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Designing Training Modules for International Audiences (Intercom Article)

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Designing Online Training Modules for International Audiences

Overview –
The topic that I will presenting is, “Designing Online Training Modules for International Audiences.” Training modules for international audiences differ greatly from training modules from within the United States. The reason for this is because certain word usage in other countries are not the same as the word usage in the United States. “The rules that apply to home audiences are not always suitable for international ones. Linguistic and cultural issues have a significant learning on how and you and your presentation are received” (Presenting to an International Audience 2017). Creating an online training module that is grammar error free will be the key to creating a great international online training module. Word transparency is a huge problem when it comes to creating online materials, especially for international audiences.

The best way to go about presenting an international online training module is to write as if the module was for a 3rd grader. If the writing seems too complex, most likely international audiences will not understand either. The rule of writing is to know your audience. To know your audience is to know your writing. It is also great to do research on the country’s stumbling blocks. If readers from a specific country has trouble defining certain words or phrases, the words or phrases should not be included. There also needs to be a clear message from the beginning. When people tend to write, they avoid stating what they are writing about initially to get the reader to read more about the product or the information. This should be avoided. If the intention of the content is understood in the online training module for international audiences from the beginning, then the information will become easier to read.

How Can This be Applied to the Professional World? -
This topic can be applied to the professional world to increase usability and efficiency in training modules. The simpler the training module is for an international audience, the easier it will be for them to comprehend. Developing International Online Training Modules is a part of the new digital generation. If a company has a product that it wants to sell to a foreign country such as Japan, the trainer would send this online training module to their country via internet or email.

How Can This Result in More Effective and Efficient Professional Practices? -
This topic could result in more effective and efficient professional practices because interacting with people throughout the world is the key from a business standpoint. The more a company branches out, the more their product or their speech will travel throughout the world making them more of a global brand instead of a local brand.
Tips for Designing Training Modules for International Audiences

- **Avoid Using Big Sentences** – Sentences should be no more than 10 words long. The reason for this is because international audiences tend to get caught up with words they do not know. Longer sentences makes it hard for them to understand the meaning of a sentences and they tend to skip over words to rush to read through the rest of the sentence. This could result in the message being misinterpreted by the reader.

- **Avoid Using Colloquialism** – Colloquialism is a form of a type of slang that is used in everyday language for Americans. International audiences will not understand the colloquialism concept. Therefore, it is very important for the person designing the training module to leave these types of words or phrases out of the training module. Examples of colloquialism are: it'll all come with time, don’t drop the ball, football, eat my dust, put your money where your mouth is, I wasn’t born yesterday, don’t bark up the wrong tree, you are killing me, I am drying laughing etc…

- **Be Specific When Using Cultural References** – Using specific language when it comes to cultural references is very important. The reason for this is because international audience could mistake an event for something else. For example, an American might say that there is a football game going on and the average American will be aware of what football is. However, for an international audience, people might mistake football for an actual game of soccer. Moreover, international audiences may not understand important sporting events such as the Super Bowl. Interestingly, some people might mistake the Super Bowl for an actual “super bowl” of something involving food. Importantly, an explanation is needed for cultural references if major American events are presented in the module.

- **Use More Pictures** – Using a multitude of pictures are always best when designing training modules for international audiences. The reason for this is because international audiences understand better with pictures. However, universal pictures are best because they will welcome the international audience the proper way. For instance, having a group of people from a foreign decent would work best rather than American people.

- **Avoid Unnecessary Word Usage** – Avoiding unnecessary word usage is key. Adding words to a sentence to make the sentence sound better is not always a good idea when it comes to international audiences. Adding words such as very, most likely, and definitely, might confuse the reader.

- **Use Consistent Terminology** – Using consist terminology is key when it comes to designing training modules for international audiences. For example, do not use the word hit and exchange the word “hit” for the word “bash”. It will most likely confuse the audience if this type of thing is incorporated into the paper.

- **Develop a Glossary if Need Be** – The most important thing to do when designing a training module is to develop a glossary at the end of the training module. If there are words are phrases that were needed that could not be taken out because of important reasoning, having a glossary with the terms would work best because it would be out of the way of the actual model and it would be a great asset for the international audience. This way, the reader will know what the trainer is talking about specifically instead of guessing about what a subject or an event means.

- **Use Active Words** – The active voice is much easier to read not just with international audience, but in general. The active voice lets the reader know what the subject is trying to accomplish.
For example, “Tommy threw the ball down the street,” is better than stating, “The ball was thrown by Tommy.”

