Professional online networks
Gaining access to a comprehensive pool of valuable contacts through the right online business network

Vietnam – the lotus blooms
How an isolated and underdeveloped nation turned into an open member of the international community

Sharing knowledge across borders
How companies unlock knowledge resources to help international employees solve their tasks
TCEurope Colloquium

Documentation Projects: Trends and Methods

Stockholm, Sweden, April 24th 2009

For more info, visit www.tceurope.org

TCEurope is the European umbrella organisation for technical communication, currently representing technical writers and illustrators in ten European countries.

Hosted by the Swedish Association of Technical Communicators (www.teknikinformatoren.se)
The idea of unlocking knowledge and making it available to people who perform the same or similar tasks, is not new. Even the ancient Greek formed so-called “corporations” of metalworkers, potters, masons, and other craftsmen, who came together not only to worship the same deities and celebrate holidays together, but also to spread innovations and train apprentices. The global enterprises of today embrace enough knowledge to form such communities of practice within their organization. The aim is clear: to make available information and experiences held within the minds of the employees and deliver it to those within the company who are facing similar tasks. The more knowledge is spread across different teams and geographic locations, the more difficult it becomes to share the available resources. To facilitate the exchange of knowledge across borders, companies are building knowledge management teams to organize meetings and sessions and develop tools that help bridging the gap. Ramesh Ramamurthy explains the challenges of such teams and how they can be solved (page 11).

In an interview with our magazine, knowledge management expert Patrick Lambe explains what kind of knowledge sharing creates the most value and why some information and experience should rather remain with the individual staff member (page 13).

While corporate infrastructures are usually quickly adapted to the global challenges of the organizations, the employees’ process of realizing that they have become part of such an international framework usually takes a bit longer. Richard Cook tells us how to become an effective global networker (page 28).

Angela Starkmann introduces the most popular professional online networks and gives valuable hints for people who have not yet joined these groups (page 18).

As you will learn from our newspages, the future of the internet will bring a strong focus on auditory communication channels to the detriment of written or visual channels. This will also affect the work of translators. Nataly Kelly describes the shift towards machine interpretation (page 15).

Sameer Raina shares with us the experience of digitizing the entire spectrum of Dutch literature (page 22) and Paul Smith introduces Vietnam as a business location, a country now described as a great success story (page 24).

The tekom Annual Conference, Trade Fair and tcworld conference 2008 exceeded all expectations. Participant numbers reached an all-time record of 3,300. Despite the international downturn, most participants forecast a positive future for the technical communication and information management industries. Ursula Wirtz has the details (page 30).

We are happy about the great response to our public Call for Authors for our magazine, and are looking forward to the promising future editions of tcworld. We hope that you will continue to enjoy reading tcworld and wish you all the best for the year 2009!

Corinna Melville
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Vietnam – the lotus blooms

The World Bank describes Vietnam as a great success story. Within just over two decades the country has transformed from an isolated and underdeveloped nation to an open member of the international community.

Professional online networks

LinkedIn, Xing, Viadeo, etc. Online business networks promise access to a comprehensive pool of valuable contacts. Which one suits our needs best and what do we need to consider before signing up?

Sharing knowledge across borders

International organizations hold an enormous amount of knowledge, information and experience. How can we facilitate and promote the exchange of knowledge across teams and locales? Which informations needs to be shared and what experiences should rather remain with the individual staff member?

Five innovations to change our lives in the next five years

IBM recently unveiled the third annual "IBM Next Five in Five", a list of innovations that have the potential to change the way people work, live and play over the next five years. It is based on market and societal trends as well as emerging technologies from IBM’s Labs around the world that can make these innovations possible. In the next five years, technology innovations will change our lives in the following ways:

Energy saving solar technology will be built into asphalt, paint and windows
Ever wonder how much energy could be created by having solar technology embedded in our sidewalks, driveways, siding, paint, rooftops, and windows? The creation of "thin-film" solar cells, a new type of cost-efficient and very thin solar cell, makes solar energy affordable. The new cells can be "printed" and arranged on a flexible backing, suitable for not only the tops, but also the sides of buildings, tinted windows, cell phones, notebook computers, cars, and even clothing.

You will have a crystal ball for your health
Your doctor will be able to provide you with a genetic map that tells you what health risks you are likely to face in your lifetime and what you can do to prevent them, based on your specific DNA – all for less than US$200. Ever since scientists discovered how to map the entire human genome, it has opened new doors in helping to predict health traits and conditions we may be predisposed to. Doctors can use this information to recommend lifestyle changes and treatments. Pharmaceutical companies will be able to engineer medications targeted for the individual patient. Genetic mapping will radically transform healthcare and allow you to take better care of yourself.

You will talk to the web . . . and the web will talk back
"Going" to the web will change dramatically. In the future, you will be able to surf the internet, hands-free, by using your voice – therefore eliminating the need for visuals or keypads. New technology will change how people create, build and interact with information and e-commerce websites – using speech instead of text. You will be able to sort through the Web verbally to find what you are looking for and have the information read back to you – as if you are having a conversation with the Web.

You will have your own digital shopping assistants
A combination of new technology and the next wave of mobile devices will give the in-store shopping experience a significant boost. Fitting rooms soon will be outfitted with digital shopping assistants - touch screen and voice activated kiosks that will allow you to choose clothing items and accessories to complement, or replace, what you already selected. Once you make your selections, a sales associate is notified and will gather the items and bring them directly to you. You’ll also be able to snap photos of yourself in different combinations and email or SMS them to your friends and family for the thumbs up… or the thumbs down.

Forgetting will become a distant memory
Details of everyday life will be recorded, stored, analyzed, and provided at the appropriate time and place by both portable and stationary smart appliances. To help make this possible, microphones and video cameras will record conversations and activities. The information collected will be automatically stored and analyzed on a personal computer. People can then be prompted to "remember" what discussions they had, for example, with their daughter or doctor by telephone. Based on such conversations, smart phones equipped with global-positioning technology might also remind them to pick up groceries or prescriptions if they pass a particular store at a particular time. It’s not hard to imagine that TVs, remote controls, or even coffee table tops, can one day be the familiar mediums through which we tap into our digitally-stored information.

www.ibm.com
Localization’s impact on purchasing decisions

Companies that adapt their products to local languages and market needs have a significantly greater chance of selling to international buyers. In a September 2008 survey of 351 buyers of business software from eight non-Anglophone countries, research firm Common Sense Advisory (CSA) found a high correlation between purchasing likelihood and localized products. The survey, included business people in Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Spain, and Sweden. The findings are detailed in CSA’s report “Localization Matters.” CSA’s Chief Research Officer Donald DePalma explains, “Many firms still debate whether it makes business sense for them to localize their products, mostly because there is a longstanding assumption that people feel comfortable using English. However, this data clearly shows that even when people speak English confidently, they still prefer products in their language.” The research report includes the following findings:

Even when people speak English, they prefer to buy in their own languages.

More than 80 percent said they felt that their English proficiency was good enough to understand the offers, benefits, and terms and conditions associated with buying software; however, nearly all of the respondents said they were more likely to buy products with translated product information and localized interfaces.

The survey also found that even when a buyer thinks that end users understand English well enough to use English-language productivity applications, they are still 4.5 times more likely to purchase a software product if marketing, other collateral, and end-user documentation have been translated into their language and the software programming, documentation, tools and post-sales support are available in their language.

Translating and localizing marketing materials drives sales.

More than 80 percent said they wouldn’t give full consideration to a product that did not have localized marketing materials. For four out of five buyers, translated information and localized software increases their likelihood to buy. One out of six buyers will never even consider buying software that’s not localized.

When surveyed about purchasing via websites, Asian buyers are significantly less comfortable buying in English. Just five percent of the Japanese and seven percent of the Chinese respondents said they were very comfortable buying in languages other than their own.

OASIS members form committee to advance CM interoperability

The international open standards consortium, OASIS, has formed a new group to standardize a specification to enable greater interoperability of Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems. The new OASIS Content Management Interoperability Services (CMIS) Technical Committee will advance an open standard that uses web services and Web 2.0 interfaces to enable information to be shared across internet protocols in vendor-neutral formats, among document systems, publishers and repositories, within and between companies. With CMIS, users do not need unique applications to access each ECM repository. Application development and deployment are much faster and more efficient. The specification provides easy mapping to existing ECM systems. Web technologies, including Web 2.0, internet scale, service-orientation and resource-orientation, are all exploited in CMIS.

Participation in the OASIS CMIS Technical Committee remains open to all interested parties. Archives of CMIS work will be accessible to both members and non-members.

