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# Global Ambitions

*(R)*Evolution in Motion

Preview



Dear Reader,

What you are about to flip through is a preview of the full **Global Ambitions: (R)Evolution in Motion** publication that will be released in September 2025.

For the past four years, we have strived to capture the zeitgeist of the language services industry through the inquisitive, question-raising, and thought-provoking perspectives of diverse voices.

People like *you*: fellow human beings with varied backgrounds, but united by a common goal to get better at what they do and sharing a passion for languages, communication, and technology.

So, what are you in for this year?

In this year's edition, we're witnessing an industry propelled forward not just by AI, but by the countless decisions individuals and teams make every single day. You may think not much is happening, but if you zoom out, you'll see an industry in motion.

So slow down, brew yourself a nice cup of coffee, and explore a sneak peek of five articles (out of 20+) you'll read in the Global Ambitions magazine in just a few weeks.

**The Argos Global Ambitions editorial team**

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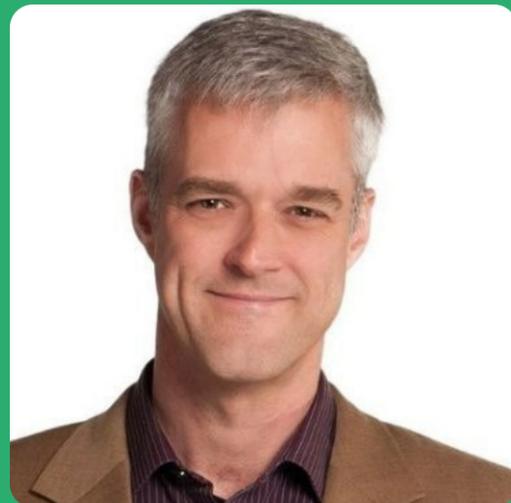
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# Innovation Meets Infrastructure

## Erik Vogt

Solutions and Innovation Strategist at Argos Multilingual

Erik Vogt is a veteran solutions architect, program director, and executive consultant with deep expertise in AI enablement, multilingual content, and global operations at scale. He partners with organizations to unlock business value through strategic innovation, operational alignment, and measurable outcomes across complex, cross-functional programs.



Even when there's a strong appetite for innovation, the reality on the ground is far messier. Most language services teams aren't operating with a clean slate. They're carrying years — sometimes decades — of infrastructure decisions, integrations, and workflows that were built under a very different technological framework. Although it may surprise some of you, there are still clients today who require the resizing of .rc files or compiling CHM files as part of their localization process. Those are literally 20th century technologies, having been introduced in Windows 1.0 and Windows 95, respectively.

Add to this a long list of proprietary systems built by a cohort of perhaps 10,000-25,000 localization buyers (my estimate includes only companies who spend over \$100k on localization) and the many permutations of CMS, LMS, DAMS, CRMs, and TMS systems could easily reach 500,000 — not including other significant differences like software versions and let's not forget, ahem, languages. And the legacy system issues aren't just technical; they're also hardwired

into organizational structure, business endpoints, and cultural dimensions. They represent baked-in assumptions about quality, accountability, and even the definition of success.

Add to that the sheer velocity and scale challenges of market leaders, where computing, storage, and transaction costs are the primary constraints.

It's easy to say, "AI will make this faster," and we hear that just about every day. I don't need to cite a single number to prove this point, but I feel I should anyway. According to a 2024 Gartner report, 79% of CEOs say AI is a top priority for business transformation, yet only 15% of companies have successfully scaled AI beyond pilot programs. AI is talked about everywhere, but a staggering number of AI projects fail to deliver value, by various accounts between 70%-90% in fact. Of course, OpenAI and other LLMs have started a new arms race over the past couple of years that many expect to improve the odds, but aligning systems, maintaining accountability, defining



correct KPIs, and reorganizing systems remain challenging.

