

argos
multilingual

Global Ambitions

Meaning- Making



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With over 25 years at the intersection of language and technology, Jérôme has made it his mission to turn content globalization into a competitive edge for tech companies. From AI-powered workflows to CI/CD pipelines and enterprise TMS deployments, he brings both strategic clarity and technical depth. A trusted partner to leadership teams, he aligns product, engineering, and operations to build scalable language models that accelerate international growth and drive lasting business impact.



Chaos to Order, Sure. But Where to Start?

With the advent of large language models (LLMs), localization teams have access to a toolbox that simply didn't exist before. They now have tools that perform tasks faster and cheaper, and, in some cases, enable tasks that were once considered entirely out of reach (or ones you couldn't even imagine).

There's all this choice, and navigating the plethora of tools without any guiding principles is exactly the challenge most teams are now facing.

Where there may have been a semblance of order, until circa 2022, chaos can now run rampant.

In the land of plenty

I remember my early days in the industry when we were given sheets of paper and had to count words by hand to quote translation jobs. Although that now seems prehistoric, I have a more recent example too: Do you remember how fun it was to check a 500-page doc against your UI termbase for

consistency without a proper CAT tool, not to mention when UI changes were introduced in the middle of the project? Today, such tasks are manageable in a few clicks or with a well-thought-out prompt.

LLMs also make possible tasks that have been on your back burner for too long: terminology extraction and management, automatic tag fixing, MTQE, full MT for prototyping, to name a few. I mean, from a localization manager's perspective, what's not to like? This sounds too good to be true, and Procurement will be jumping all over the opportunity to slash vendor costs, or to negotiate much lower rates (so long, cost per word?).

There's a very legitimate question that emerges: Why do you need an LSP when an LLM can provide the same translation at almost zero cost? That argument sounds compelling until something goes wrong. Who owns the risk when problems appear, and who's in charge of fixing them? Language quality, market adaptation, brand integrity, how your localized product is perceived, and the message your



company wants to convey remain, in theory, something a brand would never compromise on.

This is not a sudden rupture: The mechanism that produces translated content has been evolving for decades. From human translators to translation memories to the various flavors of MT, culminating with neural models, and now AI, LSPs have historically assumed the linguistic and cultural risk of translation errors. Today, with companies resorting to AI for instantaneous translation in-house, there is no mechanism in place to absorb risks should something go wrong. AI makes risks invisible until they surface in production (or after you have shipped). Ask yourself this question: If an error is spotted (and yes, it needs to be spotted first), can anyone in the company defend, explain, and fix the LLM-generated output? If not, your workflow is faulty — and the LSP probably still justifies its place.

To ask for forgiveness or permission

As you start planning to implement LLMs in your workflows, is it better to ask for forgiveness or permission? At the current speed of innovation and under growing pressure from above, waiting appears to be a losing strategy. While you play the waiting game, perhaps in a bid to protect your legacy, others in the company are experimenting, iterating, and implementing prototypes. Similarly, blindly jumping into building a whole ecosystem of automation scripts without a clear roadmap is a surefire recipe for failure.

Localization blends language and technology, giving you all the legitimacy in the world to experiment on your own. Build microservices or small POCs for non-critical content, document them, and show KPIs like time-to-market, price comparisons, and degree of human intervention, until they are ready for full-scale production.

Jérôme Selinger on
permission vs. forgiveness

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Don't wait until they are ready to shout from the rooftops. Brag about them. Demonstrate how far up the learning curve you are and how you can scale up and down seamlessly while containing risk. Don't pitch ideas in yet another slide deck about potential AI work, asking for approval. Identifying, documenting, and talking about (loudly and repeatedly, if need be) potential pitfalls and benefits, and building governance give you this edge. That's the difference between localization being seen as a cost center asking for resources and localization as an integrated function demonstrating ROI it has already proven.

Strategic boots to grow into

But when it comes to owning and implementing this strategy, how do you move from a pure execution role to a strategic one? Honest answer: It can be a stretch. If leadership only hears from localization during budget reviews or issue escalations, the framing battle is probably already lost.

The human hurdle — visibility and credibility with leadership — will be the hardest to clear, but there is a way. The technological barrier is virtually nonexistent nowadays, and that's where you need to start. If you can demonstrate your team knows which models to use and how to train them with the right datasets, you're already plugged into the loop. AI is here to take time-consuming, repetitive tasks off your plate, freeing you to develop new skills and adjust your language from "price per word," "language quality," or "TM savings" to "international client retention," "Net Promoter Score," and "global expansion".

