



# Global-ready growth: The Lokalise guide to unlocking international revenue



Obviously, we're biased. We'll go right ahead and ruin the surprise by telling you that we think localization-powered international expansion is an important consideration for any organization's growth plans. We'll discuss that in detail later, but our main focus is on all the other important pieces that can contribute to completing your international expansion jigsaw. Throughout this guide, we'll give real-life examples of how other ambitious companies have successfully implemented their strategies.

We'll take you through:

- How to explore new avenues for growth
- How to plan and implement a global expansion plan
- The role localization plays in any expansion plan

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# 1. Exploring new avenues for growth

If your business isn't growing, it's standing still. Businesses that stand still don't last long. Just ask Blockbuster Video. Technology advances, customer preferences change, and there will always be a competitor waiting in the wings to steal your market share. This is why constant exploration of new avenues for growth is a must for any business.

There are any number of growth models you can try and map your organization to. You've got your Ansoff Matrix, BCG Growth-Share Matrix, or Hambrick and Fredrickson's Strategy Diamond, all of which are well documented, discussed, and used by organizations the world over. But if the fear of getting lost in all those matrices is too daunting, take a look at *The Alchemy of Growth: Practical Insights for Building the Enduring Enterprise*, written by three McKinsey consultants: Mehrdad Baghai, Steve Coley, and David White.

It acts as a practical guide to jumpstarting expansion and keeping it going: "Growth is a noble pursuit. It creates new jobs for the community and wealth for shareholders. It can turn ordinary companies into stimulating environments where employees find a sense of purpose in their work," they write. "Growth's transformative power is akin to the alchemy of old." The book is less academic and more practical, and has a focus on constant innovation.

It also provides a starting point for those of you who find yourselves sitting at your desk looking at a Google Doc titled "Growth Plan" for hours on end. The Seven

Degrees of Freedom of Growth provide a framework intended to help businesses broaden their horizons. The seven degrees are:

- Selling existing products to existing customers
- Acquiring new customers in existing markets
- Creating new products and services
- Developing new value-delivery approaches
- Moving into new geographies
- Creating a new industry structure
- Opening up new competitive arenas

Take an hour and examine your business in terms of each of these points; it should give you a much better idea of the growth path your business is best equipped to take. Let’s take Notion, the popular note-taking and project management tool, as an example to see how this exercise might look for them:

<b>Notion growth brainstorm</b>	
<b>Growth degree</b>	<b>Idea</b>
Selling existing products to existing customers	We know we have users of our free Personal plan using Notion to manage their personal lives. Let’s target those who have registered with a company email address to upgrade to our Team plan for use in their professional lives.
Acquiring new customers in existing markets	We can target the same cohort by offering them a free Personal Pro plan, if they encourage use within their organization by inviting 5 users to try the Team plan.
Creating new products and services	Airtable is increasing in popularity – we could develop a table-based view to decrease users lost to Airtable.
Developing new value-delivery approaches	Let’s explore new sales channels through partner programs and consults.

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Moving into new geographies	<a href="#">Our expansion to Japan</a> was a massive success. Using the same model, let's run some growth experiments in Korea, where we already have a large number of customers.
Creating a new industry structure	A partnership with Slack, packaging the two tools for a reduced price, could be mutually beneficial.
Opening up new competitive arenas	Let's target universities by offering a reduced price to academics and students. This could encourage stickiness among the next generation of tech employees.

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Whichever model you choose, the one thing they all agree on is that a focus on growth, innovation, and new opportunities is what separates the winners from the also-rans, the Netflixs from the Blockbuster Videos.

