supply chain.** Standardizing outsourced localization projects and implementing secure content sharing

#### Case Study — Medtronic

Medtronic is a medical technologies manufacturer which products are used to treat chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, neurological disorders, and vascular illnesses. Like other medical device manufacturers, their product documentation must adhere to stringent regulatory standards and quality control.

“I was hired in part to improve the localization and English authoring processes 14 years ago,” says Daphne Walmer, Director of Technical Communications for Cardiac Rhythm Disease Management at Medtronic. “In the past five years we have expanded the number of languages from 10 to 20 and have tripled or quadrupled the number of products and pages produced per year.” She adds that they have accomplished this while keeping the translation budget for the business unit relatively flat.

How is Medtronic localizing more documentation into more languages, without sacrificing quality or increasing localization spend? Walmer lists off a slew of process improvements that have been critical to their success. Among them are concepts like improving communication and relationships between authoring and translation departments, standardizing documentation tools and processes, managing translation

*continued*

#### Fast Facts

- √ Best-in-Class companies are 3.1-times as likely as Laggard companies to review and approve new terms through a formal process, and 3.2-times as likely to check new documentation for compliance for already approved terms
- √ The Best-in-Class are 22% more likely than Industry Average companies and 86% more likely than Laggard companies to check for similar or matching content that has already been localized, the first step to localization reuse
- √ Best-in-Class companies are 56% more likely than Industry Average companies, and 86% more likely than Laggards, to release original language documentation in increments for localization

**Case Study — Medtronic (continued)**

assets in house, automating page composition, assigning dedicated roles to localization, providing product training for linguistic specialists and translation project coordinators, and authoring original language documentation with translation in mind.

Regarding technology adoptions, Walmer says, “We put a world-class terminology management database and process into place, which we continue to refine. Also, we built a global content management system that integrates English authoring and European translations. It is designed for maximum re-use of text, at a very small level of granularity – often at the size of a bullet and the following text. As a result, more than 80% of all content in all languages is generated from re-use. Of the remaining 20%, more than 75% of that content benefits from translation memory automation in all target languages. At the translation site we also used work flow technology to automate the processing of the many files per project.”

As a result of these process improvements and technology implementations, Medtronic has seen business benefits in all areas. Walmer explains that the cycle time from when they get their last translation change to sending out the document in PDF format has gone down from an average of two weeks to just five minutes. She adds, “We have vastly improved quality and we have freed in-country personnel to focus more time on customer support.”

**Starting Improvements at the Source: Managing Terms**

In the world of localization, the management of terms is where everything starts. Having a central repository of terms is an important step to controlling the quality of localized terms, and eventually, to effectively reusing already localized terms. Without the ability to track and manage localized terms, companies are unable to refer back to past work, or standardize new localization projects using approved terms. Best-in-Class companies differentiate themselves by having formal processes to review and approve new terms, by checking for compliance of approved terms, and by designating individuals responsible for managing approved terms, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: The Competitive Framework - Managing Terms**

	<b>Best-in-Class</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Laggards</b>
<b>Capabilities</b>	New terms are reviewed and approved through a formal process		
	37%	28%	12%

	Best-in-Class	Average	Laggards
<b>Capabilities (continued)</b>	New documentation is checked for compliance to already approved terms		
	29%	24%	9%
<b>Capabilities (continued)</b>	Terms are managed and approved by specifically designated individual(s)		
	37%	29%	15%
<b>Technology</b>	Spreadsheet applications		
	44%	53%	30%
	Terms managed in a terminology management system		
	33%	44%	13%
	Term approval process automated and managed by centralized system		
	30%	23%	15%
Term compliance process automated and managed by centralized system			
30%	20%	9%	

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

The Best-in-Class are more formally controlling their documentation terms in a variety of ways. From a process perspective, they are 32% more likely than the Industry Average to review and approve new terms in a formalized process, and 21% more likely to review and check documentation for compliance to previously approved terms. This helps to ensure that Best-in-Class companies are using accurate and agreed upon terms in their localized documentation and results in higher localization quality. The Best-in-Class are also more likely to produce documentation that is consistent across products and releases, since the same terms can be reused in appropriate contexts.

From an organizational perspective, the Best-in-Class also dedicate resources to formally manage terminology. They are 28% more likely than Industry Average, and 2.5-times as likely as Laggard companies to have an individual or group specifically assigned to managing terms. Having an individual and a technology solution to manage terms are not mutually exclusive practices. In fact, the Best-in-Class are better able to manage terms through the implementation of both strategies.