The teams that show up with an AI adoption roadmap, a quality framework, and governance proposals are seen as assets. Teams that show up defending the

status quo are seen as obstacles that invite removal. At the same time, be pragmatic enough to recognize that not all content types need to be processed the same way. Some can be fully automated; others require and deserve the highest human-authored quality. Tier your product portfolio between high-visibility material with the highest ROI, and material that can be bulk-translated at low cost with limited risk. Do this — yes, it's a lot — and visibility and credibility will take care of itself. Stepping up and showcasing your strategy, including KPIs, dashboards, and cross-functional relationships with Sales, Product, Engineering, etc., will be the final step that cements your role as the company's internal language AI consultant.

The risk of not reaching a position where you can influence strategy leads to a different problem: shadow localization. Most content platforms offer automatic translation features directly embedded in different tools: in your code repository, in your CMS, or in your publishing platform. Anyone outside your team can and will use AI to solve a translation problem without understanding concepts like text expansion, right-to-left handling, legal or regulatory phrasing, or cultural connotation, and will ship the result before you even hear about it.

I once encountered an engineer who put together a prototype that utilized API calls to an LLM to translate UI terms for "building purposes" only. That's one small step from becoming a feature one day pushed to production. So my team rebuilt the solution with RAG feeding curated product documentation and selected TMs into an LLM to pre-translate UI strings with 70% confidence. That reset the table, with my team gaining ownership over the initiative. Of course, software engineers using Google Translate to localize build strings at the last minute is a tale as old as time. How many times have you fixed them? As overconfidence grows with AI usage, this can only gain momentum. A localization

team, with expertise in international markets, language, and cultural adaptation, has all the legitimacy it needs to be in charge of deciding if and when LLM-generated content is a good fit for the company's products and needs.

But what if the situation has already slipped out of your hands? How can you make a difference? This kind of fight takes a lot of energy, particularly if decisions have already been made without you. If shadow localization is a reality in your company, you can still make a difference by auditing what's in place, recognizing what works, qualifying risk, documenting errors and pitfalls, and suggesting fixes or alternative workflows and solutions.

Come to think of it, localization teams have historically been the last piece of the puzzle, quietly absorbing linguistic errors and engineering mistakes. That hidden value has been invisible for too long — now is the time to document and surface it. Expose the iceberg, without judgment. Showing

your value as a center of excellence can change how you are perceived: The people who know how to deploy AI in their domain without breaking things. You're an enabler, not a blocker.

Some in our industry are still fighting the wrong battle, pointing at obvious AI errors as proof that the technology isn't ready for prime time. But attention is running low. Some companies have already decided that AI delivers good-enough localization, and the assumption is that the quality bar will only keep rising.

The real question isn't whether AI can do the translation job. It's whether anyone in the room will know what to do next when something breaks, when a market reacts badly, or when a product ships with strings no one reviewed. That's your added value, and your seat at the table. Don't show what value you bring to the company. Show what the company would lose without you.



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It's a Trap! Or Why Coming Up With the Name Is the Easy Half of the Job

A year ago, I published "[Goodbye Localization, Hello Global Experiences](#)" on LinkedIn. The argument was that the label most of us grew up under (translation, localization, etc.) undersells what we do and makes it easy for the business to file us under a cost center rather than a growth driver.

The online response was generous. The message resonated, but the part that touched my heart — and I won't lie, really made me proud — was the fellow localization managers who reached out privately, or found me at a conference, to say they'd walked the same path. About fifteen had already renamed their teams: Global Experience, International Experience, Multilingual Experience, and so on. Different words, same instinct.

It's a strange kind of validation, watching people you've never met arrive at the same conclusion on their own. But beneath the pride, I also felt unease creep in, because I suspected a good number of them stopped at the name. They changed the sign on the door, felt the relief of finally

being called something that sounds better, and left it there.

But that's the trap! *[ndlr: We may have channeled the immortal words of Admiral Ackbar during the editing of this article.]*

To be clear, renaming your function is fine, and I still think it matters. But believing the new name does all the work is where things can go sideways. Nobody hands you authority or budget because you tweaked the org chart. What goes into your year-end performance review is what the function actually delivered. If my original LinkedIn piece put too much weight on the name and not enough on the outcomes, that's on me. I'll try to fix it here.

Outcomes, outcomes, outcomes

Coming up with the name for the work is the easy half of the job. Changing the way you go about it is more difficult. I can already picture you skimming the page — you know what's coming:

Outcomes, not outputs.

Stop talking about words and start talking about impact.

“Yes, yes, we know, Jose, every other self-appointed guru is saying this left and right. Now tell us something useful.”

Fair. I get it. We've become numb to the idea by sheer repetition. But I think that's only because most people preaching it stopped at the surface, or never went deep enough into an actual business to know what it means in practice.

Picture a localization team supporting multilingual documentation. They take the user guides, the help center, the release notes, and make them work in every market the company sells into. Measured the usual way, this is how the story goes (very succinctly): Words out the door, turnaround met, and to the people who set budgets, all of it reads as cost.