## **Establishing your growth horizons**

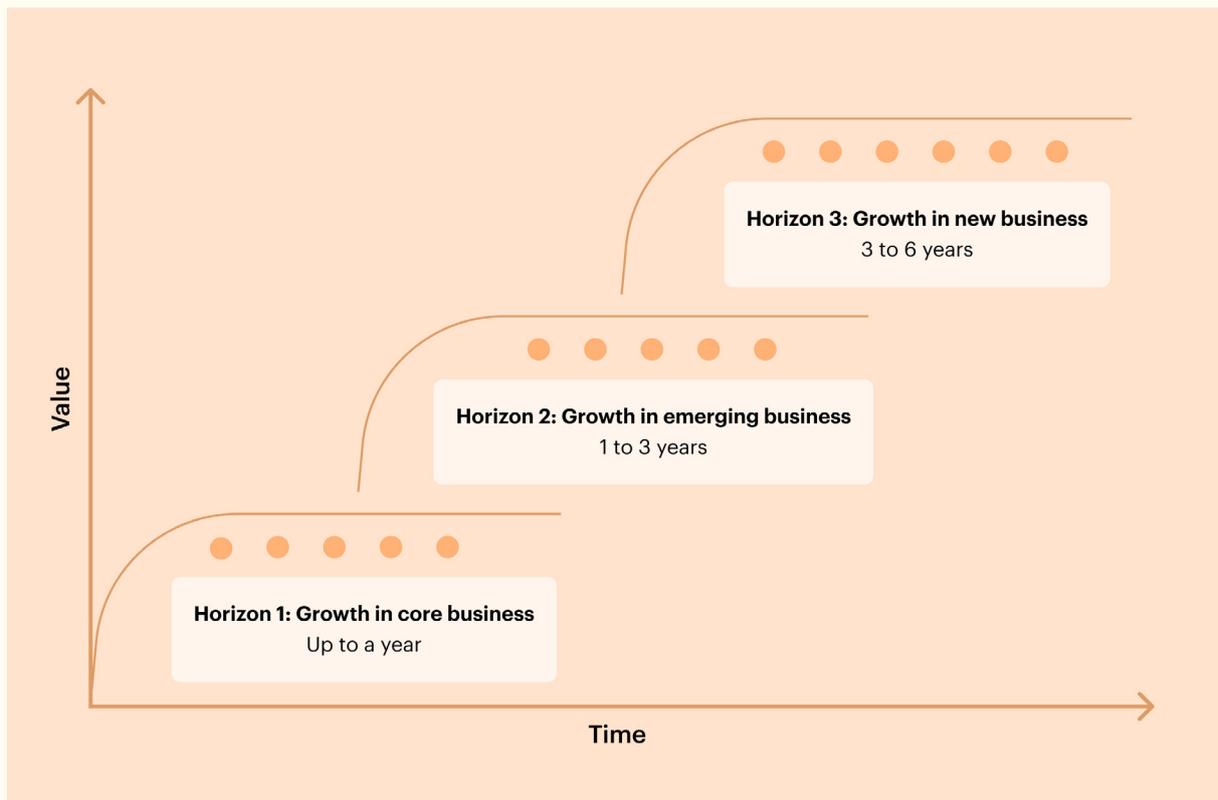
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Growth isn't something you decide to do one day. It should be a constant focus and be reflected in all of your annual and quarterly plans. Our friends Baghai, Coley, and White suggest a simple way of framing this — the three horizons framework. The horizons are not completed concurrently. You should have an eye on all three simultaneously, and reflect on and revise as needed at each of your annual, half-yearly, or quarterly planning sessions.

We asked Nick Ustinov, our Founder and CEO, how he keeps track of growth ideas. He has a Keep note open in the same tab as his calendar with the headings:

- This year
- 1–3 years
- 3–6 years

He enters ideas under these headings as they arise, narrows them down in November, and discusses them with our management team at the Q4 quarterly offsite.



## Horizon 1: Maintaining core business (up to 1 year)

These are opportunities associated with your core business and the ones to which any scale-up should be dedicating most of their capital and focus. These are the activities that are right under your nose and that you have the most power to influence, like improving internal processes, increasing efficiency, and attracting new customers. On a practical level, these could include:

- Automating tasks such as lead nurturing with Marketo or HubSpot
- Implementing workflow tools like Asana or Jira to improve how your team collaborates
- Adopting asynchronous communication
- Decreasing the number and improving the efficiency of meetings. We have two designated no meeting days a week.

## Horizon 2: Extending the existing business (1–3 years)

Horizon 2 ideas extend a company's existing business model and core capabilities

to new customers, markets, and targets. Selling new products to existing customers or finding new customers for existing products are vital growth tactics for any ambitious business.