Best-in-Class companies are more likely to leverage technology to remove inefficiencies from the term approval and compliance process. Specifically, they are twice as likely as Laggard performers to have a centralized system (defined as a terminology management system, content management system, or other workflow or project management system) with project management capabilities such as tracking term approval and compliance status. Best-in-Class companies are 50% more likely than Industry Average

"Implementing a translation management system has greatly increased reuse of translated material. This has resulted in elimination of inefficiencies, cost savings, and greater speed of response."

~ Ken Shaw,  
Manager, Process &  
Communications,  
Nacco Materials Handling  
Group

companies and over three times as likely as Laggard companies to use technology to automate term compliance.

Likewise, the Best-in-Class are more likely to be using the workflow capabilities of these centralized systems to automate the processes. While paper forms can get lost or delayed on someone's desk, workflow applications ensure that tasks are easily searchable and reminders can be sent to alert individuals of pending tasks. Workflow applications can also automatically notify stakeholders when documentation content has been changed. By employing technologies with these capabilities, Best-in-Class companies remove process inefficiencies and act immediately on action items. Centralized systems such as terminology and content management systems, or other workflow or project management systems, give top performers the edge in meeting documentation deadlines without sacrificing quality, and ultimately allows Best-in-Class companies to launch products with completed documentation ahead of their competition.

"We have just implemented a content and localization management system. After our first large project, we have already seen significant cost reduction. I anticipate we will see significant reuse of translated content going forward."

~ Mary Ann Simek,  
Technical Writer,  
Molecular Imaging,  
Siemens Medical Solutions USA

### Leaning out the Localization Process

To further differentiate on efficiency and time to market, the Best-in-Class are streamlining and "incrementalizing" their localization process by identifying reusable content, implementing processes and tools that support automation, and getting a head start on localization projects before the original language content is completed in entirety (Table 6).

**Table 6: The Competitive Framework - Leaning out Localization**

	Best-in-Class	Average	Laggards
<b>Capabilities</b>	Documentation topics are checked to see if similar / exact matching content has already been localized		
	39%	32%	21%
	Documentation is localized incrementally, as soon as the original language piece of content is complete		
	39%	25%	21%
	Original language topics and resulting localized content are associated with one another		
	56%	43%	35%
	Localization stakeholders are automatically notified when documentation content changes		
	33%	20%	9%
Dedicated project / program management role tracks and manages localization projects			
50%	45%	39%	

	Best-in-Class	Average	Laggards
<b>Technology</b>	Documentation-specific XML authoring applications		
	50%	32%	25%
	Translation memory server or translation management system		
	40%	46%	26%
	Centralized workflow system to track and manage localization review process		
	30%	20%	18%

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Best-in-Class companies are 56% more likely than Industry Average, and twice as likely as Laggard companies, to use documentation-specific XML authoring applications. Structured authoring, such as XML authoring, allows technical publications to be decomposed into their constituent sections for use in a single source manner— that is, they allow changes that are made in one place to automatically propagate to all instances in the text.

Structured authoring also enables document reuse, since modular segments of text can be swapped and copied into other documents. Once translated, the same document segments can be reused in localized documentation— but if you don't know you already have it, then how can you reuse it? The first step to reuse is to check for existing content. The Best-in-Class are 22% more likely than Industry Average companies and 86% more likely than Laggard companies to check for similar or matching content that has already been localized. In addition, Best-in-Class companies are also more likely to use technologies like translation memories to automatically associate original language topics and resulting localized content with one another, keeping content organized and easier to find.

Even so, the task of identifying segments of similar or exact matching content that have already been localized is arduous and time-intensive, practically impossible without the aid of technologies such as translation memory servers and translation management systems. Best-in-Class and Industry Average companies are more likely to implement these technologies that support automation and content reuse. Reuse is extremely important in localization projects for a variety of reasons. It enables improved consistency in both the source and localized product documentation, and increased costs associated with personal preference changes can be avoided. The resulting documentation is more accurate and consistent across products and releases.

In addition to supporting document reuse, another benefit to structured authoring is that localization can be started earlier and in parallel to the original language authoring process. With structured authoring, segments of the source text can be released in increments as they are completed. Best-in-Class companies are 56% more likely than Industry Average, and 86% more likely than Laggards, to release original language documentation in

"We have divided our documentation into smaller pieces and can deliver the finished pieces to the localization vendor sooner than waiting for whole chapters or books. We are also implementing DITA / XML to try to reduce the lag time and cost of desktop publishing."