The tired advice tells the team to prove its impact: Watch the support tickets and the analytics, and when something spikes in a market, go fix the content and claim the win. Better than nothing, eh? But in this version of the story, you're waiting for the problem to surface, which can depend on someone happening to look the right way on the right day. Most days, nobody does.

Do the moonwalk (or work backward)

Here's my advice: Pick one problem and work backward, making yourself really useful at solving it.

For example, imagine your company runs an event across EMEA. The obvious move would be to pitch the executive who owns the events budget on full localization everywhere. The number comes out at

\$90,000, and they politely pass because they don't have the bandwidth and, to them, the money is better spent elsewhere. You leave with a thank you and not much else.

Now watch it work a different way: You find the sales leader in Germany whose quarter depends on the success of the Munich event. You don't ask them for budget. You offer to take something off their plate: Sharper pre-event outreach in German. A follow-up webinar that keeps the room warm after the keynote. An opening video with local footage, dubbed properly, so the American speaker earns some trust before he opens his mouth. You handle the complexity. They support it and take the credit.

All you ask in return is that someone tracks whether it worked, against a number they already report on: registrations, pipeline, satisfaction, conversion. Link one activity to one metric, and you've got a return. Make one leader look good, and you've got a business case. Get a few on board, and you can walk into their VP's office and say with confidence: “We spent this much to drive that outcome, and here's what a full regional investment returns.”

You only have two levers to pull: Growth to accelerate, Risk to mitigate. Everything you do should visibly move one of them, in numbers the business already tracks. Do that consistently, and the name stops mattering.

Nobody questions a function that keeps turning up in the pipeline report, the three-year product roadmap, or the compliance review. You need to see and conduct yourselves like a quota-carrying team, just like Sales does. Listen to your company's strategy and align on the big picture (if you don't know what's different at your company from Q2 to Q4, you're being tactical, not strategic), but when it comes to building your plan, go deep into each function. Talk to the stakeholders whose success depends on regional experiences,

Jose Palomares on how small work stops being small

"It's all about building your reputation by making others successful. You promote their wins directly and indirectly, and you de-risk scenarios they weren't even aware of. And you do it in a non-intrusive way — you are an enabler. Once word gets out that you create value and ask for nothing in return other than metrics and visibility, goodness will propagate through the chain of stakeholders."

and work backward from there to define your quota with target numbers. Whether it is more leads, accelerating go-to-market, increasing adoption, or enabling compliance. Everything you do, every cent you spend, must support hitting that numerical quota.

No such thing as small wins

Now the sharpest objection, the one I keep chewing on myself: Aren't activities like the ones I suggested too small to matter?

It's all about building your reputation by making others successful. You promote their wins directly and indirectly, and you de-risk scenarios they weren't even aware of. And you do it in a non-intrusive way — you are an enabler. Once word gets out that you create value and ask for nothing in return other than metrics and visibility, goodness will propagate through the chain of stakeholders, each of whom got a win they can point to and who opens the next door for you. Do it enough times, and the small work stops being small.