LOCATECH, CROSSGAP AND JONCKERS MERGE

After partnering for ten years, the Locatech GmbH, CrossGap srl and Jonckers Translation & Engineering have now joined forces. The three merging companies are founding members of LCJ EEIG, a Microsoft Premier Vendor. Under the name of Jonckers the group will offer the entire range of localization services to an international target group.

www.locatech.com

IVERSON MERGES WITH TRANSPERFECT

Language service provider TransPerfect Translations, Inc. has merged with Iverson Language Associates, Inc., a provider of technical translation services. Iverson will become a division of TransPerfect and will continue to be led by founder and president Steven Iverson, who will join the TransPerfect senior management team.

www.transperfect.com

ACP TRADUCTERA COOPERATES WITH UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

ACP Traductera, a translation and localization company, is cooperating in a joint effort with the Faculty of Management of the University of Economics in Prague. The University focuses on management and economics in the Czech Republic. Cooperation between the parties will help postgraduates entering the business market and embarking upon professional careers.

www.traductera.com

ASCENT MEDIA FORMS ALLIANCE WITH SDI MEDIA

Ascent Media Group has formed a strategic alliance with SDI Media Group, a provider of translation services for the media and entertainment industry. Combined services include content storage in a globally distributed archive, international content creation and distribution, and the integration of dubbing and subtitling processes into asset management and broadcast playout fulfillment.

www.sdimediagroup.com

www.icasa.com

www.oasis-open.org

www.commonsenseadvisory.com
PLUNET ACADEMY

Plunet GmbH, a provider of business management software for translation services and agencies, has developed the Plunet Academy – a university training program aimed at establishing a network of universities, partner companies and key communicators in order to promote teaching content that is relevant to the industry.

www.plunet.de

XTRF 1.6

XTRF Management Systems of Lido-Lang Technical Translations has released version 1.6 of its XTRF system. New functionalities include solutions facilitating automation and control of work within projects. Three interface languages have been added – Spanish, Latvian and Belarusian.

www.xtrf.eu

TELEPRESENCE UPDATE

Cisco will add real-time translation to its TelePresence high-definition conference technology this year, enabling people in different countries to meet virtually and each hear the other participants’ comments in their own languages. The feature is expected to go on sale in the second half of 2009 with an initial set of 20 languages.

www.cisco.com

CATALYST ADDS REVIEW SERVICES

Catalyst, a provider of foreign language search and review technology, has added foreign language review services to its technology offerings. Catalyst can manage and staff multi-language reviews with over 1,000 experienced reviewers fluent in over 115 languages including key Asian languages, most Western Romance languages and most of the Eastern ones.

www.catalystsecure.com

AFRICAN MICROSOFT INTERFACEpacks

Microsoft has released Windows Vista language interface packs to drive technology accessibility, particularly in rural African areas. The Windows Vista language interface pack is an open source software program that translates the English wording in a Microsoft operating system into Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu or Sesotho sa Leboa.

www.microsoft.com

Workers will see more content in the form of pictures, video and audio

Research company Gartner Inc. predicts that by 2013 more than 25 percent of the content that workers see in a day will be dominated by pictures, video or audio. The proliferation of video within the enterprise will require numerous modifications in content authoring training and procedures, information management strategy and improvements in analytic technologies. Information managers, architects, record managers and content creators will all need to adjust their strategic plans accordingly.

“Consumerization has proven a force of unmatched potency in the past and the same will be true when it comes to the explosive spike in the popularity of consumer online video, fueling a similar interest in video within enterprises,” said Whit Andrews, vice president and distinguished analyst at Gartner. “Video use on the Web is growing swiftly, with 73 percent of the internet audience watching a video online at least monthly, that is about 90 million viewers.”

Mr. Andrews said that enterprises that see such growth as irrelevant to their operations risk alienating themselves from customers who start to request video communication services. He said the typical first uses of video for commercial entities have been for promotion, generating contests where users are encouraged to submit creative or funny videos to compete for prizes or for part of a promotion.

According to a Gartner survey of 800 end-user organizations in July 2008, software for the management of images and video is the fastest-growing segment of the content management market, with just 44 percent of enterprises having such products today but 22 percent intending to install it in 2009.

Gartner believes that the popularity of simple digital asset management (DAM) will force a number of different technological problems to be solved, such as the ability to incorporate video simply into other document types. Such uses are likely to be so compelling and the demand for them so great that by 2013, more than 25 percent of the content that workers see in a day will be dominated by pictures, video or audio. Additional information is available in the Gartner report “Video Killed the Document Czar”.

www.gartner.com
New board members at GALA

Members of the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) have chosen new board members for the 2009–10 GALA Board. The three new members, who were elected from a pool of established industry professionals, were announced in mid-October at the Localization World in Madison. The newly elected board members are: Robinson Kelly of Clay Tablet Technologies (Canada), Serge Gladkoff of Logrus International (Russia) and Dimitri Stoquart of Stoquart SA (Belgium). They join the three continuing board members: Matthias Caesar (Locatech, Germany), María Gabriela Morales (Rosario Traducciones y Servicios, Argentina) and Michael Sank (TransPerfect, USA) who are currently in the middle of their terms on the board. The current board chair, Kim Harris (text & form GmbH, Germany), as well as board member Arancha Caballero (TSG, Spain) finished their terms at the end of 2008. The new board will preside over a growing GALA membership—in six years the association has grown from its original 15 member companies to 280. Additionally, the board will work with GALA’s newly appointed executive director, Jim Hollan, a first for the association.

Content in local language is as essential as connectivity

The power of the internet is multiplied when people are able to access and use content in their local languages, agreed a group of experts who opened the 2008 Internet Governance Forum in a session on Reaching the Next Billion: Multilingualism. The complex topic of achieving multilingualism on the internet has political and social dimensions beyond the technological challenges of ensuring tools for access and translation. Key points of the discussion were: Content in local languages is as essential as connectivity. People must be able to create and receive information in their local language and to be able to express themselves in ways their peers can understand. Internet tools and applications – software, hardware, search engines, browsers and translation tools – must be localized and support special accessibility needs. A fundamental access point is how one accesses internet sites. Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and internationalized email addresses, to accommodate non-Latin scripts, are being developed through technology, standards, and policies. Increasingly, online communication is occurring in mediums other than in written form: multilingualism for multiple media, of which mobile devices are a significant point of access. A common framework and language will help the Internet Governance Forum to address these issues. There remains a great need for capacity building in digital literacy as well as basic, traditional literacy.

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Translation
Localization
Globalization
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focus

Sharing knowledge across borders
Promoting corporate values internationally

As companies have their offices spread across more and more geographic locations and a large scale of employees working in different countries, it becomes even harder to represent a single organization as one unique entity. The key lies in raising awareness for the company’s vision and mission as well as equipping staff in all locations with the latest technologies. Advancements in communication technology have led to a deeper focus on knowledge management activities – benefiting both the organization and the individual.

By Ramesh Ramamurthy

Knowledge management – a definition

Knowledge management (KM) is a strategy aimed at enabling people to develop a set of activities to share, exchange, update and use knowledge. KM focuses on the following aims:

- Enable employees to create and use knowledge
- Define techniques and processes of maintaining and sharing knowledge within groups
- Decide upon the form of knowledge stored (manuals, database, intranet, workgroups)
- Bring together people to identify the key focus areas of technologies
- Add innovation initiatives within the organization by identifying key resources

Knowledge management team

The knowledge management team (KM team) is the central core that helps bridging the gap between the various teams in an organization and enables them to share or exchange knowledge. As the customer base locations are spread globally, it is essential for people to have regular meetings and knowledge sharing sessions to understand and meet the client’s requirements. The knowledge management team focuses on the following:

1. People
2. Process
3. Domain

1. People
Even the greatest abundance of knowledge is worthless if people are unaware of it. International organizations hold such an abundance of knowledge, however, it is spread over numerous staff members in the various teams and locales. Communication is essential for sharing and exchanging knowledge. Employees around the world must have the opportunity to get to know people in other teams and locations and develop a good idea of the work of this team. The KM team provides forums and open discussion meetings in which people get the chance to come closer and learn about each other’s roles. This helps people within the organization to know their colleagues from other teams and to identify points of contact regarding their work fields.

2. Process
Different business units or teams follow different sets of processes. If one of the teams follows a definitive process, process knowledge should be shared across teams to help implement best practices and techniques to improve the process company-wide. People from different teams might be able to increase quality and improve the cost factor by adapting to the benchmark process. The KM team enables such activities by initiating process trainings with key people.

3. Domain
An organization works in several domains of interest. It is very important for people in today’s IT world to be conversant with the current domain they are associated with. To add value to their work and to advance the level of knowledge they possess, domain knowledge plays a key role. Seminars and trainings organized by the KM team on specific topics related to the domain enable learning and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, these core activities of KM can be classified into some sub-topics wherein the KM team initially decides on the KM planning activities and their key focus areas.

Understanding goals and objectives

An organization comprises of several business groups or teams working on different domains or technologies. Employees within an organization need to effectively understand the goals and objectives of the organization. The KM team facilitates this by providing corporate information through the company’s intranet portal, corporate blogs, RSS feeds and well-planned seminars that include talks by senior management team members. Webinars help to effectively deliver messages from management in which employees across all geographic locations can participate in open forums and ask questions. Live and recorded sessions of management talks can also be provided on the company’s intranet portal. These sources of information are made available by the KM team in order to deliver the goals and objectives of the organization to employees across all locations.