Intercom is a company that has done this really well. What started as a tool for support teams benefited from being split into separate, but integrated, products. This allowed them to find new customers among onboarding and marketing teams, while offering these new products to existing customers. You could do this by:

- Analyzing your customer list and interviewing them for clues concerning new products or features to make their lives easier. This has contributed to our development of a new product for companies that wish to provide multilingual support but don't have the resources to hire a multilingual team.
- Expanding to new geographic markets. We'll be discussing this in detail in chapter 2.

### **Horizon 3: Creating new business opportunities (3–6 years)**

This is the place for your moonshots, for the gambles outside of your existing business. These are often the realization of your company's vision, or they could be side tools which take on a life of their own. Consider Uber's move into food delivery or Square's pivot to B2C with Cash App. Lokalise started life this way, as a tool developed by our founders to solve the localization problems they faced while running another company. Consider:

- Identifying skills and resources in your team that could be applied to other ventures
- Monetizing side tools built internally

## **Equipping your business for global-ready growth**

Having an awareness of your business's potential from the outset will enable you to make decisions with long-term effects and not just those that will have short-term

benefits. And your business, no matter what field it's in, has the potential for global expansion.

The ease of doing business across borders, due to favorable regulatory environments and increasingly distributed workforces, now means that global commerce is no longer reserved for the few. It's an opportunity waiting to be tapped. Equipping yourself for this global-ready growth, particularly in the areas of product, platform, and people, will ease progression through your horizons at a far greater pace.

## **Product**

Having a global-ready product means developing it in such a way that it's easy to adapt and customize to the needs of new markets. Agility is key. One of the most common elements you'll need to prepare to localize is your pricing. Once you understand the cultural nuances of a new market, you may realize that you'll need to:

- Offer pricing in local currency
- Change payment terms from monthly to annual or vice-versa
- Include or exclude certain features from pricing plans

## **Platform**

Take the scalability of your platform into account from day one. You must always ask yourself: will the platform we're developing be able to handle double the number of requests? What if demand becomes 10 times greater? 20 times? If not, you'll spend time that should go into improving your platform and developing new features on servicing it to maintain an acceptable level of performance.

For example, if you're running an ecommerce store, you need to make sure your platform can withstand the now annual onslaughts of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. An inability to do this could lead to very unhappy customers.

## People

Implementing more flexible, horizontal org structures with a diverse, multinational workforce will help on two fronts. Your team will be empowered to make growth plays without waiting on decisions from the board. And instead of relying on consultants, you'll have a team of in-house experts who can advise on the best way of doing business with their home countries.

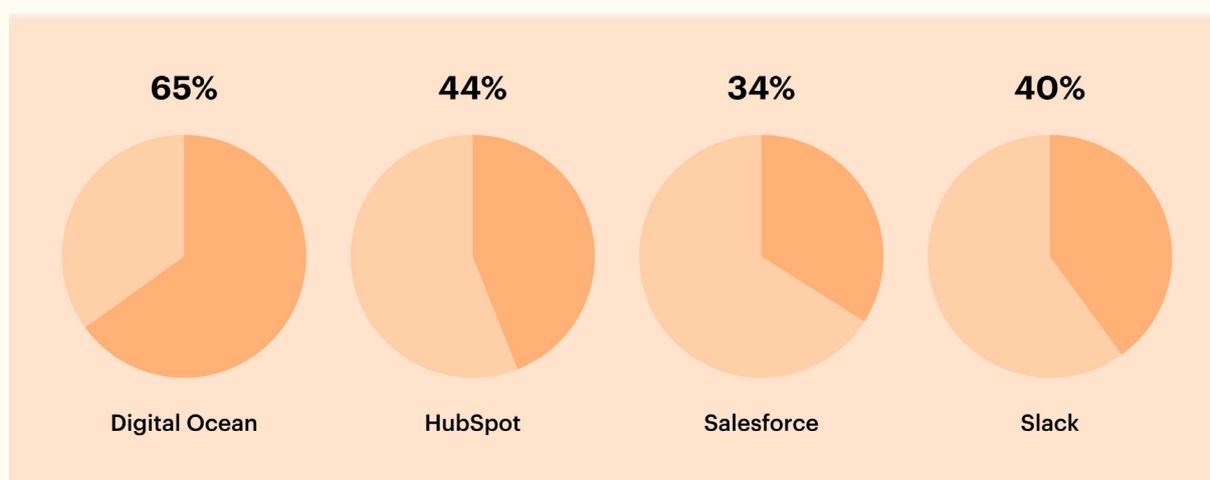
Focusing on your Horizon 3 goals, particularly those related to expansion, from the outset allows you to build agility into every facet of your organization

For example, if you're running an ecommerce store, you need to make sure your platform can withstand the now annual onslaughts of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. An inability to do this could lead to very unhappy customers.