Still, even against these odds, the language services industry is starting to deliver real value, in part because of decades of experience with foundational technologies like TMS and NMT systems. Adding an AI-based review can add demonstrable value, not to mention exciting new opportunities like orchestration, knowledge graphs, and soon generating content on demand directly from a new set of core assets. These new capabilities are measurable and compelling, but we still run across systematic challenges in deployment.

Case in point, how do we predict project costs for a procurement system that expects word counts and predefined rate cards, when the NMT and AI output is not determinative? Who is accountable if technology doesn't translate to lower human effort on the part of translators or reviewers? How does one even measure that when there could be half a dozen systems being deployed across a localization program? How should we now manage CMS systems that need to accommodate multilingual (or even multimodal) feedback loops? Or what

do we do with a QA process that flags AI-generated content as inherently suspect, regardless of outcome (or can't effectively determine what AI-generated content is in the first place)?

**The constraint, then, isn't just what AI can do — it's what the end-to-end system lets it do. Real change requires mapping the whole environment: the business transaction layers, the data flows, the metrics, the regulatory expectations, and the unspoken norms that shape how things actually get done.**

In many cases, we're asking 2025 questions while living inside a 2010 (or earlier) infrastructure.

**Three hidden bottlenecks that block AI innovation**

While the promise of AI in language services is real, many organizations are finding that the biggest obstacles aren't about models or capabilities — they're structural. The innovation bottlenecks are often hidden in plain sight, buried in processes, policies, and systems that were never designed for rapid, intelligent change.

## 1. Rigid procurement models

Traditional procurement structures are optimized for predictability and scale, not experimentation. They depend on rate cards, fixed scopes, and RFPs that assume human translation is the atomic unit of value and that human effort has a predictable level of output.

But AI-driven workflows don't always conform. They thrive on iteration, feedback, and blended outputs. There are several major bottlenecks, including buyer-hosted systems, intermediate technology providers, and language service providers, and their subsidiaries. Business endpoints require deterministic metrics, but procurement teams often can't flex to accommodate those variables, and as a result, innovation stalls before it even starts.

## 2. Legacy metrics and incentives

A few years ago, I helped pitch metrics heavily, with a "Measure what Matters" campaign. I still find it deeply useful, but I recognize that we need another level of thinking on how to apply it in today's world. The premise is that you get what you measure — and in most cases, we're still measuring inputs (words translated, hours billed) rather than outcomes (customer understanding, speed to market, user engagement). AI changes the shape

of the work, but if quality metrics and accountability structures remain static, teams will default to the safest path — even if it's no longer the most effective.

For example, if a program is highly commoditized, it is organized to standardize and minimize unit price. In most cases, that is per word. Words are an obvious choice. They are easy to count, and the human translation process roughly follows somewhat predictable levels of effort. The time it takes to translate 100 words varies by content and translator, but the business layer imposes a structure that generally normalizes around sustainable means. However, with AI, the system performance (as defined by the product of a hybrid system against any standard metrics) may range from 0%-500% of the non-AI throughput. While we're on the topic of standards, does MQM still represent the valid framework for quality? How much does severity and classification matter in an AI-powered workflow?

## 3. Fragmented ecosystems

Language doesn't live in isolation. It's woven through CMSs, product databases, analytics platforms, and user interfaces. AI can automate specific tasks, but if the surrounding systems are brittle or siloed, the cost of integration outweighs the benefit of innovation. Too often, the conversation stops at "Can we use AI here?" rather than "What would it take for our whole system to support this kind of intelligence end-to-end?" This helps us get to a deeper journey of discovery for the goals and means of using language to deliver value to organizations in the first place.

I think a fundamental rethinking of language is at the heart of the discussion about LangOps, and how language is handled across multiple business functions, including

value delivery (products, services, and experiences), trust and compliance, market access, brand identity, and operational clarity. For example, I have seen many in-country review efforts clash with central localization initiatives due to a profound mismatch of expectations. The in-country reviewers, such as resellers or in-country sales teams, are often not linguists and can introduce errors and provide erratic feedback. However, they might have a bone to pick with the head office about the inclusion of translated features they can't sell in their region.