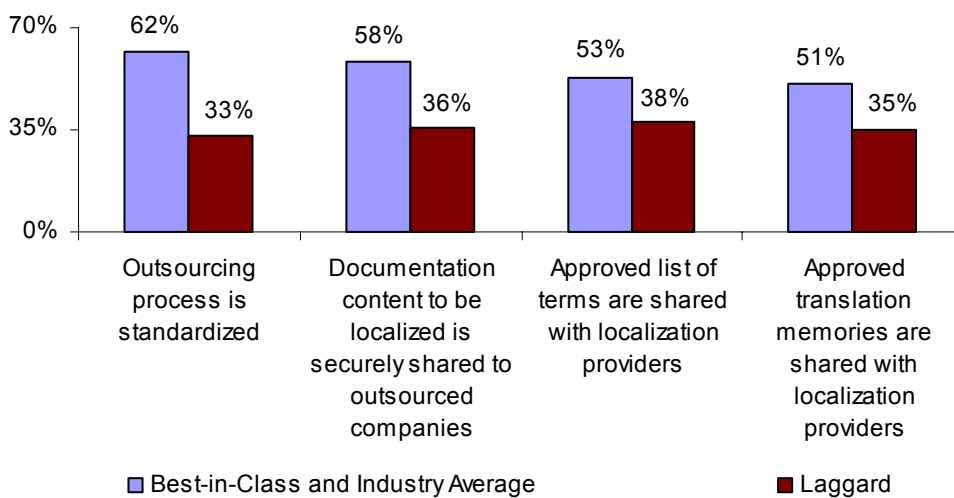
~ Sigrid Schoepel,  
Manager of Technical  
Publications,  
Nuclear Medicine, Philips  
Medical Systems

increments for localization. This is in sharp contrast to the “bulk release” strategy where the entire set of documentation is released for localization all at once. Incremental releases not only enable localization to be started earlier, but smaller and more manageable segments of content need be localized each time original language content is completed. Each subsequent localization task requires less time and fewer resources, and the effect is saved time and cost in the overall localization process.

### Working in Localization Supply Chains

As in any project, localization requires collaboration across the supply chain. The key is to standardize processes and share resources while still maintaining intellectual property. Figure 5 shows some of the capabilities and enablers employed by the Best-in-Class to successfully outsource their localization work.

**Figure 5: The Competitive Framework - Localization Supply Chain**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

The Best-in-Class and Industry Average companies do not see outsourcing of localization work as an ad-hoc venture. Instead, they are more likely than Laggard companies to formalize and standardize the engagement. This is especially important when considering the need for secure collaboration. The document content to be localized is Intellectual Property (IP), but so are the terms and translation memories that need to be shared. Best-in-Class and Industry Average companies are more likely than Laggards to share approved list of terms and translation memories with their Language Service Provider (LSP). By approving these shared resources ahead of time, Best-in-Class companies are better able to protect their IP while still enabling the LSP to work more efficiently and thus save them time and money.

"We edit source documents for ease of translation and provide the language provider with a glossary of specialized terms along with translator notes. Translated terms are then approved by in-country reviewers and added to the translation memory database. The result is faster, higher quality translation."

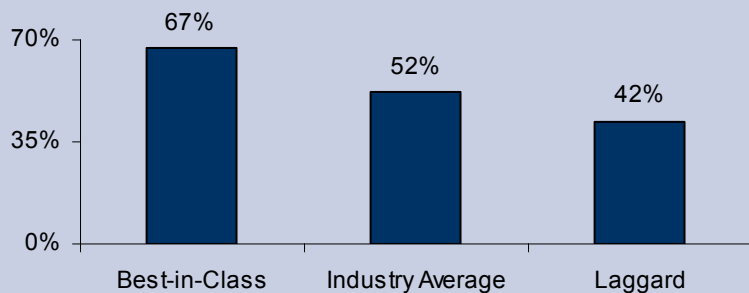
~ Judith Taylor,  
Interim Technical Writer,  
ACIST Medical Systems

### Aberdeen Insights — Technology

The Best-in-Class have adopted a wide variety of technologies and process changes to differentiate themselves from their competition. They are more likely to centrally manage content terms, implement formalized approval processes, identify reusable localization content, and automate translation processes.