## 2. Planning and implementing your international expansion

For any ambitious company, international expansion shouldn't be an "if", it should be a "when". It's one of the most efficient ways to grow your customer base. In a survey, [41% of tech CEOs](#) stated that international expansion was part of their strategic growth planning, with [44%](#) highlighting new customer acquisition as the main reason for this. By stopping your growth at the border of your home country, you're leaving money on the table.

Most leading SaaS companies generate a significant portion of their revenue from [outside their home markets](#). The pie charts below show the percentage of total revenue generated from countries outside the home base of 4 of the world's biggest tech companies:



But it's not just about revenue, depending on your business, there are multiple goals you can accomplish with your international expansion plans including:

- Capturing market share
- Expanding sales presence
- Diversifying investments
- Increasing ability to acquire top talent

- Reducing costs
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Adding an in-country employee near a customer or client

Research from [Globalization Partners and CFO Research](#) shows that the reasons for international expansion vary. While the top-cited reason among 166 senior executives was capturing market share, the desire to expand sales, diversify investments, and acquire top talent were also listed.

In line with the growth horizons mentioned above, our advice would be to start planning your international expansion before you need to do it. It most comfortably fits into Horizon 2, i.e., those 1–3 year-plans geared towards extending your existing business.

## **Phase 1: Preparing to go global**

Regardless of whether you're expanding your ecommerce site to a new geography, offering your app in a new language, or trying to expand your product's customer base, the foundations of your international success will be built at the planning stages. This is something you'll never have time for so you must make the time, deprioritize some short-term projects to ensure the long-term growth of your business.

A well-thought-out market entry strategy allows you to consider all the variables so you can minimize the appearance of the one thing we all hate – surprises. You probably considered a lot of these factors before starting your business, now is the time to reconsider them. Actioning on differences that exist between these and your home market can support smooth entry into new markets and help forge a strong connection with all of your new prospects and customers.

### **Identify a market with a need**

The obvious place to start your market selection process is looking at your existing

data for early signs of interest and usage information, [just like Slack do](#):

“We also do quantitative research in partnership with analytics, which gives us a window into the current and historical Slack usage for a region. This helps us look for areas in the product experience where customers may be meeting friction or running into issues.”



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Look at the country-level data to answer the following:

- Where are you seeing traction?
- Where are people signing up?
- Where are they trialing but maybe not converting?
- What is your average order value in those countries?
- Do customers in some countries have a higher lifetime value?

Use these indicators to get a general sense of where you should take a deeper dive and measure the broader opportunity. Pay less attention to top of funnel metrics like traffic volume, and look more closely at metrics that directly impact revenue such as closed won leads.

## Conduct market research

You have a market, you know the value of the opportunity, now you need to understand your potential new customers.

To do this, plan to conduct interviews, send out surveys, read competitors' customer reviews, and spend time in your new customers' online communities. Find these reviews on places like G2, Capterra, Reddit, or LinkedIn. The more you can learn about the people who are going to support your business, the better.

Look for details like their preferred language and dialect, how they feel about current offerings in their area, and if anything is missing from what the competition offers. Also, look for what you can incorporate to set your business apart from the competition. Slack provide details of how they go about this [in a recent post](#):

“Before starting localization in a particular market, we do background research to better understand our customers and their needs. This research takes multiple forms. We talk directly with our local customers who tell us how Slack is working for them today and how it could be better in the future. We collaborate with qualitative research to understand the important features that shape the workplace in a region, from technology trends to relevant policy, to environmental factors, and more. Sometimes we conduct formal in-country user research where we meet with people directly and learn about their working lives.”



**“Before starting localization in a particular market, we do background research to better understand our customers and their needs.”**

This market research phase may seem obvious, but it's too easy to take too much about your business for granted. If you make too many assumptions about customer needs in the new market, there's going to be a disconnect between what you're offering and what the market needs.

The more you consider local perspectives, the more likely you are to find success among your new customer base.

## **Assess internal capabilities**

Once you've figured out what's important to your target demographic in the new market based on market research and customer reviews, look at how best your business is suited to enter the market and serve those new customers.

Ask questions like:

- What systems do you have in place that can be easily adjusted to fit the new market?
- Do you need to create new systems?
- What does our business need to do to survive in this market? Did we discover any unmet needs during the research phase? Can we adapt our product or service to meet this unmet need?
- What are the regulatory requirements we need to consider? Do we need different insurance? What taxes do we need to charge?

These questions help you understand the extent of your market entry process. Your answers allow you to focus on the right areas within your business that may need to be changed or customized. For example, you may need to find a new local supply chain to reduce costs or create specific offers or products tailored to local preferences.

This step can also help you understand the cost of entering the new market and what the ROI would need to be for it to be a profitable endeavor.

## Other considerations



### Language

[78% of people](#) are more likely to purchase from an online store that speaks their language. To successfully expand into new markets, your website, product, and content must be available in the new customers' languages.



### Payments

Unless you're expanding within a specific region that already uses the same currency (like most of the EU), you'll have to navigate fluctuating exchange rates and different payment preferences. Prior consideration will help you identify the most common form of payment, support those payment types, and lock in currency rates for deals and pricing. Stripe has [a great guide](#) to choosing the right payment methods.



### Brand recognition

Does your target market know who you are? If not, make sure to factor in making adjustments to your brand and messaging to improve their appeal among different cultures.



### Compliance

Every market has different rules and regulations when it comes to doing business. Whether that's privacy and data collection rules, like GDPR in the EU, tax codes, licenses, or employee benefits. You'll need to be well-versed in the legal implications of your international expansion. Use the [ease of doing business](#) rankings created by the World Bank to get a general sense of this for each country.



### Staffing

When taking your first steps into a market, you can do so remotely. But, as you build a customer base, you'll need a team on the ground that understands the nuances of that market, either because they're in situ or have experience in dealings there. People buy from people, no matter what you're selling, and buyers like to deal with people who understand them.

## **Phase 2: Market entry strategy**

Now that you've considered some of the main points that may affect your decision to expand and decided to go for it, it's strategy time. There's no one-size-fits-all approach, but a good market entry strategy usually involves:

- Market profile
- Target customer and channel strategy
- Resource allocation
- Product offerings
- Brand positioning
- Operational considerations

As you keep in mind the results of your market research, here are the two essential elements to consider to put yourself on the path to clarity.

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### Decide on your objectives

If you do not heed any other piece of advice from this guide, please heed this: set clear goals and track them weekly.

Examples of goals include:

- Accelerating the company’s growth rate
- Preventing competitors from capturing market share
- Capitalizing on existing market demand signals
- Reducing costs by setting up in cheaper markets

While your goal will likely fall into one of those buckets, it needs to be more specific for you to be able to form a strategy and tactics around it.

### NiceApp KPI Update

Week 28th Nov – 3rd Dec

Standard colors ● ● ●

		KPIs	Weekly target	This week	Last week	Status
Top of funnel	DC	#visitors blog	XX	XXX (-1.5%)	XXX (-1%)	●
		#visitors website	XX	XX (+0.2%)	XXX (-7%)	●
		#visitors Chrome Store	XX	XX (+13.7%)	XXX (-9%)	●
Sales	BC	#demos requested	XX	XX (+13.7%)	XXX (-9%)	●
		#demos complete	XX	XX (+10.1%)	XXX (-3.3%)	●
		#accounts closed	XX	XX (+13.7%)	XXX (-5%)	●
		#users closed	XX	XX (-5%)	XXX (-5%)	●
Prod.	BV	#PR closed	XX	XX (-)	XXX (+8%)	●
		#daily error logs	XX	XX (-)	XXX (+8%)	●
Engagag.	MB	#active shared boards	XX	XX (-5%)	XXX (-5%)	●
		#churned accounts	XX	XX (-5%)	<b>XXX (+77%)</b>	●
	RR	#users expanded acc.	XX	XX (+13.7%)	XX (+13.7%)	●