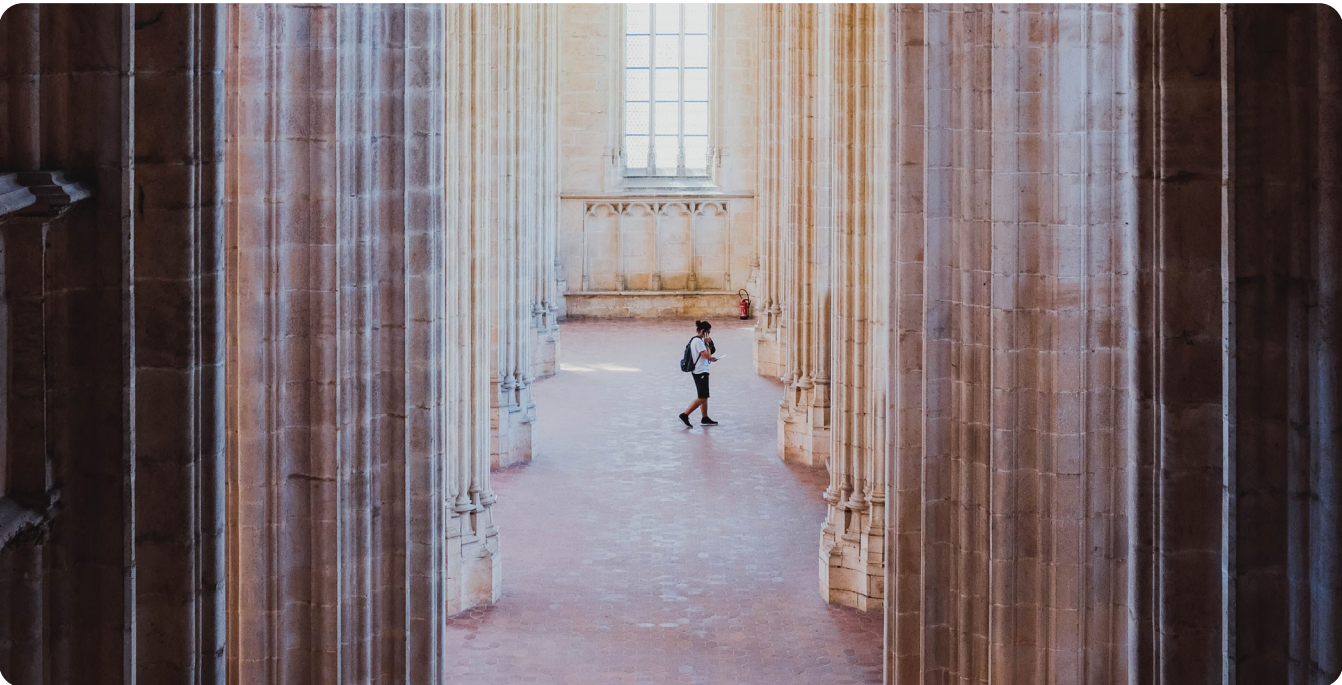
None of this is glamorous. Working on one initiative at a time is slow, can be very hands-on, and it can feel too small for the ambition you (secretly) harbor. That's exactly why you must lean on AI. AI gives you range and speed, so a team your size can place far more of these small bets than it ever could before. You start to lead with “Yes, we can do that with AI,” while keeping all efforts clearly aligned with a roadmap. It just doesn't need to be a “global” roadmap all the time. Keep a clear view of where multilingual features and language access are heading across the whole business, and let that vision decide which experiences are worth the surgical effort. You work two axes at once: The big (global) picture that sets direction, and the ground-level wins that prove it and pay for it, one stakeholder at a time.

The hard part for us localization folks has always been getting into the room where it counts. To get a seat at the table, you need to offer something the table actually wants. AI is the entry ticket that turns the “translation people” into the “multilingual AI experts”. Wearing this new cape, you can try things fast and cheap, tackle a problem from multiple angles and using different tools, and help other leaders deliver on the "we have to use AI" mandate just by partnering with you. Machine/AI translation, task automation, style and terminology checking, automatic QA... they're all forms of AI that will impress your peers if you sell them well. Can't build them? Sure, your vendors can help with that. So you can walk into almost any problem and say, plainly, “We can try that, with AI, and in this quarter.” You carry the hard part. The stakeholder backs you, checking the box they're under pressure to check, and takes the win. Call this your master key into those rooms you covet.

This persistent thing we call complexity

Which brings me to the question I find most uncomfortable: Has the job actually gotten easier with AI?

Machine translation gave us scale but remained “pro-only”. Now, general AI appears to remove the job entirely, and that's more dangerous because it isn't true. Fluency at the sentence level is mostly solved, but that was never where our work and expertise resided. It lives in the judgment an AI model can't make on its own: Whether we're being tone-deaf for a given audience, or whether a term means something different in a regulated market than it does over a coffee chat between developers. It lives in the technical seams, where content flows back and forth between repositories, translation layers, and delivery surfaces. And it lives in scale, where going from three languages to nine to twenty-



seven doesn't get three or nine times harder. It compounds in ways that break processes nobody stress-tested past language six.

AI solves many problems. What it cannot solve is running a mature multi-market operation: Deciding who gets the final say, knowing the context a model has no access to, and meeting rules that change in every market you sell into. None of that is new. It was always there, hidden behind translation, because translation took all the attention and all the budget. Now machines handle the words well enough, and everything else is out in the open.

That work is what you offer to take on, and it's why the master key cuts. Anyone can run a prompt. Very few people can tell a stakeholder which parts to trust the machine with and which parts will cost them a market. The job didn't get easier. It got more valuable, provided you're willing to lead with the hard part.

So, go ahead and rename the function. A sharper name might even get you the first conversation you wouldn't have had otherwise. Just don't expect it to get you more than that. The work ahead of you is walking into a problem the business already cares about, holding a key to solve it, and offering to carry the complexity so someone else can take the win. Do it enough times, and the name takes care of itself. Use your “higher-than-average” AI knowledge as your badge and your surgical, results-oriented, fail-fast focus as your differentiator. It's an evolution, not a rebranding.

Meaning

Noun /'mē-nɪŋ/

1. a: the thing one intends to convey especially by language
b: the thing that is conveyed especially by language
2. something meant or intended
3. significant quality
especially: implication of a hidden or special significance
4. a: the logical connotation of a word or phrase
b: the logical denotation or extension of a word or phrase

*As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary