



# Multilingual

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**HANS FENSTERMACHER  
INTRODUCES GALA**

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## INTRODUCES GALA

*The recently formed Globalization and Localization Association addresses the needs of industry professionals*

**JIM HEALEY**

**H**ans Fenstermacher, president and founder of ArchiText, Inc., is a founding member of the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA), a non-profit association whose mission, according to its Web site, "is to promote collaboration between all companies providing products and services in the translation, localization, internationalization, and globalization industry." Born in Germany, Fenstermacher speaks six languages and holds a B.A. from Princeton University and an M.A.L.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has a 22-year career in the language and globalization industries. Recently, Fenstermacher shared his thoughts on GALA, where it is now and where it's heading, with MultiLingual Computing & Technology.

*GALA was officially established on April 15, 2002. How long had the association been in the making, and who were key folks behind its inception?*

The idea for GALA sprang from a group of localization companies that were beginning to collaborate with each other after getting together through another industry organization. Since early 2001, these companies had been discussing the need for a "trade association," where companies that provide services and products in our industry could get together, discuss problems, come up with solutions and create a more unified voice for the industry. The key people behind the formation of GALA were myself; Renée Sztabelski, president and founder of HiText; and Daniel

Carter, CEO and founder of International Software Products.

*When you, Renée and Daniel would get together to discuss the need for a "trade association," what were the needs that were discussed? In other words, what needs in particular were identified which gave rise to the founding of GALA?*

We discussed the need for companies doing business in our industry to exchange information in a very candid way without being concerned about how that information would be interpreted outside the industry, for example, by clients. The industry was and is very fragmented, and we felt the need to start finding points of unity, not differences. This fragmentation has, in the past, given rise to needless and unproductive divisions in the industry, whether they are based on differences in size, industry segment or even personal differences. We felt the need for a fresh organization that was inclusive, not exclusive, one that would focus on how to help our industry promote itself, increase its size and expand business opportunities for every company.

Lots of industries have trade associations. Pooling knowledge, ideas and resources creates a whole new world of opportunities for businesses, and it allows us to have more control over how the industry is presented to clients and prospects.



One example I often cite is the US dairy industry. A decade ago it was a highly competitive arena with a market share dwindling against the onslaught of specialty beverages. The milk producers got together, pooled their resources and ideas and created the "Got milk?" campaign. In less than 10 years, that campaign has reversed their market slump and created a brand with over 90% awareness in the United States. What if the internationalization, localization and globalization (ILG) industry could do that? Wow!

*What is the audience for GALA membership?*

GALA members can be any bona fide company that provides translation, localization, globalization or internationalization services or products, including consultancies. I also want to make clear that if GALA is to succeed, it has to encompass the whole range of companies in our industry.

*What do you mean by "bona fide" companies?*

Bona fide companies operate as true companies, not as loose partnerships of affiliated freelancers or some other confederation. Established companies have very different interests, needs and goals than individuals. I also think that companies have a much greater stake and vested interest in seeing the industry grow and succeed.

*What are the real benefits of becoming a member of GALA for an ILG company?*

First of all, there is the information-sharing. We have already seen a lot of value in candidly exchanging ideas, views and even frustrations with each other. Sometimes it's a reality-check; sometimes it creates synergies that we never knew existed. For example, GALA companies have been discussing the idea of jointly building a workflow tool or portal that would benefit us all, but which might be unattainable by any individual company because of cost and time constraints. GALA also provides a forum for establishing working relationships. Several GALA companies have collaborated already (and not just in the form of sub-contracting work), and more discussions are under way as we speak. Also, one of GALA's focuses is on building value for clients. We are looking for opportunities for our members to present themselves and their services and products more broadly. I'm talking about getting more business. It's also good for the clients because they can get to know several companies quickly, thus becoming better informed. One example is jointly running booths at trade shows or conferences, which might be out of reach otherwise. Several opportunities are being considered by GALA members to do just that.

*What is GALA doing to encourage companies to join?*

Of course, there is a lot of word-of-mouth going on. We are also putting announcements in publications (with their support) and linking our own and other Web sites to GALA's. We'll be doing more PR in the future.

*What can one find on GALA's Web site?*

Our Web site, [www.gala-global.org](http://www.gala-global.org), includes a description of the organization, a list of member companies with links to their Web sites, downloadable documents with more detailed information about GALA, a list of events of interest to our members and potential members, and links to other resources related to our industry. In the future, we will add more information and functionality, for example, an industry colloquium on critical issues of the day. The goal is to make the site a place for finding information and sharing views about topics of interest, hopefully with a view toward generating creative solutions.