## Unpacking the chaos

I think many in the language services industry will relate to the challenges I've skated through and shrug, "But that's just our business". I believe there is a more strategic way to tackle this complex world, and it starts with rethinking some basic assumptions.

One of the first to go is the premise that translation is a fixed process with fixed parameters (such as word count). Describing global strategy through word count is about the same as measuring a play by its word count. Would anyone say they got ripped off because the price to see "A Comedy of Errors" is probably the same as "Hamlet", when the former only delivers around 14,701 words and the latter roughly twice that at 29,551? Of course not — "the play's the thing", not the average cost per spoken word.

To address this, return to the original purpose of the translation, and even whether or not it needs to be translated at all. Estimate the consequences of failure, including the consequences of untranslated, mistranslated, culturally mismatched, inconsistent, high latency, and unclear content. Consider whether some translation spend is underdelivering in its core purpose. Is the in-market review by non-linguists

adding more time and cost than it's worth, especially if contrasted by underspending in terminology control, or in ensuring the right content is being translated? How about when contrasting with deploying a RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) workflow, AI-driven content tiering, or using AI as a Governance Layer? Despite all these amazing new capabilities, does adding them offset the structural inefficiencies of legacy workflows, incompatible business systems, or misaligned data systems?

**Or perhaps a more important question is not whether you can deploy the latest AI capabilities, but whether one can define the value it could bring. As Simon Sinek said perfectly in 2011: "Start with Why."**



# Our Origin Story

## Dan Milczarski

Vice President of Solutions  
at Blackbird

Dan Milczarski is a seasoned technology leader with over 20 years of experience, most recently serving as CTO at CQ fluency — transforming it into a top-tier, tech-enabled language service provider focused on process automation and custom development. He has since been appointed Vice President of Solutions at Blackbird.io, where he continues to drive AI and localization innovations and frequently speaks on responsible AI, machine translation, and process automation.



When we talk about progress in localization, it's easy to focus on the shiny objects of today (*cough, cough, AI, cough, cough*). But to truly appreciate where we stand, we must look back. And what we see in that rear-view mirror isn't a tale of stagnation, but instead an industry that has been laying the groundwork for the changes of today.

Let's set the scene. A decade or so ago, the localization industry was, on the surface, steady. Perhaps even static. Many enterprise teams and language service providers relied on established workflows that had evolved only incrementally over the years. CAT tools ruled the day, connectors were rare and fragile, and human translators remained at the heart of every project, with technology playing a supporting role rather than acting as a catalyst. From the outside, it could look like stagnation. But beneath that surface, important seeds were being sown. Early API integrations began to emerge,

albeit clunky and limited. The first orchestration efforts (neanderthals by today's standards) hinted at a future where localization would no longer live on the periphery of content operations but become embedded in them. And machine translation, once viewed with suspicion, began to find acceptance as a tool in the linguist's toolkit rather than a threat to their craft.

Customer expectations were evolving, too. Enterprises started asking for scale (more content without much more cost) and holding LSPs to stricter SLAs in terms of quality and timeliness. This demand drove innovation. It pushed technology providers to think toward platforms that could connect content creation, management, and delivery in real time, across languages.

Looking back now, we can see that what seemed like small, incremental steps were actually laying the groundwork for the industry's transformation. It's a little like the early days of the Marvel

Cinematic Universe. Those first movies might have seemed standalone, but they were actually setting up a much larger, interconnected story that would change the game. The localization industry's "origin stories" of automation, interoperability, and integration have brought us to today's inflection point.

### **Why does this matter?**

**Because progress isn't always loud. It isn't always packaged as disruption. Sometimes, progress is *Thor: The Dark World*. A fine film that doesn't stand out as a great Marvel flick but serves a purpose to move things along.**

Equate that to the countless decisions made by technologists, linguists, and business leaders who chose to push just a little further toward efficiency, toward connection, toward innovation. Orchestration, AI, and automation are no longer buzzwords but realities. And we'd be less prepared to use them if it wasn't for the past decade of incremental improvements.