Apart from this, it is also important to know and understand the different teams, their technical domain expertise and the growth opportunities within the organization. The importance of such knowledge recently evolved within corporate companies in which people are hungry for information. In the era of Information Technology, it is highly important for people to be more
communicative and possess vast amounts of knowledge with skills spanning across several areas. In order to achieve this objective and to meet the appropriate knowledge levels, individuals have started focusing on knowledge as a key aspect in today’s corporate world. The power of knowledge helps them to identify their key skills and carve their future career. There is a benefit for both, the individual as well as for the organization. This has led to a new knowledge thirst. Compared to previous times, today’s employees are keen on further education. Without proper learning and knowledge exchange, it is very difficult for them to position themselves in today’s corporate world. Also, to sustain their career within the organization despite of any changes in the global economy, it becomes highly crucial for employees to share and exchange knowledge and add value to their work through initiatives and best practices. Activities to meet this thirst of knowledge are met to a great extent by such knowledge management teams.

Benefits of KM

Knowledge management delivers mutual benefits. Based on a corporate team’s key skills, the KM team can draw inferences regarding skill specialization and can further focus on providing advanced training. This helps the organization to identify key personnel with advanced skills in specific areas. Consider, for example, a company looking to develop a flash presentation for their KM portal. If certain key talents have been identified within the organization, the company can use the resource effectively for producing the flash content. Those skills can also be used for imparting any training related to flash for other employees. This will save the costs for an external trainer.

The knowledge management team provides a platform for all employees to help understand the different teams within an organization, their roles and objectives within their business units and their key domain knowledge. This helps employees to know and understand the organization better and gives them a chance to utilize the resources available in the company. Employees will also become more aware of new career opportunities. A chief knowledge officer usually heads the knowledge management team. He or she is responsible for scheduling regular meetings, discussions, seminars, trainings, etc. Training within the company is an important activity. The knowledge management team identifies a list of trainings depending on the resources available within the company. Usually, the internal trainer would be selected from any team. They help in providing training or exchanging knowledge with respect to the specific skills they possess in their current role or from their previous experience.

Why do we need a knowledge management team?

The introduction of a KM team in the Knowledge Process Outsourcing and IT sectors has brought in several changes in organizations and led to the innovation of specific technology areas. There are many reasons behind this KM effort. They are given below:

- Manage innovation and new learning techniques
- Drive the e-learning methodologies and help exchange knowledge
- Solve technical issues by bringing teams together
- Have share point discussion groups for internal product reviews
- Leverage the expertise of people from various teams
- Help employees to get answers to their questions or any specific work challenges
- Provide additional domain expertise through certifications and trainings

Innovation, new ideas, and creativity are essential for the growth of an organization. Specific technical issues can only be solved if the organization employs people possessing these advanced skills. Share point usage within companies has led to a great amount of knowledge exchange. Certain product reviews can be done internally. Employees get answers to their queries through web forums. Certifications and trainings are required for employees to gain knowledge in specific areas. All of these requirements have been part of the knowledge management and learning activity. This has led to the KM effort and the creation of a bigger knowledge network as well as increased learning activities within the organization.

Conclusion

International Knowledge Management is driving high impact as new teams have started growing in various global locations. There is a high requirement for the new resources to be trained. This training can cause significant costs for the company. Internally organized trainings through net meetings/ phone calls and internet conferences can help save costs. They also help to avoid travel expenses. The international knowledge management team works with people from all teams spread across several geographic locations. The expertise and experience levels of the employees and managers in specific skill sets can be utilized to share or exchange knowledge within the organization. Knowledge can also be made available in the form of e-learning courses, e-books, SharePoint, online discussion forums, etc. apart from the classroom training methodology. Classroom trainings can also be made available through video conferencing. The knowledge management team identifies a list of trainers for specific topics and enables the conducting of such trainings or seminars. This helps people within the organization to develop or enhance their skills and gather new skills that may be helpful for their current role or any new roles. International knowledge management has made it even more important to create and build a knowledge base within a company for people working in different global locations.

Contact

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“Real value comes from building relationships”

An enormous amount of knowledge resides within international organizations. But how can the knowledge management (KM) team unlock this information and make it available to a large number of employees around the globe? How much knowledge should actually be shared and what kind of experience should not be passed on because it might hinder innovation and creative thinking? In an interview with tcworld KM expert Patrick Lambe answered these and many other questions.

Interview: Corinna Melville

What kind of knowledge is actually managed in KM?
KM encompasses knowledge in both tacit (kept in the head) and explicit (kept on more tangible things such as documents) forms. However many practitioners have come to realize that the “tacit/explicit” distinction – while convenient for communicating the broad aspects of KM – is not sufficiently broken down for helping to identify clear management interventions. We use a six-part typology of knowledge types influenced by the ASHEN framework developed by Dave Snowden:

- Information in tangible form, typically carried in documents, databases, maps, drawings, audio and video files etc.
- Methods, routines or ways of doing things that have been built up by workgroups but are not documented in any way
- Skills - i.e. knowledge that can be trained
- Experience - i.e. the deeper, more tacit knowledge that can only be grown over time through repeated practice and improvement (where training is not enough)
- Relationships and networks that give you access to other people’s knowledge
- Natural talent - i.e. the types of knowledge that seem to be genetically inherited such as extraordinary ability in mathematics, sports, design or communication, which cannot be replaced by training or experience.

Each of these knowledge types clearly suggests that there are different types of strategy that will help them flourish, and as you move down the list towards the “deeper” tacit knowledge types, the role of technology diminishes and other non-technologically driven strategies need to be added.

What is the difference between KM and information management?
Some practitioners believe that KM and information management are fundamentally different. Some believe that information management only looks after the explicit side of KM, not the tacit side. I tend to believe that information management is a foundation for KM, and that it is difficult to even get collaboration and sharing and knowledge development going at the more tacit end of the spectrum if you don’t have a decent information management discipline in place – simply because information management gives organizations a common language and ways of looking at their information and associated knowledge. In real life, information and knowledge are used together – any attempt to draw a rigid line might work theoretically, but not practically.

How can you motivate people to share their knowledge and make them aware of the mutual benefits?
I’m not a believer in rewards as a major motivating strategy because it tends to suggest that knowledge sharing has no intrinsic value and that’s why we have to be bribed into doing it. I believe the best motivator is to demonstrate in real life contexts how helpful it can be to share knowledge. Showing examples from work life can help you to reveal this.

How can you maintain the knowledge in the company when employees decide to leave?
Well, not by asking that question at the point of departure! You need to have what I call a sustained “knowledge continuity” program already in place long before they leave. It’s like a succession planning program. Some knowledge you don’t need to maintain, especially if it is technical knowledge that’s getting out of date. Knowledge that comes with deep experience also sometimes brings rigid attitudes that will hinder innovation opportunities. So it’s important to do a kind of audit of the knowledge and experience types that you need to maintain, ideally mapped against your expected strategic and operational needs in the future. Then you need to figure out what kind of knowledge it is, whether more eas-
focus

ily codified, very skills-based, or very experience-based. Each of these types will suggest different strategies for sustaining it – e.g. documenting, training, coaching, shadowing, mentoring, career development. But it’s not enough to look at the knowledge that’s leaving end of the equation – it’s also important to look at the knowledge learning side – do you have the right kind of successors, and have you got them in a program where they are acquiring and using the knowledge that is being captured or transferred? Will they stay with you?

What are the specific challenges of KM in a global enterprise?

KM challenges vary considerably depending on the industry, the state of the economy, and the type of organization and its culture. The most common challenges we come across are (a) getting senior management sufficiently educated and involved in the KM effort, (b) getting operational managers to allocate sufficient time and effort to the KM initiatives to let them show some benefits – i.e. overcome passive resistance and a tendency to prioritize the local work areas at the expense of broader coordination and collaboration needs across boundaries and (c) maintaining the continuity of the KM team driving the KM efforts. Progress is slow, and it’s hard to show visible, positive results quickly.

Business advisors today value "chit-chatting" as an important way of living the corporate culture. It is often through chit-chatting that valuable information is passed on (“Why don’t you try to do it this way…?” “I know someone who might be able to help you fix the problem…”). However, this kind of information is usually not captured in traditional knowledge management tools. Is there a way of also systemizing and making available informal knowledge?

I’m not sure, the value of such conversations is in capturing them. You can learn some things by capturing, but the real value is in the relationship building work that is going on, and the growth of mutual understanding and trust that is building up. At the end of the day, knowledge is still only valuable where specific people with brains and relationships and personalities and contexts are making decisions and taking actions that are informed and intelligent and effective – often in collaboration or coordination with other people. The KM system is simply a resource or a set of tools to support that activity. It does not capture or encompass that activity.

Even with a good KM system, you need people with all the right mental models, skills and experience to be able to use the KM systems, internalize what’s in them and apply them effectively and productively.