		<b>KPIs</b>	<b>Weekly target</b>
<b>Top of funnel</b>	DC	<b>Goals last week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal that wasn't accomplished</li> </ul>	<b>Goals this week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal for current week</li> </ul>
<b>Sales</b>	BC	<b>Goals last week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal that was partially accomplished</li> </ul>	<b>Goals this week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal for current week</li> </ul>
<b>Prod.</b>	BV	<b>Goals last week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal that was accomplished</li> </ul>	<b>Goals this week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal for current week</li> </ul>
<b>Engagag.</b>	MB	<b>Goals last week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal that was accomplished</li> </ul>	<b>Goals this week</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a goal for current week</li> </ul>

For each of your high-level goals, you need measurable success criteria. For example, your company plans to add \$2 million in revenue next year and \$1 M in new pipeline should be attributed to international.

It's clear, but it's not enough to answer how you're going to generate that pipeline. That's where strategy comes in:

**Goals > strategy > plan + tactics.**

## Craft the strategy

To create a strategy, start by looking at what other companies have attempted with their market expansion strategies. There's a reason Harvard teaches business students using real-world case studies – the best way to learn is from people who have been there and done that.

**Note:** Have a listen to the International Expansion Podcast with [Ramsey Pryor](#), which includes actionable insights from people who have led international growth at companies like Notion, Canva, and Zoom. Note the lessons learned, especially the failures, and best practices.

Next, think about the best way for your company to enter the market. This is your

go-to-market strategy. Will it be product-led, heavily sales-assisted, self-service, or follow any of the other paths you have available to you?

There are plenty of other considerations specific to your business model and market, but the key is to keep it simple.

## **Phase 3: Implementation**

Now that you have done the market research and developed a market entry strategy, you're ready to create a plan for entering the market. Your plan should include the following:

### **Assigning responsibilities**

Depending on the scope of your launch, this will ideally be to someone in a cross-functional role who has strong relationships with leaders, and who is familiar enough with all parts of your business.

[When Squarespace chose to enter Germany](#), they appointed an International Lead to run strategic initiatives. Her function was seated in operations and a large part of the role involved getting buy-in from the executive team to then sell the idea throughout the company.

Once bought in and approved, it's time to set up a cross-functional team.

### **Building your international team**

Even at a much smaller organization, successfully executing your market expansion strategy will require support from all your teams.

At Squarespace, every team had an international representative that led the initiatives through:

- Engineering
- Product
- Marketing
- Legal
- Finance
- Data analytics
- Creative

It will take your entire team to build an international strategy that works for everyone. Any plan you build should include training on aspects of your new markets, processes, and the localization tools you use.

# 3. The importance of localization in your expansion plans

Expanding to a market that doesn't share your language can make connecting with your new prospects and customers difficult. People prefer to do business in their own language. The evidence of this is overwhelming:

- [According to a survey of companies from throughout the world, those who use localization services make 1.5 times more money than those who don't.](#)
- [The top 10 global SaaS companies localize into 17 languages on average.](#)
- [42% of Europeans said they never purchase products and services in other languages.](#)
- [56.2% of consumers say the ability to obtain information in their own language is more important than price.](#)
- [78% of people are more likely to purchase from an online store that speaks their language.](#)

## Where does localization fit in?

Localization happens in two phases of your market entry strategy.

First, your market research process acts as something of a localization discovery phase. You learn *everything* you can about what matters to local consumers, including product specifics, cultural differences that may influence consumer behavior, and messaging. The information you gather here tells you what you need to do to connect locals with your brand or business.

Second, outline your localization implementation strategy within your market entry business plan. Be sure to include the languages that people speak and use to do business in (these could be different), and list areas of cultural importance.

Localization helps you avoid situations like using sales methods that don't speak to local customs or perhaps being too direct in a market that prefers a soft sell. It also allows you to create highly relevant experiences or products that genuinely entice local customers and set you apart from other businesses.

Researching and preparing your localization process by the time you're ready to do business in a new market is a critical part of your early success. This creates that meaningful presence when you finally open or launch.

## **Commit your organization to continuous localization**

Prepping for international expansion isn't just about the new parts of your organization you'll create and hire in other markets, like translators, local support teams, or even local sales teams. It's about preparing your existing team to adapt their processes and how they will collaborate with other localization stakeholders.

