Offering incisive and scalable localization solutions for eCOA systems through process and technology integrations

A Case Study

The Case

Our customer offers solutions that help digitally enable clinical trials. Their solutions cover Patient Engagement, Randomization & Trial Supply Management, Virtual Monitoring, Electronic Clinical Outcome Assessment (eCOA) Data Collection and Data Analytics. Working with clinical trial Sponsors, most of whom are top pharmaceutical companies, their processes are complex and broad and their quality standards specific and high.

Our collaboration with the customer dates back to their earlier days, in 2013, and has progressively grown to cover the language needs for their eCOA solution, namely for trials related to the field of neurology.

We have traditionally been providing various services to them, including:
- translation/editing/proofreading
- subtitling – and, more recently, voice over
- legacy translation migration from paper to digital – and, more recently, linguistic validation
- software localization & linguistic validation

for content types such as:
- Rater training materials & various site documents
- videos
- scales
- eCOA software strings

respectively.

The Challenge

During the first years of working with the customer, our work was limited to a specific language set (on a regional level) for each of their projects, and the language service workflows were built, maintained and led by the customer.

Offering incisive and scalable localization solutions for eCOA systems

Such a set up provided us with little visibility of:

- where the content for translation/localization comes from and which native systems are being used for different types of content
- what processing is involved on the customer side and how that impacts customer budget and project timelines
- how and how often linguistic assets are being updated/maintained
- the extent to which existing processes and workflows best serve the customer's needs, standards and business goals.

Currently covering:

- ❖ 167 language combinations
- ❖ 89 languages/locales

Service offerings include:

- ❖ translation/editing/proofreading
- ❖ subtitling
- ❖ voice over and audio integration
- ❖ legacy translation migration from paper to digital
- ❖ linguistic validation
- ❖ software localization & linguistic validation

Despite our poor visibility of the above, it was certain that such a localization approach is one that requires significant investment of time, effort and resources on the customer side, which is tough to maintain when the business starts to scale up.

When this came about for our customer, in the form of a merger and subsequent rapid growth, we were eager to help tackle the challenges together and grow our collaboration in a more holistic way.

In addition to gaining insights into the points listed above, further challenges included the following:

- Customer business transformation and growth leading to increased needs for more and more efficient services
- Rigid legacy workflows that were process-heavy, resource-demanding and resistant to change
- Extensive involvement of customer internal teams in various phases of the project lifecycles, with impact on customer budget and project timelines, and leaving little room for workflow improvements
- Fragmented linguistic asset (translation memories, glossaries/termbases) creation and management that frequently led to long and far from error-proof QA rounds
- Growing list of target languages/locales, alongside the inconsistent quality outcomes for different language/locale sets, given the customer's regional-level language service provider collaboration scheme.

The Approach

Having built a long and trusting relationship with the customer, and seeing them enter a transformative journey internally, we brought forward a dialogue that allowed us to dive deeper into the inner works of the customer side:

- their processes and full project lifecycles,
- the workflows of their in-house language management teams,
- their internal systems and tech stack.

And this deep dive was exciting and, most importantly, it was fruitful!

It allowed us to map out the full spectrum of what is involved in each project type on the customer side, put the pieces together as to how and where our work fits within and among the customer's internal processes, and plan out process and technology integrations with a focus on:

- filling-in process gaps,
- eliminating process waste,
- establishing efficiencies and optimizations,
- lifting burden off our customer's shoulders.

Here is what we implemented:

- Pre-translation source file processing got incorporated into our workflow for most project types, including subtitles and paper-to-digital scale migration projects.
- For the latter, we developed a custom app to extract and import back translatable content for the native e-scale files, a step the customer used to handle manually on their side.
- Creation and maintenance of linguistic assets was entrusted to us, while the customer withholds access to them at all times via our translation environment.
- Collaboration on managing paper scale-derived assets (translation memories from paper scale alignment) was implemented through an online library we created and share with the customer, for cost and effort savings across all project types that involve paper scales and paper scale references.
- Customer review work got incorporated into our translation environment for optimized edit tracking and version control, eliminating file back and forth efforts and time-consuming file management activities on both sides, across all project types.
- Flexibility towards adapting to the customer's internal business transformation initiatives has been immediate and we are in tight collaboration with the customer for ongoing workflow improvements and new workflow setup.
- Response to ramp-up requirements, in order to cater for:
  - frequent volume spikes,
  - extended locale targeting, aiming to unify processes & achieve consistent quality across all locales, and
  - new service needs

  is rapid through proactive account & resource planning on our side.
- Regular touchpoints with stakeholders on the customer side are established for transparent project updates & reviews, continuous process improvements and feedback sharing.

The Outcome

Through the fruitful dialogue and the actions that followed, we grew our collaboration with the customer in a meaningful and effective way that brought us closer to our vision for this account:

To be a reliable partner of choice for them, a powerful extension of their internal team, who provides them with comprehensive and efficient language solutions that meet their needs and meaningfully support the achievement of their business goals, all that through an effective blend of people, technology and processes.

Our goals moving forward are to continue driving our efforts towards this vision, keep the dialogue open for ongoing optimizations and joint exploration/deployment of further process and technology integrations, and future-proof the customer's language management activities for years (and challenges) to come.