So, it's worth acknowledging the journey. Our past wasn't about standing still. It was about preparing the ground for the revolution that is now in motion.



# The Progress To Disappear (or Why Everyone Still Needs a Plumber)

## Jon Ritzdorf

Senior Manager of Globalization Content Infrastructure at Procore Technologies

Jon Ritzdorf is a seasoned language industry professional with over 20 years of experience in translation technology, solutions engineering, and globalization strategy. Since 2003, Jon has served as an adjunct professor in translation technology, localization, and language industry business practices at institutions including Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS), NYU, U. of Maryland, and U. of Chicago. Currently, Jon is Senior Manager of Globalization Content Infrastructure at Procore Technologies, leading Procore's technical strategy for global expansion.



I have to wonder. If the last stage of CSA's globalization maturity model is "Transparent" — where localization is no longer a function or department, just the way things are — aren't we, the people who built the system, setting ourselves up for obsolescence?

Think about it. "Transparent" describes a state where the localization team has done such a stellar job that systems, awareness, and mindsets are so attuned that they've made themselves redundant. Everyone knows how to write for a global audience. Products are designed with all the cultural permutations factored in from the start. The marketer instantly knows what won't fly in Japan. The developer instinctively prepares the UI to be readable from right to left for Arabic-speaking countries. You know, the dream.

So, where does that leave us, the localization professionals, the language enthusiasts?

There are two things that we have going for us, in my view:

1. There's a long and winding road for companies to realize that dream state. Sometimes they even regress or fall into a loop of "two steps forward, one step back". Until then, there's plenty for us to do.
2. Everyone needs a plumber at some point. As unglamorous as this may sound, we, the localization professionals, are the plumbers of global business. No matter how much AI a company throws at solving a challenge, something somewhere will break, and they call the plumber to fix it.

This is the paradox of localization in the GenAI age. If our goal is to automate ourselves out of our jobs (and we seem to be hell-bent on this), the system is not designed to work without some level of expertise in plumbing. It just so happens we're very

good at quickly diagnosing and solving plumbing issues.

## The “how” of localization is changing, but the “why” stays the same (and you need a plumber to understand the “why”)

I was recently asked the question, “What excites you?” Twenty years later, I’m happy to report that I’m still excited about teaching. I just love passing on my knowledge to others.

Having done so for some time now, one thing I’ve noticed is that the fundamentals of localization and internationalization (or the “why”) have remained unchanged between today and, say, the 1990s. Just because we have AI now and we can do things faster or more efficiently, doesn’t change the basics. It’s the “how” that is changing.

**The “how” we go about things may be changing, but the “why” — enabling and facilitating communication or allowing companies to sell — remains largely unchanged. The problem is that the “how” is feeding our anxieties today and diverting us from the “why.”**

People are rightly anxious about machines replacing them, and as machines improve, that anxiety is triggered even more.

However, consider something else, the playbook for doing things globally

is evolving as well. There are the fundamentals, sure: If you do this, you need to translate that (or not). If you translate, there are better options than spreadsheets. Then there are numerous permutations of companies with varying levels of maturity. Are they truly thinking globally, or is it all just aspiration? Are they open to adopting a global approach to current challenges, even if it creates issues or hogs resources? How will “going global” be prioritized? What’s the budget? Do they have the time or the personnel?

Every team has a unique combination of these elements, and (spoiler alert) it still requires a human to make sense of it all and connect the objective with a process. Sure, you can throw the problem at the machine, but chances are you’ll end up going back to the human for cleanup or refitting (which neatly brings us back to our humble plumber analogy). The fact is, there is a reason truly global-minded companies have a localization team. Nobody gets as excited about doing this cleanup work as we language and technology nerds. We’re expert plumbers and we take pride in our jobs.

## AI: a solution in search of a problem

I’m sure there will always be a need for people like us. We now have a wonderful toolbox called AI, and it’s a potential solution to many problems that required significantly more time and tooling before the 2020s: It can perform source rewrites, extract terminology, modify tone and register, and automate post-editing to some degree.



Yet for all its prowess, the LLM sometimes still can’t manage things as basic as consistently preserving line breaks. The LLM is also not an “all-knowing” localization specialist that will tolerate and be understanding of your engineering team’s insistence on using improper ISO coding for internationalization. So what’s supposed to be a solution often just introduces a new set of complexities, unpredictable decision making, and it’s still me, the human, doing the cleanup, making hard decisions, and choosing trade-offs, just as I did back when I started 24 years ago in 2001.

In a way, interactions with the machine are not unlike an executive coming and saying, “Just get this translated” into 10 new languages. Every person the executive asks (some with experience in the area and others with no knowledge) will present a different pathway and process to achieve the goal. Just as any set of randomly chosen LLMs will present 10 answers to the same prompt when you ask 10 different times. It’s still the plumber who has to *decide* which of the 10 different ways to fix the problem

is the “right” one based on decades of hard-earned experience. But I made my point clear: the plumber doesn’t go away, not really.

## I worry about who comes next, and you should too

Worry might be too strong, but at the very least, we should all be thinking about the next generation (of plumbers).

If you think about the typical localization career, most of us over the age of 30 fell into it through an affinity for language and foreign cultures, or just being at the right place at the right time (“Who speaks French in this office?”). Very few explicitly train for a job in our industry. The institutions that train professionals for career paths in the language industry generally lean heavily into (or are forced into) a dark corner of the institution where interest is low.

And that's the core issue: higher educational institutions should be open to all the potential departments our skill set really falls into, say, in a global business school, exposing students to all the topics related to doing business globally (and arguably trying to stray away from all the acronyms our industry loves so much; they'll have plenty of time to pick those up later). Alternatively, programs in technical writing, user-centered design, marketing, supply chain logistics, and other fields could all afford to include a localization component in their curriculum. If we continue to be confined to our niche, I am nearly certain that in a decade there won't even be a formal education pathway anymore, and we'll go right back to the time when people just fell into this field by accident.

Certainly in the U.S., language programs overall have been fighting a battle of interest. Our industry is competing for attention, and (depending on how much stock you put into the reports), the attention spans of younger generations are not very long. That's why we should get out of our shells and push hard to get a seat in programs that offer more "fashionable" degrees with long-term viability, such as global business or information design. Exactly the kind of bridges we are building with our stakeholders. We've been so focused on making the case for this "localization thing" to the C-level for so long, and we've done a decent job of that. Now, we should do the same in approaching those who educated that C-suite executive in the first place.

I'll leave you with another question that is bigger than can be answered in one article: **What are we doing to embrace new talent, pull in interest from other areas of study, and bring it into our industry?**

It's rare for new talent to appear at traditional localization events uninvited. It's time we did something about that, too. Otherwise, I fear it'll just be us, the geeks and the language enthusiasts, who continue talking to ourselves in our echo chambers about fixing the (global) pipes when our stated „Transparency“ goal is to get everyone in every department to think global from day one.



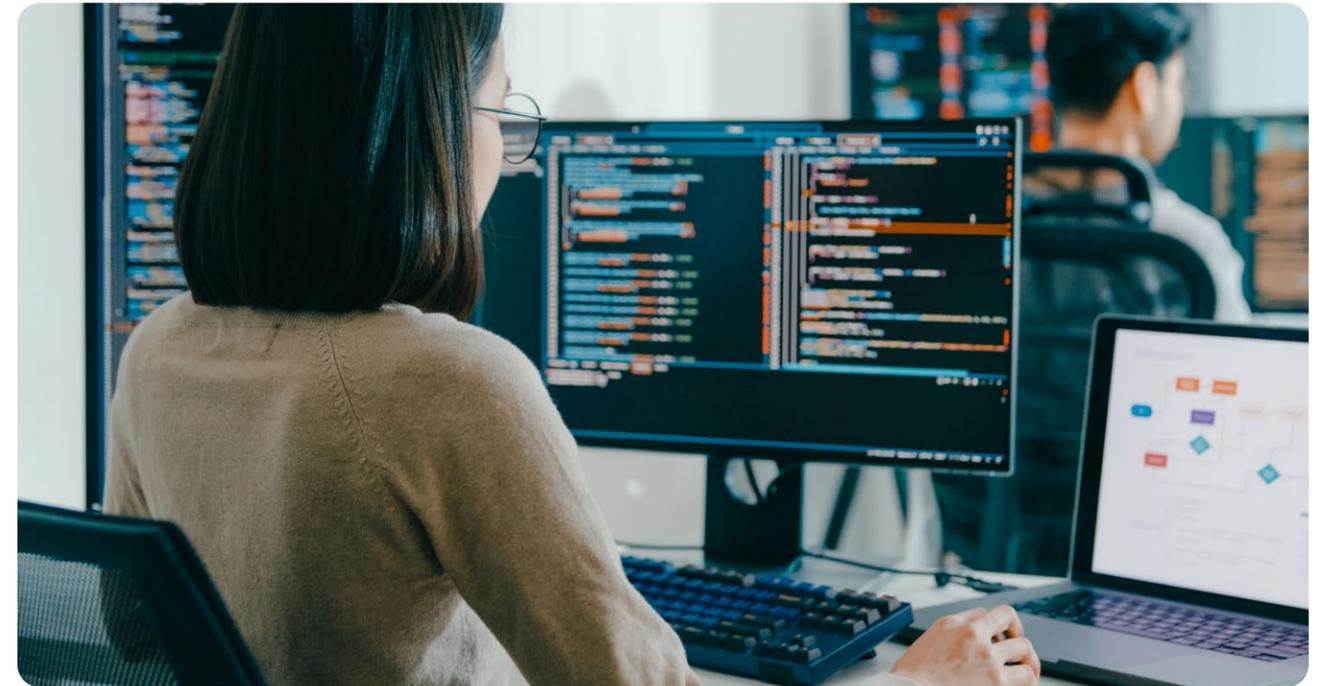
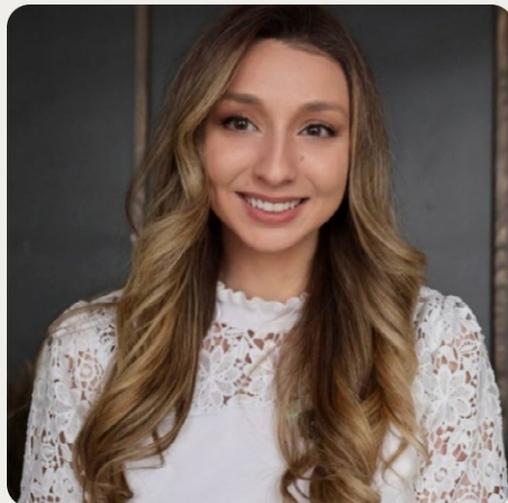
# Why Localization Is Now a Product Problem

**Veronica Hylak**

AI Product Strategist

Veronica Hylak is a product leader with 10 years of experience in software and six years in AI/ML. She has led product innovation for SaaS and AI platforms across Fortune 500s, U.S. government agencies, and early-stage startups, from autonomous drone systems to business management tools.

Her current focus lies at the intersection of go-to-market strategy, regulation, and AI ethics, helping organizations deploy reliable and responsible AI at scale while navigating real-world constraints.



When a product really wants to gain credibility or traction, whether it's a Silicon Valley startup or an established enterprise, there's a predictable moment of truth. They start thinking about expanding to new markets.

And when they do, what's the first thing on their checklist? Localization.

It has become the litmus test for platform maturity, the gateway to user trust, and the difference between scaling successfully or failing to gain traction globally. But something big has changed.

Localization is no longer a siloed industry workflow managed by specialty linguists behind the scenes. It has evolved into a core product problem that directly impacts user acquisition, sales conversion, and customer retention. Technical teams, product teams, marketing teams, and sales are all thinking about it. **Many companies now think about language access through the lens of user trust, not just translation coverage.**

## Translation as a feature, not a premium

Slator coined the term „Translation as a Feature“ (TaaF) to capture this mindset. Translation is no longer a premium service, but rather **it has become the bare minimum expectation for end users**. Open TikTok, Instagram, or any major social platform, and you'll see translation embedded everywhere. With over 5.24 billion active social media users globally spending an average of 2 hours and 21 minutes daily on these platforms, billions of people are constantly consuming localized content. These platforms have become the first way most global audiences interact with translation (even if the quality is junk), and this ubiquity has fundamentally altered user expectations.

**When users encounter an app or platform that doesn't speak their language, they don't see it as a company that hasn't invested in translation yet, but rather, they see it as a company that doesn't care about them.**

The data backs this up: According to a report by UserPilot, around **52% of users have uninstalled an app due to poor localization**. But that's not a translation problem. **That's a product problem.**

## The invisible industry problem

Despite the critical importance of localization, we face a massive awareness gap.

When most people outside our industry think about translation, what comes to mind first? Google Translate. Then ChatGPT.

The sophisticated ecosystem of translators, interpreters, localization engineers, and

cultural consultants remains largely invisible to the very people who need these services most. Startups, corporations, and product teams recognize the need to localize, but **many decision-makers don't know our industry exists.**

So they default to the tools they're familiar with (Google Translate or AI chatbots) for their first multilingual experiment. Plug in an API, and call it a day. The Chinese translation LOOKS correct, so it must be... right?

While they struggle with user conversion loss, the very people building these apps often lack awareness of professional localization services. They're solving a product problem with the wrong tools because they don't know better tools exist.

## The opportunity gap

This disconnect has created interesting market dynamics. We're seeing well-funded, Y Combinator-backed startups emerge promising to solve localization for developers (receiving backing, press coverage from TechCrunch, and accelerator support) without any team members who have localization industry experience.



They have a shallow understanding of how localization teams function, yet they're the ones capturing mindshare in the product and development community, as many believe it's a problem that has yet to be solved.

This isn't necessarily their fault, but rather it's a symptom of the broader disconnect between our industry and the product teams who desperately need our expertise. **We've remained behind the scenes while the problem we solve has become central to product success.**

## Localization is now the product manager's issue

Product managers and directors are responsible for figuring out what to build, how to build it, and ensuring it's sticky enough to retain users. **When localization becomes a barrier to product stickiness and to expanding to other markets, it automatically becomes the product team's problem to solve.**

The most forward-thinking product leaders are starting to recognize this.

They understand that localization isn't just about translating text, but building trust with users across cultures and markets. **It's about ensuring your product feels native, not foreign.** It's about creating experiences that convert users rather than confuse them.

What's particularly telling is that I am now seeing product managers themselves start championing localization best practices. As one product manager noted in a UserPilot article: "Mobile app localization isn't throwing your copy into Google Translate and calling it a day."

**These weren't the words of a linguist or localization specialist. They came from a product manager who recognized that poor localization was directly impacting the success of their product.** A product manager took it upon themselves to educate their fellow product community about the importance of quality localization.

## How we reframe the conversation

The solution isn't to lament our industry's invisibility, but rather to reposition ourselves within the product development conversation. Instead of talking about translation coverage, we need to talk about user trust and access. **Instead of discussing translation quality in isolation, we need to connect it directly to conversion rates and user retention. Instead of focusing on process workflows, we need to focus on product outcomes.**

Localization has become a product discipline, whether we acknowledge it or not. The question is whether we'll step into that role that we already know how to do so well, or continue watching tech companies attempt to solve these problems without us.

The companies that understand this shift, that treat localization as a core product capability rather than an afterthought, are the ones winning global markets. This is something we already know. They're not just translating their products, but they're building products that succeed across cultures from the ground up.

The only question is whether our industry will be part of building those solutions or watching from the sidelines as others attempt to solve them without us. I know which side I will choose.

# Who Comes Next? The Future Should Look Different

## Michael Levot

Head of Localization at Canva

Michael is Head of Localization at Canva, a graphic design platform available in over 100 languages and with more than 100 million LOTE users each month.



Here are three quick snapshots from Canva's localization team in Q2 2025:

1. We hired for a new senior localization role in a key market. The successful candidate's prior experience was in sales and product.
2. We kicked off a large-scale localization initiative. We used project templates (presentation decks, whiteboards) borrowed from our colleagues in UX design and content design.
3. We purchased two new software tools and engaged with two new agency partners. The software was for creative review and video dubbing, and the agency partners were production agencies.

The common thread of these snapshots is that they don't fit within (what I consider to be) the boundaries of the localization industry and craft. Talent,

playbooks, and partners you won't find in the buffet line at Monterey.

Another common thread from the above is that all of these things are in some way or another a response to internal pressures: an organization frustrated with the process-driven, efficiency-oriented, scale-obsessed approach of our localization team; stakeholders who speak their own dialect of growth and customer value; in-market teams who would rather take matters into their own hands — even at significant cost — than accept a centrally funded solution that limits their ability to tailor content to local nuances.

When I was asked to share my thoughts on "Who comes next?" and what the next crop of people driving localization will look like, my mind immediately went outside the boundaries of the language industry and the idea that these things and these people might play a bigger role in the future than they do today. The next generation

of localization leaders shouldn't be defined by deep specialization in tools or workflows. They should bring skills from marketing, growth, product, and research into our industry. This isn't a prediction. (I have enough trouble predicting the future at Canva, let alone the rest of the world.) It's an ambition. The future *should* look different.

Of *course* it should look different. Who looks at the current state of things and thinks "This is as it should be"?! The challenges are so familiar and ubiquitous that they've become too trite to repeat at any length. Our metrics don't measure what matters. Our stakeholders don't consider us strategic partners. Agencies are underpaying the talent. Repeat *ad infinitum*.

**So, in a moment when the vendor side is facing obliteration, and the buyer side is unhappy with their lot, why wouldn't we all take the opportunity to rethink the whole endeavor?**

At Canva, we piloted this shift by reallocating linguists' time. Rather than scoring thousands of randomly sampled strings, we now run **weekly qualitative audits of complete user journeys**. A native speaker signs up, publishes a design, upgrades to Canva Pro, and shares a template — exactly as a customer would. They flag moments of friction, cultural mismatch, or emotional dissonance that an MQM spreadsheet could never surface. Vendors still perform the bulk of quantitative checks, but our internal experts focus on the experience that actually moves revenue and retention.

This is not mere process tinkering; it is talent realignment. Suddenly the most

valuable localization skills look a lot like **product growth, UX research, and data storytelling**. In our upcoming Japan Localisation Lead role, "localization experience" appears fourth on the list — after cultural insight, product growth, and content strategy.

One uncomfortable hypothesis raised in our editorial brainstorm is that the industry's operating model is often shaped less by buyer needs than by **what vendors can sell at scale**. If your revenue comes from per-word production, you optimize for throughput; if you earn margin on QA, you preach the gospel of error categories and severity scores. Buyers may internalize those frameworks without questioning whether they map to user value.

**The next wave of leaders will flip that dynamic. They will start from the user's end-to-end experience, and then reverse-engineer the processes and partnerships required. They will measure fluency, delight, and conversion rather than error density. And they will buy services, not because those services fit a legacy RFP template, but because they accelerate the product's mission.**

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