How can you enable an informal knowledge exchange in an international context / what is the virtual equivalent to the “coffee machine chat”? There are lots of Web 2.0 tools that support this – the most ubiquitous are e-mail and phone of course, but instant messaging, blogging and micro-blogging can also help do this. The key – usually – is that people should be able to meet face to face once in a while to build up the trust relationships that help them to share more freely, to interpret more accurately what other people are sharing, and to forgive the skips and inconstancies that human beings are prone to.
Moving toward machine interpretation

Translation memory (TM), computer-assisted translation (CAT) and machine translation (MT) tools are widely used for text-based applications, but spoken language communication is largely neglected. Though many business communications employ speech as the primary mode of interaction, the status quo of current localization business models and technologies remains limited to written applications. However, emerging technologies enable spoken inter-language communication through TM leverage, terminology databases, and computer-assisted interpretation (CAI), all of which point to move toward machine interpretation (MI).

By Nataly Kelly

The orality of communication

Of the 6,912 known living human languages, 2,261 have writing systems. Comparatively, all languages have either an oral or manual (signed) tradition. Oral and manual systems of communication define in part what it means to be a human being. Writing systems have resulted from attempts to catalog and capture spoken language — a portrait of a natural language at a given moment in time. Like all portraits, written systems are an imperfect rendition imperfectly attempting to capture the reality, richness and myriad dimensions of language.

Even Shakespeare’s plays, deemed to be some of the world’s greatest written works, were originally a combination of visual and oral mediums, destined not to be read, but to be seen and heard. We only need to consider the fact that the human ear can perceive between 300,000 and 400,000 distinct emotional states through tone of voice to gain a better understanding of the limits of written communication. In part due to these limitations, written language forms cannot keep pace with their spoken counterparts, often retaining elements of language that are outdated and no longer reflective of the speech used by the masses. In contrast, spoken language is dynamic, interactive and constantly evolving.

Text-based language is easier to control, while spoken language has a greater degree of variation and spontaneity. Written language has historically offered more ease and consistency for tracking, organizing, repurposing and distributing the information expressed in a language. Due in part to these qualities and to a historical lack of low-cost technologies for audio and video recording, linguists and businesses alike tended to rely heavily on written language.

A father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, believed that writing was merely a complement to oral speech. He wrote of the “usefulness, shortcomings and dangers” of writing and noted that oral speech is the underpinning of all verbal communication. In spite of its ancestry, written language sometimes yields more power than its spoken counterpart. In fact, languages are sometimes not even regarded as “legitimate” unless they have a writing system. Until recent decades, scholars focused their attention on written language, which was easier to document, analyze and write about than spoken language. With changes in technology, academics in the fields of linguistics, sociology and anthropology are turning an ear toward language in its most natural form, paying closer attention to the differences between writing and orality.

Limits of literacy

In spite of renewed attention from academics, at a practical level, individuals who cannot access written communication are often at a severe disadvantage in societies that depend on their members’ ability to read and write. According to estimates from the United Nations, one in five adults aged 15 or older was illiterate in 2000 worldwide; the majority of these individuals hail from countries with limited economic resources. Economically developed countries are affected by global literacy rates. According to the International Organization for Migration, there were nearly 175 million international migrants worldwide in 2005, meaning that one in every 35 people is an international migrant.

In Europe, migrants accounted for 7.7% of the population, while in North America, migrants made up 12.9% of the continent’s total. Australia had the highest percentage of migrants at 18.7%. However, even in highly developed economies, a literate population is not a given. The National Adult Literacy Survey found in 2003 that roughly 22% of the American population had “below basic” quantitative literacy.
we've observed with most societal advances, innovations are at first available only to a select and privileged few, until technology improvements enable the masses to benefit. For example, family portraits were once available only to those with the money and the time to stand in place for hours. Today, this technology is affordable to the average person, evidenced by announcements earlier this year from Sony and Canon that each company had shipped more than 100 million compact digital cameras. Camera phone sales tend to outweigh digital camera sales at a ratio of four to one, meaning that a greater percentage of the world's population can benefit from this technology than in the past.

In summary, anyone who wants to communicate messages to large groups of people — be they government bodies, organizations or businesses — cannot possibly reach the total audience through written language alone. In the United States, companies that want to reach consumers solely via text-based communication frequently overlook more than a fifth of their potential market. Those who produce material at any literacy level that exceeds the “basic” category are unable to reach 55% of their audience.

### Automation's shift toward spoken language

The language services industry, along with most economically developed societies, has mirrored academia by devoting most of its energies toward written language. There’s no shortage of tools, processes and technologies that promise to automate nearly every aspect of translation production and management, but they tend to focus on text-based communication. When you factor voice-over and speech technologies into localization and internationalization discussions, you find interpretation aids mentioned only in the context of specific applications or technologies such as health care, public safety and the military. Your search will discover that few technologists pay much attention to the implications of spoken language automation for the field at large. Meanwhile, interpreters of spoken language are increasing in both importance and number throughout the world. Speaking at 150 words per minute, an interpreter who spends four hours per day rendering spoken language converts 36,000 words per day without automation. Compare that to a prolific translator who, for most language pairs, would be lucky to manually convert 1,000 written words in the same time period. As we’ve observed with most societal advances, much attention to the implications of spoken language automation for the field at large.

#### CAI

Total automation of interpretation emerges as an ambitious goal and will not take place overnight. While the developments in the field of MT, the movement toward MI will be incremental. Yet, while it is unfamiliar territory for most who concentrate on written language, some promising efforts to automate conversion have already taken place in the oral communication realm. CAI is a growing phenomenon. When working as a telephone interpreter in the mid-1990s, I experienced CAI firsthand. Because I provided interpreting services remotely, I was able to use machine-based support to assist with many interpretation tasks. As an on-site interpreter, I rarely had the chance to use reference materials in the midst of a live interpretation. However, as a remote interpreter seated in front of a PC, suddenly I had the ability to access resources in real time to facilitate part of my work. Searchable electronic glossaries were available to assist me when I needed to find the perfect equivalent for a term in the regional variety that would be most suitable for the person on the other line. Definitions for unfamiliar terms were at my fingertips, reducing the need to request clarification. Even pre-translated scripts were available so that I did not even have to think about how to render lengthy questions on life insurance applications. I simply needed to read them aloud from the document and only had to interpret the answers from the other party, thereby eliminating the need for me to convert in one direction. Half of the words that were to be spoken were already translated, so all I had to do was pronounce them, much like an in-language insurance agent would read the questions from a script. I could even talk to fellow remote interpreters in chat rooms in case I needed help with a term or phrase, and we supported each other frequently this way. We were already engaging in an early form of collaboration to facilitate our interpreting work. Little did I know at the time that Facebook would employ a similar technique for website localization more than a decade later by engaging in collaborative translation.

Today, telephone interpreters can still access resources, both human and electronic, to support their work, improve quality, and provide renditions faster with reduced need for clarification requests. VI is also available for some spoken and sign languages; however, the interpreter’s on-screen presentation can make it a bit more difficult to access web resources and search for terms, let alone read a pre-translated script while simultaneously looking into the camera. However, technology promises solutions for overcoming these limitations of VI. For example, pre-translated scripts could be visible to the interpreter on a split screen, or the interpreter could control whether or not to display a video feed. VI is also an important technology to provide access to communication for deaf and hard of hearing populations. In the United States alone, the National Center for Health Statistics estimates that approximately 20 million people — 8.6% of people aged 3 or older — have hearing problems. Around the world, many countries report shortages of sign language interpreters, and there are at least 103 different sign languages.

#### MI

On the side of remote interpreting service providers, not much has taken place over the past decade to advance CAI or MI. While a great deal
of potential exists for automation of interpreting, it remains largely unexplored. For example, some TI companies record millions of minutes’ worth of interpreted calls. This effort represents enormous stashes of potential “interpretation memory” — units of interpreted speech that could be leveraged by replaying them. Sound familiar? The same concepts that drive TM apply to interpreters that record interpreted sessions or by establishing their own services and creating recordings. Eventually, bodies such as the US Department of Health and Human Services and the European Commission (EC) could begin sharing audio-format interpretation memory files, much as the EC is already harvesting TM.

MT is already happening in some settings. Devices such as IBM’s MASTOR and the Voxtec Phraseator automate unidirectional interpretation for military settings. Companies such as Polyglot Systems already facilitate interpretation in both directions for some health care settings. The company’s ProLingua software product enables hospital staff to speak more than 7,000 medical questions and instructions in a variety of languages by clicking on the phrase they wish to convey, after which the system verbalizes the phrase in the patient’s preferred language.

Solutions such as these are extremely promising. However, they represent only a tiny fraction of the possibilities for automating interpretation. Technologies such as those offered by SpeakLike may provide a glimpse of the future. With this web-based service, a person can type the information he or she wants to convey into a chat window. Then MT generates translations, which are in turn corrected by human linguists in real time so that the person who speaks the other language can see the translation. This enables two people to “talk” to one another via web chat with ease. It is easy to imagine how a live linguist could just as easily receive the text and speak the phrase in another language instead of typing it. These MT offerings represent important advances in the quest to automate spoken language transfer. Unfettered bidirectional speech-to-speech communication is still the Holy Grail in the automation space. In the cases of Phraseator and ProLingua, one-way communication is possible, and this certainly fills an important gap. However, with these technologies, if the party who is the recipient of the unidirectional communication wishes to respond or ask a question outside of the program’s parameters, this is not possible without requesting additional language assistance. ProLingua had the foresight to build a solution to this problem. The system can instantly connect an interpreter through a dialer that routes the call to a TI provider.

With SpeakLike, bidirectional communication is possible, but if a spoken language element were to be added, this would be a wonderful way of bridging the litany gap. Individuals who cannot read or write — let alone type — could simply speak their utterance via Skype or another computer telephony product. Then the remote linguist could either speak or type the rendition to the other party. While it would still require human intervention, a hybrid of this nature holds potential for overcoming barriers of language differences as well as disparities in literacy. One solution, JAJAH, already exists for this purpose. Just as we have seen with efforts to automate translation, human linguists still play important roles, especially in clarifying ambiguities and perfecting the output to make sure it can be easily understood. However, in the realm of interpreting, the linguist’s role is even more complex and varied. Human interpreters often take on roles that are unrelated or distantly connected to language transfer tasks. Depending on the professional standards of practice, the customs within a country or community, and the setting in question, an interpreter may do everything from walking a customer to the parking lot to consoling a parent who has learned that surgery did not save the child’s life. Such tasks are non-linguistic in nature, and there is great debate in the field of interpreting about whether or not interpreters should assume such roles.

The non-language-related elements of interpretation are important considerations, but technology will continue to evolve nonetheless and is likely to address the linguistic elements first and foremost. Expanding access to spoken and sign language services will have a tremendous impact on large groups of people. Countries require interpreting services to communicate with trade partners and to participate in the global political scene. Multilingual societies are especially reliant on spoken language interpretation. They simply cannot guarantee health care, public safety, education and legal services to their population without it. There are 192 multilingual countries in the world. Of the 193 recognized countries, only politically isolated North Korea is considered monolingual. All of these nations need interpreting services.

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Professional online networks – the bridge to business and information

The world is a village – a village with nearly seven billion inhabitants, to be exact. Through modern travel and electronic means of communication, we’ve come closer to our friends and colleagues all over the globe. There’s no serious reason keeping us from working for customers in other countries, cooperating with partners on other continents, sharing information with peers from all around, networking with all the people we have met along our path during our entire professional and social life, something, that has lately become more popular than ever.
The emergence of Web 2.0 (the interactive Web) has also affected the internet. What used to be an alternative medium for ‘flat’ texts between one singular writer on the one side and his or her readers on the other side has turned into a platform for interactive tools facilitating the exchange of social communication between all users, all of them readers and writers alike. This is a revolutionary development we are just starting to understand - we will all have to try and find our way around it in the next couple of years, and use it as well as we can for our individual professional development.

Many of us are using today’s internet and its social applications in our daily activities already. This also includes ‘older’ people like myself, who have been raised in a world without computers. Being born in 1969, I remember writing my first university papers on my father’s old typewriter and promising myself in an act of romantic conservatism, to use this typewriter for the rest of my life. Only two years later I started working with the first computer and have never looked back to the old computerless times ever since.

We use the internet to search for information and communicate online with our friends and family. To ‘google’ and to ‘skype’ have even become words of their own. Today, the online community myspace has somewhere between 100 and 200 million registered members - if it were a country, it would be among the ten largest in the world. It has become very common to bank online, shop online, learn online, share pictures, hobbies, and even plan meetings or private parties online. At the moment LinkedIn is only available in English. Beta versions of the Spanish and French website are available, and hopefully the German website will follow soon.

The German business network xing (www.xing.com) is LinkedIn’s most direct competitor, with a strong hold in German language markets. It has approximately six million members, most of them life (hobbies, parties, relationships), their main goal is to help manage professional contacts and facilitate the exchange of information with other professionals: peers, (former) colleagues and customers. The most important business networks were created in 2003, and have continued to grow exponentially since then.

Business networks overview

Most important in range and number of members is LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). By December 2008, it had approx. 30 million members, with a focus on the US and on professionals working in an international environment. In recent months, LinkedIn has raised considerable amounts of money for the further consolidation of its business, and has started offering additional new applications for professional users since then. It offers attractive services for free basic accounts, plus relatively expensive services for premium users. At the moment LinkedIn is only available in English. Beta versions of the Spanish and French website are available, and hopefully the German website will follow soon.

The German business network xing (www.xing.com) is LinkedIn’s most direct competitor, with a strong hold in German language markets. It has approximately six million members, most of them in Europe. The primary advantage of xing is its rather affordable premium service. The functionalities for users of the free basic package are very limited. Xing is currently available in more than 15 languages.

Viadeo (www.viadeo.com) is a smaller European network. It is especially popular with francophone users. At the moment, it has approximately three million users. Viadeo is available in seven European languages.

The competition, particularly between the two largest networks is quite considerable at the moment. Their rapid growth shows how popular business networks are, and what an impressive role they might play in the professional environment of the future. Particularly LinkedIn and xing are competing for market share. In this process they also develop quite interesting and useful functionalities for their users.

Considering the relatively small size of our particular professional environment, viz. the localization, translation and technical communication industry, it will be easy to see the importance of professional networking within the framework of these online networks: In spite of our international work environment, it is actually possible to know many of the people active in this industry, and to work with them whenever this might seem useful. We will only have to motivate ourselves to be active and forthcoming in this...
respect, try to know many of our peers, exchange information with them, network with them, be as flexible as possible when it comes to virtual co-operations and actual working relationships. We really should leave the confines of our offices and seize new possibilities to expand our network.

Business networks in practice

What I am looking for in a business network is a framework helping me to present myself as a localization professional. It should enable me to get access to resources and information by finding the right people, and simply manage my contacts before I even get into a situation where I will need them. A network like this should surely reflect the fact that I am using it as a professional user, not as a teenager sharing the latest party snapshots and funny games with my buddies. It should help me to keep track of former colleagues, give me the opportunity to find peers who have information or special expertise I might need for a project, and be a framework to manage my contacts with people I meet at other occasions. I am even using it to prepare my attendance at conferences: I look for the people on the list of participants, browse through their online profiles and thus know before I even go somewhere, what I want to talk about with someone.

Particularly in LinkedIn, recruitment and job searching functionalities have started to play an important role. Recruiters search the database to find new candidates for specialized functions. On the other hand, it is also possible to post jobs in the system, and to have interested candidates contact you directly via the internal messaging system. Through the recommendation system (only available in LinkedIn), people can ask their business contacts to endorse their work and vouch for them on the basis of their immediate knowledge of their individual work relationship.

Most important elements of professional networks

A user’s personal profile is playing an important role within professional networks. All systems allow their users to present themselves and their background in a sort of annotated, searchable CV. It should not only contain key data of a person’s career (education, functions, dates), but also other related personal details like areas of expertise and particular interests. The profile should make it interesting to approach a person and give some meaningful information about what makes them special assets for a job or a function. Groups or hubs are offering a forum for special professional interest groups. They can be created and are to be managed by individual users. In LinkedIn, there are groups for technical communication, translation and localization professionals as well as other groups especially geared for users in a certain area or with a special professional status (freelancers, company alumni etc.). All of these groups can be found by searching through the group directory. They can have vastly differing numbers of members and levels of activity. The challenge is the same as in other areas where content is created by the users of a system: The quality of a group is fully dependent on the input by its users. So don’t expect a meaningful discussion and information exchange, if you are not able or willing to be a part of it and contribute yourself. At the moment, many new groups are being created every day with the network only offering the technical framework for the content contributed by its users. Many of them will also disappear again, if they don’t prove to be relevant enough for a large enough group of users and contributors.

Give it a try!

Here are a few tips for novice users of professional networks:

1. Consider the active participation in professional networks as an important tool for your individual professional development. But: be selective about where you invest your time and energy. Check out the major networks, like LinkedIn, Xing or viadeo, and see which system you like best and where you know most people. A hint: Today, as professional networks are well established in
the international professional environment, it is becoming increasingly hard to motivate people joining a professional network, particularly if they are already using another one. So check out the people you know in the network you’re looking at, and see for yourself where you find most of your peers.

2. Never confuse professional networks with social networks. Just as there is a difference between you in your spare time and your other, professional ego, you should be careful not to mix up your private and professional online environment. In a business network, you want to reflect the professional side of yourself. Create a business profile, in which you can give relevant and interesting information about yourself and your professional background. Remember that you want to use this tool for your professional development, and act accordingly.

3. Be active yet selective when it comes to connecting with professional contacts within your network. I personally believe that you should actually know the people you are connecting with. Consider what you can do for them, and how they could help you. Professional networks can be a great way to deal with the pile of business cards you end up with after having attended a conference or other professional events. Check out the people whom you met, send them an email, and renew the relationship by introducing yourself and your assets for them via your professional network.

4. Ask yourself how you can help others instead of asking how they can help you? Help others to do better in business, introduce them to peers who might be relevant for them. Share information with your colleagues and clients, and they will also be open and helpful with information that might be useful for you.

5. Be aware of your own appearance on the web. Just like you don’t leave the house in your pajamas and without your hair combed, you should also try to have your profile in business networks look professional and well-groomed. Keep your profile up-to-date. Use a good picture of yourself (in business clothes, not with a bottle of beer in your hand and on the beach), and use all your eloquence to stress your professional achievements.

6. You are an expert in your field. Don’t be shy to show this. People are looking for contacts and information, and they might be very thankful if you can help them with your knowledge and your profile fits their needs. In the ideal network, with all of its members sharing their knowledge freely, much more valuable information will be available for everybody. At the same time, it will also help you to get a good professional reputation for the knowledge you have contributed. You can recommend people (and be recommended by them, LinkedIn only) or introduce them to other members. Use the endorsements of people who appreciate you, to show to others, what you’re especially good at.

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Establishing a digital library of Dutch literature

Erasmus and Anne Frank in bits and bytes? In an ambitious attempt to preserve almost a millennium of literature and making it available to the greater public, the Digital Library for Dutch Literature and its Philippines-based digitization partner SPi Technologies are collaborating to build one of the largest online repositories of Dutch literature.

By Sameer Raina

The Digital Library for Dutch Literature (Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren, DBNL) was founded by the Society of Dutch Literature in 1999 with the aim of digitizing the main works from Dutch literary history, together with all kinds of secondary information like biographies, articles, portraits, audio files and illustrations.

Executing on the vision

Since 2000, armed with funding from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and later on from the Dutch Language Union, DBNL embarked on an ambitious journey aimed at preserving and making available to the greater public a vast body of Dutch language and literature.

The goal, in terms of scope, encompassed hosting on the internet a large spectrum of books and periodicals covering the field of Dutch humanities over a period of nearly 1,000 years – from the 11th century to the 21st century. Mr. René van Stipriaan, editor-in-chief of DBNL comments: "We started digitizing and posting the books online in late 2000 and expect to host approximately one-third of the whole universe of Dutch literature (30,000 books or 10 million pages) on our website www.dbnl.org by 2012. This online database, when completed, would
Scanning antique literature with modern search facilities

One of the reasons that has made the website popular is that DBNL offers all kinds of search facilities, like advanced search and full-text PDF searching, besides a navigational structure that gives an insight into the wealth of Dutch literary culture. Commenting on the underlying reasons for the popularity of the website, René van Stiprianaan said: "The website is based on XML and the 1.5 million pages which it hosts are well structured and are almost flawless in their transcription. It is also this excellent quality of our text content that makes our website tremendously popular amongst our audience." Currently DBNL prepares for a big book-scanning project of about 25,000 volumes of periodicals and books. Ultimately, the collection of PDF-files will enable DBNL to accelerate the production of reliable and structured XML, which would provide even more flexibility in repurposing content for multi-channel distribution.

Literature’s comeback

The DBNL user statistics prove the usefulness of a broad scope digitization initiative. Not only do canonical texts or well known authors find their expected audience, even the forgotten or less important texts of the past centuries start a new career: for example - some really marginal text like collections of proverbs have found a huge new audience through DBNL. Further, with an easy to use and mostly automated service to the general public, DBNL always tries to find new ways of making public interesting content in attractive presentation formats and compilations. In 2008, DBNL prepared a compilation called ‘The Basic Library, 1000 Key Texts from Dutch Cultural History’, and in 2009 DBNL will release a compilation called ‘1000 novels, the Golden Era of Dutch prose 1780-1980’.

The main advantage of this goal-oriented digitization is that it combines a sense of urgency with attractiveness for a big audience. The new book scanning prepares for another stage in the functioning of DBNL. This digital showcase will ever more be a good alternative for the classical library, not only for easy orientation but also for more elaborate reading.

Partnership with SPI Technologies

With a budget reliant on donor support and an aggressive agenda, DBNL realized that in order to execute on its vision, it would have to look to Asia-based digitization service providers to meet its conversion needs. After talking to and testing multiple vendors, DBNL decided to select SPI as one of its main partners in the digitization process. "On evaluating various vendors, we felt very comfortable with SPI’s experience and track record in large scale PDF and XML conversion and digitization projects, especially as it related to converting and processing sensitive historical material", said René van Stiprianaan.

Mr. Bart Loeven, European Sales Manager at SPI comments: "Our goal is to be a service provider who understands the strategic objectives of DBNL and can provide the highest quality and accuracy at an attractive price. At the same time, our Philippines-based production team was very excited and enthusiastic about participating in this landmark initiative."

To ‘test the waters’, DBNL and SPI started collaborating on low volume conversion and digitization projects to improve their respective workflows and capabilities. The first project was undertaken by SPI in 2003 and involved the conversion of 100,000 pages of 19th and 20th century Dutch language books into XML format. From 2003 to 2007 DBNL and SPI partnered on projects with increasing scope and complexity. In 2008, comfortable with the experience of the past few years, DBNL and SPI agreed to take their partnership to the next level by agreeing to digitize, scan and convert into searchable PDF over 25,000 hardcopy books with approximately ten million pages. While the relationship between SPI and DBNL has grown over the years, it has not been without its share of challenges and learning experiences. Some of the key learnings involved putting in place measures to improve data quality, smooth volume fluctuations, and using best-in-class technology and tools to reduce turn-around time.

Reflecting on the engagement, René van Stiprianaan says: “In SPI we found a partner that gives us all the essential feedback that is necessary to speed up and to prepare for the challenges of the next decade. For us, as a data provider, it is very important to be reliable, transparent, and also very user friendly. The only way to achieve that goal is to develop and maintain high quality standards and use the workflow systems that SPI provides. Communication and exchange of innovative ideas is crucial to the whole process and SPI has been a true partner in this regard.”
Vietnam blossoms into a global technology hub

Vietnam – the lotus blooms

Asking people about Vietnam, you are likely to get a response that focuses on the Vietnam War. It was one of the few times the cold war turned hot, and it was an event that defined the country in the eyes of a generation. You are probably less likely to hear that after twenty years of market reforms the World Bank now describes Vietnam as “one of the great success stories”.

Photos: Harvey Nash
By Paul Smith

From war ravaged to commercial haven

After the conflicts with colonial France and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, by the mid 1980s the war-ravaged country faced famine, a decimated national infrastructure, and the prospect of its economy failing completely.

In the face of its major trading partner, the Soviet Union, collapsing, the Vietnamese government launched a renovation process (ĐoTHREAD) in 1986, committing the country to increased fiscal liberalization and the type of structural reforms needed to modernize the economy.

Within the span of 23 years, Vietnam has transformed itself from a closed door on the world, a crushingly poor and underdeveloped nation, to an open and inclusive member of the international community. Foreign investment has grown substantially as the domestic entrepreneurial spirit has been unleashed.

Vietnam's economy has expanded rapidly. It avoided the economic collapse that other transition economies went through in the early 1990s as well as the economic crisis that several East Asian countries suffered in the late 1990s. The economic growth rate has exceeded eight percent for the last three years, and while this is forecast to drop this year to around six percent, Vietnam still boasts the second fastest GDP growth in South East Asia, behind China.

A remarkable economic development

A key element to Vietnam's success has been its geographic stability, that is, within a region that has seen both incredible growth as well as devastating economic and social collapse in its neighborhood. Vietnam has been able to maintain both political and economic security by integrating effectively with a range of international institutions. Its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January 2007 and joining the United Nations Security Council has resulted in both lower barriers to trade and shared priorities on the world stage with the most developed nations. Indeed Vietnam has become increasingly influential as a lobby point for countries to gain access to the Security Council – a fact not lost on peer countries clamoring to be good friends.

Foreign investment comes from an array of major global brands, from HSBC and Prudential in financial services, to Microsoft and IBM in IT products and services. Vietnam's attractiveness to organizations of this caliber is largely based on its modern approach to public financial management. Increased decentralization, improved fiscal transparency, and strengthened auditing mechanisms are all part of the appeal. The introduction of common regulations and models of corporate governance for all enterprises, regardless of their ownership, has contributed to the rise in prominence of Vietnam in the corporate boardrooms of the world's largest firms.

As a major foreign investor in Vietnam for almost a decade, Harvey Nash plc has witnessed first-hand how international integration and the ĐoTHREAD economic policies have transformed the country. As a UK based, publicly traded business we are acutely aware of Vietnam's importance to the British economy. In 2007, Vietnam imported British goods worth £119.3 million, and the UK remains one of the largest investors in Vietnam.

Foreign investment comes from an array of major global brands, from HSBC and Prudential in financial services, to Microsoft and IBM in IT products and services. Vietnam's attractiveness to organizations of this caliber is largely based on its modern approach to public financial management. Increased decentralization, improved fiscal transparency, and strengthened auditing mechanisms are all part of the appeal. The introduction of common regulations and models of corporate governance for all enterprises, regardless of their ownership, has contributed to the rise in prominence of Vietnam in the corporate boardrooms of the world's largest firms.

Development on such a scale would not have been possible without effective investment in its human resource. From a purely fiscal perspective, real income has grown 7.3 percent per annum over the last ten years. Reinvesting wealth, derived from domestic natural resources and an expanding industrialized economy, into education and public infrastructure has proven highly successful. Vietnam has an abundance of natural resources with a thriving mining and oil industry. This year has seen the opening of Vietnam's first oil refinery.

From an agricultural perspective Vietnam is now number two in rice and coffee production, and supplies spices, shell fish and seafood to the world markets.

When the World Bank reengaged with Vietnam in 1993, income per capita was US$170. In 2009, it could cross the US$1,000 mark. Relative income growth, in line with advancing education and skills, have led to Vietnam being recently described by the World Bank as "one of the best-performing developing economies in the world".

An economic engine: the Vietnamese people

Vietnam's human resource is significant. It is the 13th most populous country in the world based on estimates from 2008 with 86,116,560 people. This already exceeds the population of Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, for example. Birth rates and improved life expectancy are predicted to push the population size over 100 million by 2020.
Additionally, Vietnam benefits from a population with an average age of 27, compared to the average age in the United States of 37, 40 in the United Kingdom and 44 in Japan. As the advanced economies continue to age, and suffer the economic and social problems that accompany an aging workforce, it becomes very clear that if Vietnam continues to invest in the education and welfare of its young population, it will further benefit from growing economic prominence.

The Vietnamese people are ambitious for their country. They are confident that they, both individually and as a country, are well placed to enjoy greater prosperity during the next generation. These feelings are reinforced by low unemployment rates during recent years. Unemployment currently runs at 4.5 percent, a positive outlook when compared with the United Kingdom at 5.7 percent, China at 6.1 percent, the United States at 6.5 percent and the European Union at 6.7 percent.

Harvey Nash employs more than 2,500 local Vietnamese staff in its software development and business process outsourcing operations throughout the country. There is a high demand for domestic employees with technology skills, and we have found our local staff to be hardworking, loyal, trustworthy and honest, as well as highly skilled in their role.

The power of talent

The "power of talent" is highly regarded in Vietnam. Its track record of investing in the education and advanced skills of its people, particularly in the technology sector, is enviable by any standard.

In the last two decades, school attendance has dramatically improved, with net primary enrolment increasing from 86 percent in 1993 to 96 percent in 2006. With the support of initiatives from international organizations such as the World Bank, the Vietnamese Government has put more than 80 million language and mathematics textbooks into primary schools across Vietnam and built around 14,000 classrooms. Microsoft has undertaken a program to train 50,000 teachers in the country. Such investment has contributed to one of the highest literacy rates in the world, at well over 90 percent, with a large percentage of the population speaking both Vietnamese and English. Internet access penetration per capita of 23.4 percent positions Vietnam in the world's top twenty countries. It is easy to understand why when traveling outside the major conurbations: Every village seems to have an internet café.

Advanced education to degree level has also benefited from investment by both the Vietnamese Government and private institutions. There are more than 200 universities in Vietnam, with 23 non-public universities, accounting for 11 percent of the total number. Harvey Nash was one of the first businesses to partner with local organizations – in our case it was our software development partner FPT – to educate students in high technology skills.

The FPT University alone provides over 2000 technology graduates each year. The success of these institutions in training students for specific high technology careers has led the government to announce an increase in the number of non-public universities from 11 to 30 percent within the next few years. Within the technology sector, specific initiatives have also contributed to the creation of a highly skilled technology workforce. The US$70 million government investment in software industry training is one such example. Also, one should not forget how the personal drive and ambition of the Vietnamese people contribute to the success of the technology sector. Science-based subjects are the first choice for 83 percent of students at Vietnamese universities. It is no coincidence that the development of software services, Vietnam has become a natural home for many technologically sophisticated companies. Seven years after our initial investment in the country, Harvey Nash now employs over 2,500 technology professionals. An important and often forgotten statistic is the staff churn rate, which has reached damaging proportions in India, for example. Vietnam has enviable staff retention rates primarily based on the innate culture of loyalty created by the family ethic. Harvey Nash staff churn rates are sub 6 percent of the workforce.

Gender balance

The investment in education of the last two decades has also had a significant impact on gender diversity in the Vietnamese workforce.
In a country where 52 percent of the population is female, women make up a very positive proportion of skilled employees and management. In fact, with science and technology subjects favored by the vast majority of Vietnamese students, women also make up a large proportion of technical roles like software engineers – a far more positive balance than the gender gap plaguing the IT industry in developed countries where less than 12 percent of technology workers are female.

Harvey Nash’s experience also proves this favorable trend: 56 percent of the Harvey Nash team in Vietnam is female, including many management and technical roles. In fact, our senior management team in the country comprises six people in total: four women and two men.

Foundations for growth and an exciting future

The basis for the current success and future prosperity of Vietnam was established more than 20 years ago with the adoption of the Doi Moi economic policies and a desire to integrate into the global community. The more recent investment in education, which has led to the development of a world-class technology literate workforce, has already had a direct impact in propelling Vietnam into the global business spotlight.

As Klaus Rohland, former Country Director for Vietnam at the World Bank recently stated, “there is probably no other country in the world that has moved its development so far and so fast”.

Still, challenges remain for the Vietnamese Government and the Vietnamese people. There is a need for more sophisticated regulation in financial services to encourage further foreign investment. The pace of infrastructure upgrade has to be improved to keep up with the demands of 21st century business. Middle management skills in all industries also need continued investment to ensure quality standards are not put at risk. This is not surprising given that Vietnam has such a young workforce and therefore lacks experience in certain fields. However, this is an opportunity for many professionals from the rest of the world who can help to fill the skills gap.

There are few Western companies with as much experience in Vietnam as Harvey Nash, and the ongoing pace of development in the country constantly impresses us. We see continued investment from the Vietnamese Government and foreign business, making Vietnam ever more appealing to the rest of the world.

Vietnam is already a stable, growing and strong country. As it continues to reinvest its mineral, agricultural and economic wealth in science-based education to benefit the global high technology industry, it will grow in importance on the world stage.

The Vietnamese Government has laid the foundations, while the Vietnamese people have shown that they have the entrepreneurial skills, the energy and the ambition to create a winning formula for long-term success.

Paul Smith is global managing director at Harvey Nash Outsourcing and Offshore Software Development. He is an active member of the CBI London Council and recently received a personal award for outstanding services to Vietnam’s ICT industry from the Vietnamese government.

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Becoming an effective global networker

When organizations ‘go global’ we often think of the formal networks that need to be stretched and expanded to accommodate the increase in communication that results. What we often fail to realize is that as individuals, we now need to network on a global scale as well, in order to maintain the effectiveness of our role. Here’s how you become an effective global networker.
Why we need to become global networkers

Having teams spread out across the globe and having key opinion leaders in remote offices means that our influencing skills can be severely tested as we try to continue applying them now mostly virtually instead of face to face. The time and distance factors combine with cultural differences to create untold hurdles to ‘getting things done’ in the time frames and in the well-ordered ways that had been the norm only a short while back. You can find yourself, on occasion, regretting the globalization process and wishing for less complicated times of yore! So what are the key characteristics of a ‘global networker’?

Become curious about people and their culture

In the UK and a number of other countries the norm is to keep separate the personal from the professional. Being curious can be interpreted as ‘being nosy’. However outside of these cultures the norm in a large number of countries is that you need to get to know people well in order to work with them. Therefore being respectfully curious and interested in someone and in their culture always generates a positive response. By being curious we send out ‘respect’ signals and once we move beyond the surface histories of ‘Heroes & Holidays’, (the kind of information you get in short introductions to a country in guide books or on tourist websites) we can move to the second level of cultural values. This is about what people in that culture believe is important in the realms of human interactions, families, communication, how to get things done on a day to day basis and so on.

Are you ready to reciprocate?

Curiosity about cultures needs to be a two-way thing. So be open with information about your own culture, prepare yourself - take a few simple books abroad with you that will help explain or illustrate what you are talking about. These books can also make excellent gifts.

Don’t ask why

A word of warning here: Be very careful with the question “Why?” in any cultural context. It usually generates a defensive response - because behaviors need to be justified. Also, simple explanations may not always be forthcoming.

When you are ‘inside’ a culture your fellow nationals don’t usually discuss these kinds of things in that way. It simply is that way! As a Brit I am regularly asked why we in the UK drive on the left. It took me some research to find out why. It is not a question we would ever ask ourselves in the UK! Again, in a number of countries around the world I have been asked why we in the UK put milk into our tea. Not information that is readily available in the national consciousness.

Feel enriched through meeting people

This is the bit about ‘work life balance’. What else can you get from working in a global environment? If you follow your curiosity you will learn much about the world first hand that you couldn’t by staying at home, despite all the news channels pumping stories into our homes through the TV. This is the bit that others who don’t travel talk about when they find out that you travel abroad regularly for work purposes. But what do you actually see or experience? For some it can be just the inside of a taxi and then a hotel followed by an office meeting room. Eventually all these environments merge and you could be just about anywhere and it wouldn’t really matter where you were. It doesn’t have to be that way. Don’t turn down invitations to socialize just to go back to the hotel to check emails or whatever. Take the time to meet people, visit places and do things that may enrich you personally whilst helping to build relationships with those you leave behind once you return home to the Head Office.

Make connections

Being able to see connections is a necessary set of skills in today’s business world. Thinking outside of the box in an intercultural context is an absolute necessity. Why? Because it is all outside the box if it’s a different culture, or at least outside your box. Gaining cultural leverage is often a good result of making connections. Outsourcing decisions are an example of this. Seeing the potential of moving certain business functions to certain countries to gain a number of market and cost advantages requires the ability to make connections on a number of different levels. Another example is the ability to see how transferring staff globally by matching key skills and areas of expertise to priority roles elsewhere (particularly those moves that go against the trend of Head Office to foreign subsidiaries) can increase productivity or quality where it is most needed.

Keep channels of communication open

In relationship-oriented cultures (that’s everyone except us Anglo-Saxons) people spend a lot more time involved in formal and particularly informal ‘networking’, e.g. attending functions, having coffee and so on. In more task-oriented cultures there is a tendency to only contact people when we need their input or support. This is viewed on rather poorly in other cultures. Open channels may mean different things in different cultures. In formal cultures such as the Chinese it will mean ‘cultural events’ with sponsorships and so on to manage your contacts in government whilst formal banqueting activities are the rule with immediate business partners, joint venture partners and clients. It is said in China that if you eat alone your business is in trouble! A good tip is when you next arrange a trip to Asia or Latin America or Africa, build in time to have social occasions and events with key contacts. This means more than just dinner at the end of the day with the Japanese or Chinese team leader. Increasingly the personal and the professional lives are becoming more and more intertwined as we work across cultural, time and distance borders. Develop your global networking skills and it will pay off for both you and the business.

contact

Richard Cook is founder and director of Global Excellence Ltd, a UK based global provider of intercultural and diversity training and consultancy services for corporate clients.

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From November 5th to 7th, 2008, the protagonists from the fields of technical communication and information management gathered in Wiesbaden, Germany for the tcworld conference, the tekom Annual Conference and Trade Fair 2008. The total number of conference attendees and visitors to the exhibition amounted to 3,300, marking an impressive increase by 20 percent in comparison to last year (2,750 participants). More than 170 presentations, panels, tutorials and workshops as well as 132 exhibitors and 179 speakers marked another record.

The wide range of topics covered in the program met all demands of any technical communication professional – from indispensable basics of professional writing and technical authoring to best practices in user assistance, terminology and localization, and finally expert sessions on XML applications. The comprehensive localization stem that lasted all three days was – like last year - organized in cooperation with the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA). A survey conducted by tekom after the conference revealed that for most participants the overriding motivation to come to Wiesbaden was to complete their professional skills and competencies. The conference thus represents an excellent opportunity for lifelong learning and further training in the profession. Learning about latest trends and the current state of the art as well as networking with colleagues also ranked highly as reasons for attending the conference and exhibition.

A vast majority of 88.6 percent of the participants stated that they felt at ease or very much at ease during the event and 72.9 percent expressed their satisfaction with the broad spectrum of topics. The feedback from participants proved that tekom managed to find the right balance between theory and...
practice, scientific background and use cases from the industry, basic and expert knowledge, “evergreen” topics and new trends, between strategic and technical viewpoints, tool presentations, standards and methods as well as well-known and new speakers. According to the survey 87.4 percent of the conference attendees and 73.2 percent of the exhibitors will probably return next year. The overall grades for the exhibitions are excellent: For 64.3 percent of the exhibiting companies it was good, for 12.5 percent very good.

Special guests: Technical Communicators from Japan

One of the main focuses of this year’s conference was technical documentation in Japan. Right after the welcome and opening session of the localization stem by GALA representatives, a panel on localization for the Japanese market was held. Panel speakers were members of the Japan Technical Communication Association (JTCA) and renowned localization experts. Satoshi Kuroda, member of the JTCA board, explained the special characteristics of Japanese technical documentation and presented the winners of the Japan Manual Award 2007. The response to the presence of the JTCA delegates in the exhibition and to their talks in the conference was very positive. tekom and JTCA agreed to continue this fruitful information exchange.

Besides the international character of the conference and the participation of JTCA, people appreciated most the great organization, the broad variety of topics and sessions, the ever increasing number of exhibitors including the worldwide leading companies in the field, the combination of conference and exhibition and the excellent networking opportunities in an informal and agreeable atmosphere.

Prospective for 2009

Despite the international financial crises and the, at this stage, unforeseeable impacts on the industry in general and technical communication in particular, most of the exhibitors show an optimistic attitude regarding the near future: 1.8 percent are convinced the sector will go on booming, 46.4 percent expect positive developments and 39.3 percent think developments will still be satisfying.

Given the fact that on the current labor market there is a dramatic lack of qualified technical communicators – at least in Germany – these statements do not seem to be over-optimistic. There is still significant potential for growth, not only on the European market but also – and maybe even more – in emerging regions such as Eastern Europe, Asia or Latin America.

Dr. Michael Fritz, executive director of tekom, is confident that the international involvement in the conference and Trade Fair will continue to increase. “Our event is the largest of its kind worldwide. The quality of the conference contributions and the trade fair are top-notch. We will increase our efforts to gain visibility on international level. We would be very happy to welcome a more and more international audience at future events.”

This year’s tekom Annual and tcworld conference will be held from November 4th to 6th. The event will take place once more in Wiesbaden with its famous historic spa baths, art nouveau buildings and Riesling wine tastings.

Responding to the increasing international attention, tekom will continue cooperating with GALA, JTCA and other associations in order to offer an inspiring program for technical communicators and information managers in all countries and industrial sectors.
## community

### tcworld calendar

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<tr>
<td>January 26-27</td>
<td>IMTT Vendor Management Seminar</td>
<td>Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt</td>
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<td>January 26-30</td>
<td>MT Marathon 2009</td>
<td>Prague, Czech Republic</td>
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<td>January 29-30</td>
<td>Intelligent Content 2009</td>
<td>Palm Springs, USA</td>
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<td>February 10</td>
<td>Language Access and Translation Strategies Colloquium</td>
<td>Los Angeles, USA</td>
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<td>February 16-18</td>
<td>2009 Outsourcing World Summit</td>
<td>Carlsbad, USA</td>
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<td>February 17-18</td>
<td>Web Content Conference</td>
<td>Tampa Bay, USA</td>
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<td>February 20-21</td>
<td>ACM Workshop on Intercultural Collaboration 2009</td>
<td>Palo Alto, USA</td>
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<td>March 17-19</td>
<td>Worldware Conference</td>
<td>Santa Clara, USA</td>
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<td>March 26-29</td>
<td>Global Languages, Local Cultures 2009</td>
<td>Cambridge, USA</td>
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<td>March 29 – April 1</td>
<td>Annual Writers UA Conference</td>
<td>Seattle, USA</td>
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<td>March 30 – April 2</td>
<td>AIIM International Exposition and Conference</td>
<td>Philadelphia, USA</td>
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<td>April 6-10</td>
<td>LISA Forum Asia</td>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
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**The Worldware Conference** illuminates the “why” and “what” of internationalization in a two-day conference setting. Subject matter experts from leading companies offer indispensable insights into key topics for any company delivering software to the world audience. The formal conference is followed by a third workshop day for hands-on inclined attendees.

This conference is directed to CTOs, Development Directors, product architects, and other technical decision-makers who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of product development.

The theme for the 2009 **LISA Forum Asia** is Global Design & Innovation. Building on its reputation as a leading manufacturing center, Taiwan is increasingly recognized as a leader in development and design of products sold around the world, a trend seen in mainland China and elsewhere in Asia. As Asian powerhouse companies expand into global brands, globalization and localization issues, along with training, expertise development, and cultural management, are emerging as critical business concerns. The LISA Forum Asia will focus on how companies in Asia and around the world can implement globalization best practices to expand brand awareness and international customer support.

`The Worldware Conference` and `LISA Forum Asia` are co-located events. For more information, visit [www.lisa.org](http://www.lisa.org) and [www.worldwareconference.com](http://www.worldwareconference.com).
GALA is an international non-profit association that promotes translation services, language technology and language management solutions. The 200+ member companies worldwide include translation agencies, localization service providers, globalization consultants and technology developers. GALA companies share a commitment to quality, service and innovation in helping clients reach global markets.

www.gala-global.org
info@gala-global.org

Tekom Gesellschaft für technische Kommunikation e.V. is the largest association in Europe representing technical communicators, illustrators and translators. Tekom is a neutral platform for the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise and promotes professional education and training in the field of technical communication. Founded in 1978, tekom currently represents around 6000 members in all industrial branches. Tekom cooperates with associations of related professions, educational institutions, industry organizations and standards bodies worldwide.

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With the foundation of TCEurope nine European associations of technical writers promote the quality of technical communication across borders, popularize the occupational image, advance educational opportunities and support the interests of their members all across Europe.

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