- **Limit Pronouns** – Limiting pronouns when designing training modules for international audiences is best because it lets the reader know what specific subject the trainer is talking about. Using sentences that include too many pronouns will confuse the international audience. The best way to approach this problem is to include as much specific subject groups or people as much as possible.

- **Avoid Negative constructions** – Negative Constructions are confusing to international audiences. For example, try using a sentence such as, “Edit the training module before turning it in,” instead of “You cannot turn in the training module without editing it.”

- **Limit Prepositions** – Trainers who are designing training modules for international audiences should avoid using prepositions. Using too many propositions could confuse the reader.

- **Dates** – Dates should be written out. Many people in the United States tend to write dates with only numbers and slashes (2/24/17). However, international audiences might have a hard time reading dates like the way Americans put it.

- **Avoid Humor** - The biggest mistake that trainers commit is the use of humor in international online training modules. The reason why this is bad is because some countries are not used of people using humor. Many countries believe that jokes are frivolous. For example, people who live near Germany tend to be more serious than people who live in the United States. Moreover, in some countries, it is insulting to laugh.

- **Avoid Metaphors** – Metaphors in the U.S. are ok to use, but not in other countries. Objects should not be connected with words because they may confuse the trainee.

- **Avoid Emotional Response Words** – Trainers should avoid using words that trigger emotional Responses. Examples of emotional response words: angry, evil, abuse, rage, stuck-up, disgusting, snob, snotty, and bitterness.
Do Your Research!

Research –
It is always best to do research on the country that the specific training module is for. The reason for this is because the person will know which words to include and what not to include to not offend the reader. Certain words might be offense to the reader that may not be offense for American readers. Moreover, knowing more about the region that a trainer is writing for will let the trainee know that they are important to the training process. Including pictures in the module from the region that the trainer is writing for is always a great thing to do because it will help the trainer to understand the material from an cultural or regional standpoint.

Be Aware of Units, Measurements, & Money –
In the United States, money is referred to as U.S. Dollars. However, in other countries, other terms are used. Being aware of currency terms is a big deal. Including U.S. Dollars in a British training module would create a big problem because British money is called pounds. Example of currency terms are:

- Mexico – Pesos
- Britain – Pounds
- Armenia – Dram
- Denmark – Krone
- India – Rupee
- Cambodia – Riel

Colors & Symbols –
Consider using certain colors when designing training for different countries. For example, a foreign trainer designing a model for the United States might have the color of the design as red, white, and blue because the colors are centered around the American Flag. For China, a training module with the colors of red would be best because China is associated with the color red and it is also on their country’s flag. If the trainer does not want to go with the country’s colors, they should stick with neutral colors because neutral colors are acceptable universally.

Moreover, the use of symbols are really important to learn about. The symbols that are used in the United States may not be acceptable in other countries. For example, thumbs up in America means a good thing. However, in countries such as Thailand, “thumbs up is a negative gesture because it means the same gesture as sticking your tongue out.” In Great Britain, giving someone the peace sign with the palm facing inward is equivalent to “giving the middle finger” (Baulch 2013).

Weather Acknowledgment –
Knowing what type of weather the country has is always plus, but it is not a necessity if the module does not call for weather. However, if weather is involved, knowing the type of weather a specific has throughout the year is important. For instance, a trainer should not include a picture of snow if they are designing a training module for Mexico because it is hot in Mexico. Including these types of pictures may throw the reader off track.

Writing Styles –
Some writing styles may not be acceptable or recognizable to certain cultures of countries. “Quotation marks are used differently in various cultures. The French and Danish language for example use ”<<>>” for quotations marks. The French use ”<<>>”, whereas the Danish use ”>>>”. The use of quotation marks can be a source for confusion and misunderstanding” (St. Amant 2000).
Feedback from International Audiences

Positive Feedback/Negative Feedback –

Receiving positive feedback from an international audience is always a good thing because the training module will gain more attention. However, receiving negative feedback is always a great thing because it will let the trainer what he needs to work on and what he does not need to work on to improve the quality of the training module. There may be some things that an American might understand how to do, but an individual from a foreign country might not understand. This is important because it fall under usability and efficiency. If the training is hard to utilize or if the information is hard to understand, then the international audience will be less acceptable to requesting another training module.

Online Discussion Boards –

Creating an online discussion board for the training module is always a great way of finding out what is important to a country or a region in the world. Creating a discussion board for international audiences always is a way for people to connect with other people around their region or around the world. Having a discussion board for an international training module paves the way the for the trainee to speak about any problems they are having with the module, or a individuals might offer ideas that may improve the training module.
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