Your product team, for instance, may have a sprint cycle that ships new software updates every week. With international expansion, you'll need to create room in that process for localization. In fact, localization should be a part of your continuous delivery workflow, so it doesn't halt product releases. Plus, then your international users are not treated like second-class customers by not having access to the latest version of your product right away.

"By migrating to Lokalise, we've accelerated the delivery of new localized features by 90%. With Lokalise's Figma integration, I've eliminated my operational workload and can now focus on performance to improve the overall experience for our customers."

### **Romain Dahan**

Product Manager, Withings



**“By migrating to Lokalise, we’ve accelerated the delivery of new localized features by 90%.”**

Simply put, your products and content are likely to be continuously improved and updated, so that means you’ll continuously have new content to translate and localize. Because your international expansion isn’t a one-off thing, once you launch in a new market, you’ll need to constantly support your existence in that market. Speaking on the Inside Intercom podcast about lessons learned from achieving 2,475% revenue growth, Ed Fry, Head of Growth at Paddle, shared that when it comes to international expansion and optimizing your product for a global audience:



**“Making small incremental improvements can make dramatic increases in topline revenue.”**

Thus, your marketing, sales, and support will become a part of localization because you’ll also need to create and ship new content in order to attract and retain customers in your new target market.

## **Localize any digital content and assets that will support your expansion**

Your international customers will interact with your brand in multiple ways. They may read your blog posts, visit your website, receive an email, read your tweets,

see your ads, talk to your support, and so on. All of these digital assets support the process of entering a new market. Once you know your target market(s), you can start localizing the rest of your existing content — and therefore prepare for future expansion.

The alternative is that your user experience for international customers may become awkward and disjointed because multiple touchpoints are out of sync. Imagine customers searching for your product on Google, they land on your website, but it has been translated into their native language using negligent machine translations.

Our friends at Dogo App made the decision to localize their app from day zero. Not only because that would open up a wider market for the app, but also because they know that people appreciate the chance to use a product in their own language. Their app is now available in ten languages, has been downloaded two million times, and featured as Apple’s “App of the Day”.

“You don’t need a lot of customers in one country to start localizing. It’s enough if you have some customers in a lot of different countries. Altogether, they still make a big group of people.” – Tadas Žiemys, Co-Founder, Dogo App.



**“You don’t need a lot of customers in one country to start localizing. It’s enough if you have some customers in a lot of different countries. Altogether, they still make a big group of people.”**

Despite the fact that your product might be perfectly translated and localized, your website is an integral part of your customer journey and machine translation quality is

going to raise some trust issues (especially if you are brand new to the market).

This misalignment will reflect negatively on your whole brand and your customers won't care which team was responsible for it.

## **What tools and processes do you need?**

[International expansion](#) can be a long process. The localization aspects alone can take months to sort out, which is why it's essential to use a tool that streamlines the localization process, aligns your localization team, and automates your localization workflows.

Many companies find market expansion chaotic because there aren't clearly defined tools and processes. Instead, it's lots of manual work and scattered files. It's a pain and your team feels like it distracts them from their core work.

As the person leading international expansion at your company, you're in a position to advocate for and invest in the right tools and processes – the key to driving performance at scale.

If you think about scalability in the context of market expansion, it's clear that you want a replicable process that you can apply to all new markets and languages. In which systems is content created, stored, and published?

In an ideal world, the content will live in a content management system (CMS) with connectors to a translation management system (TMS). That will ensure a truly "central" place where content gets stored in multiple languages company-wide.

## **What do I do now?**

You've considered your avenues for growth, begun to consider what your international expansion will involve, and you might even have started on your

market entry strategy. At a minimum, we hope you've realized how important international expansion is to the continued growth of your organization.

If you've decided to take the plunge and start looking for a [translation management system](#), why not join the 2500+ companies from over 80 countries, including Notion, Lemonade, Bayer, and KPMG, using Lokalise for all their continuous localization needs?

# About Lokalise

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Lokalise is a continuous localization platform that streamlines the translation and localization process and collaboration between developers, designers, translators, and project managers. APIs, SDKs, and plug-and-play connectors automate data input from prototyping platforms to production. Lokalise is a fully remote company founded in 2017 that has 2500 customers from 80 countries, ranging from startups to Fortune 500 companies.

Ready to see Lokalise in action? Book a demo with one of our team or give it a test-drive yourself with our [free trial](#).