When outsourcing localization projects, Best-in-Class companies are more likely to have standardized processes and secure content sharing. While the process of implementing these changes can seem staggering, the good news for Industry Average and Laggard companies is that the Best-in-Class did not arrive at these differentiating capabilities on their own. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the Best-in-Class reported that they engaged the assistance of an external party for consultancy regarding making changes to their localization process (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: The Best-in-Class Engage with Consultants in Making Changes to the Localization Process**



Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Figuring out what to change, at a granular level, is not easy. Deploying it can be even more difficult because of cultural push-back. The Best-in-Class got help from external parties when they went through that evolution. Consultants can help companies look at their localization processes objectively, identify areas of improvement, and assist in the deployment of process changes and new technologies.

## Chapter Three: Required Actions

Whether a company is trying to move its performance in localization of product documentation from Laggard to Industry Average, or Industry Average to Best-in-Class, the following actions will help spur the necessary performance improvements:

### Laggard Steps to Success

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- **Standardize term approval and compliance processes.** Best-in-Class companies are 3.1-times as likely as Laggard companies to review and approve new terms through a formal process, and 3.2-times as likely to check new documentation for compliance for already approved terms. This is the first step to controlling localization quality and consistency.
- **Formalize a role or organization to manage terms.** Best-in-Class companies are 2.5-times as likely as Laggard companies to designate individual(s) to manage and approve terms. Having a process owner ensures that tasks get completed in a timely manner.
- **Adopt structured authoring technologies.** Authoring source language content in a single sourcing manner will enable document reuse as well as concurrent original language authoring and localization work.

### Industry Average Steps to Success

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- **Adopt project management and workflow technologies.** The Best-in-Class are 30% more likely than Industry Average companies to manage approved terms, and 50% more likely to manage term compliance, using centralized project management or workflow systems such as terminology management or content management systems. These technologies also enable automation of processes and improve localization efficiency.
- **Leverage translation memories.** By automatically identifying previously localized content, Best-in-Class companies are able to reuse 24% more localization content than Industry Average companies. The next step after adopting structured authoring is to leverage translation memories to enable reuse of localization content.
- **Formalize a role or organization to manage the localization process.** Best-in-Class companies are 11% more likely than Industry Average companies to have a dedicated project or program management role to track and manage localization projects.

#### Fast Facts

- √ Best-in-Class companies are 2.5-times as likely as Laggard companies to designate individual(s) to manage and approve terms
- √ By automatically identifying previously localized content, Best-in-Class companies are able to reuse 24% more localization content than Industry Average companies

## Best-in-Class Steps to Success

- **Incrementally localize documentation.** Use structured authoring to release source language content in increments, as soon as it is finished, to enable localization work to start sooner and be tackled in smaller segments. Best-in-Class companies lead in this area, but exhibit room for improvement with only 39% having implemented this capability.
- **Share approved terms and translation memories with outsourced Language Service Providers (LSPs).** By approving shared resources ahead of time, Best-in-Class companies are better able to protect their IP while still enabling the LSP to work more efficiently.

### Aberdeen Insights — Summary

There are many challenges in localizing product documentation, such as increased volume, less time, demand for better quality, and high associated costs. To meet these and be profitable, companies must start with improving and standardizing their localization processes.

In comparison with Industry Average companies, the Best-in-Class are 32% more likely to review and approve new terms in a formalized process, 28% more likely to have an individual or group specifically assigned to managing terms, and 11% more likely to have a dedicated project or program management role to track and manages localization projects. Companies hoping to improve their performance must start by formalizing these processes, and understand exactly who will do what in the process. Once that is understood, supporting technology solutions can be applied to improve efficiency. In some cases, companies can automate existing processes with technology. For example, project management and workflow applications can be introduced to automate notifications to stakeholders when there are pending tasks or when content is changed.

In other cases, technology is required before a new process can be adopted. An example is structured authoring and translation memory, and the role these solutions play in reusing previously localized documentation content. Without either technology, reuse is nearly impossible. Structured authoring applications such as XML applications allow Best-in-Class companies to use documentation segments interchangeably, as well as release source language content in increments for smaller scale localization projects. Translation memories are crucial in identifying similar or exact matches in previously localized content. These technologies remove the need to rely on the memory of individual resources, and the supporting tasks necessary for content reuse can be completed predictably and consistently in significantly less time.

*Send to a Friend* 

## Appendix A: Research Methodology

Between March and April 2008, Aberdeen examined the use, the experiences, and the intentions of more than 350 enterprise respondents, of which 210 are localizing product documentation.

Aberdeen supplemented this online survey effort with interviews with select survey respondents, gathering additional information on localization strategies, experiences, and results.

Responding enterprises included the following:

- *Job title / function:* The research sample included respondents with the following job titles: senior management (1%); vice president (2%); director (7%); manager (41%); staff (31%); and other (21%).
- *Industry:* The research sample included respondents from the following industries: high technology and software (28%); medical devices (12%); industrial equipment manufacturing (8%); computer equipment and peripherals (7%); engineering (6%); and telecommunications equipment (5%).
- *Geography:* The majority of respondents (73%) were from North America. Remaining respondents were from Europe (19%); Asia Pacific (6%); South / Central America and the Caribbean (1%); and the Middle East and Africa (1%).
- *Company size:* Forty-one percent (41%) of respondents were from large enterprises (annual revenues above US \$1 billion); 36% were from midsize enterprises (annual revenues between \$50 million and \$1 billion); and 23% of respondents were from small businesses (annual revenues of \$50 million or less).
- *Headcount:* Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents were from large enterprises (headcount greater than 1,000 employees); 35% were from midsize enterprises (headcount between 100 and 999 employees); and 17% of respondents were from small businesses (headcount between 1 and 99 employees).

Solution providers recognized as sponsors were solicited after the fact and had no substantive influence on the direction of this report. Their sponsorship has made it possible for Aberdeen Group to make these findings available to readers at no charge.

### Study Focus

Responding executives completed an online survey that included questions designed to determine the following:

- √ The degree to which localization is deployed
- √ The structure and effectiveness of existing localization implementations
- √ Current and planned use of localization technologies to aid operational and promotional activities
- √ The benefits, if any, that have been derived from localization initiatives

The study aimed to identify emerging best practices for localization of product documentation, and to provide a framework by which readers could assess their own management capabilities.

**Table 7: The PACE Framework Key**

Overview
<p>Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:</p> <p><b>Pressures</b> — external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations (e.g., economic, political and regulatory, technology, changing customer preferences, competitive)</p> <p><b>Actions</b> — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures (e.g., align the corporate business model to leverage industry opportunities, such as product / service strategy, target markets, financial strategy, go-to-market, and sales strategy)</p> <p><b>Capabilities</b> — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy (e.g., skilled people, brand, market positioning, viable products / services, ecosystem partners, financing)</p> <p><b>Enablers</b> — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices (e.g., development platform, applications, network connectivity, user interface, training and support, partner interfaces, data cleansing, and management)</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

**Table 8: The Competitive Framework Key**

Overview	
<p>The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the following three levels of practices and performance:</p> <p><b>Best-in-Class (20%)</b> — Practices that are the best currently being employed and are significantly superior to the Industry Average, and result in the top industry performance.</p> <p><b>Industry Average (50%)</b> — Practices that represent the average or norm, and result in average industry performance.</p> <p><b>Laggards (30%)</b> — Practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry, and result in below average performance.</p>	<p>In the following categories:</p> <p><b>Process</b> — What is the scope of process standardization? What is the efficiency and effectiveness of this process?</p> <p><b>Organization</b> — How is your company currently organized to manage and optimize this particular process?</p> <p><b>Knowledge</b> — What visibility do you have into key data and intelligence required to manage this process?</p> <p><b>Technology</b> — What level of automation have you used to support this process? How is this automation integrated and aligned?</p> <p><b>Performance</b> — What do you measure? How frequently? What’s your actual performance?</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

**Table 9: The Relationship Between PACE and the Competitive Framework**

PACE and the Competitive Framework – How They Interact
<p>Aberdeen research indicates that companies that identify the most influential pressures and take the most transformational and effective actions are most likely to achieve superior performance. The level of competitive performance that a company achieves is strongly determined by the PACE choices that they make and how well they execute those decisions.</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

## Appendix B: Related Aberdeen Research

Related Aberdeen research that forms a companion or reference to this report include:

- [\*Tailoring Products to Customer Preferences: Configuring Profits to Order\*](#); March 2008
- [\*Dynamic Publishing: Smart Documents Streamline Technical Documentation\*](#); December 2007
- [\*Profitable Design Chains: Global Product Design Comes of Age\*](#); October 2007
- [\*Publishing Technical Communications to a Multi-Channel World\*](#); May 2007
- [\*Companies Outsourcing Multi-lingual Documentation Four Times More Likely to Hit Translation Cost Targets\*](#); January 2007
- [\*Next-Generation Product Documentation: Getting Past the "Throw It over the Wall" Approach\*](#); December 2006

Information on these and any other Aberdeen publications can be found at [www.Aberdeen.com](http://www.Aberdeen.com).

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