*What has been the industry's response to the association thus far?*

The response has been very positive. Many companies echo the current GALA member companies' sentiment that our industry needs to work from within to improve and promote itself and gain its rightful place in global business. Since we began operating our Web site in June 2002, we have added six new member companies, with others currently in the process of submitting their membership.

*What are GALA's members telling the association that they want and need?*

Everybody in our industry seems to be looking for something. The fact that there are so many associations is indicative of our need to get together. GALA members want more information about each other, the industry, what works, what doesn't, who's doing what and so on. They also want a chance to be seen and heard, to "show their stuff," so to speak. Innovation and creative solutions can come from any one of us; the more we exchange ideas, the more creativity we'll have. GALA members want the industry to be more respected and valued, and they seem to agree that the best way to achieve that is to work together for a better image.

*What are some of the challenges facing the association in its early days?*

Of course, marketing and PR are big challenges that require lots of effort, not to mention money. We are grateful for the support in this effort by a number of individuals in our industry and several organizations, including MultiLingual Computing, Inc., and the Localisation Research Centre in Dublin, that have helped us get the word out.

Another challenge is to avoid creating a large, costly infrastructure that seeks to exist for its own sake. We are very mindful that the association should serve its members in a democratic way, too. That's why GALA is a non-profit and run by a board of directors elected from its ranks.

Perhaps our biggest challenge is to provide real value to our members. To help do that, we are asking our members to tell us what they want and how they want GALA to help them achieve those goals. For example, one of the things we are hearing is that companies want more opportunities to present themselves to clients and demonstrate their innovative solutions. GALA will help to do that.

*How does any association, GALA included, avoid "creating a large, costly infrastructure"?*

First, you have to want to avoid it. Then you make sure the organization is democratically led. We have a board of directors, elected from the ranks of the membership, with fixed terms of office. Anyone can run for the board. What's more, all members are equal in the sense that

they all have one vote, whether it's a \$100-million company or a \$2-million one. GALA's aim is to uncover opportunities for members. They can then individually decide whether to pursue and fund that opportunity together or not. At some point, we will undoubtedly have a larger infrastructure and a permanent staff, but this organization is built on service to its members, not to exist for its own sake.

It's meant to be as inclusive as possible.

*Most of the member companies are located in the United States and Europe. What efforts are being made to address the needs of companies in other regions of the world — Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia?*

One of our founding companies is a significant industry player in Korea, JTS, and we would be delighted to have more members from Asia and the other regions you mention. GALA was deliberately created to be

an international organization because our industry is a global, not a regional one. One of the ways we hope to attract members from different geographical zones is to develop a program of regional events that are of interest to players in those areas. For example, we may create a one-day seminar or mini-conference on localization and globalization. This would give companies that provide services and products a way to introduce themselves to a regional market and, conversely, allow potential customers for those services and products in a region to learn more about the service providers in a compact, informative way. We would hope to be able to reproduce this experience in various locales, in part to "spread the gospel," so to speak, about localization and its importance.

*Do you find that the needs of ILG companies change from region to region? For example, are there any differences in needs from an ILG company in Asia as opposed to an ILG company in Europe or the United States?*

It seems that the needs change more based on the company's orientation (for example, whether it's an SLV or an MLV) than geographic location. We all face the same questions: How can we get more customers? How can we serve them better? How can we convince prospects of the importance

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of what we do? Having said that, though, I think there is a sense that Asian companies feel a bit "left out," as it were. We need to do more to integrate the industry worldwide, while at the same time meeting the specific needs of a region. We're looking for input and help from our Asian and other regional members to help bring the global industry together better.

*What are some of the events or activities which GALA is planning in the near future?*

One of the immediate activities we are implementing is an industry colloquium on our Web site, starting some time in September. The colloquium is intended to be a forum for serious discussion of industry issues, a place to trade viewpoints, ideas, possibly even barbs. We will invite anyone and everyone in the industry to participate in a very frank discussion of what ails us in order to begin to fix it. Don DePalma of Common Sense Advisory, a GALA member, will moderate the colloquium in his usual frank, hard-hitting way.

*GALA will have a presence, either through a presentation or a booth, at LangTech 2002 (Berlin, September 26-27, 2002), Localisation Conference (Dublin, November 12-13, 2002), and First Annual Globalization R.O.I. Expo (Aspen,*

### GALA Members Worldwide

- ABLE Innovations, Inc.**, U.S.A.
- ArchiText Inc.**, U.S.A.
- Common Sense Advisory, Inc.**, U.S.A.
- Comunicación Multilingüe**, Spain
- ES**, Turkey
- GAMAX KFT**, Hungary
- Hieronymus, s.r.o.**, Czech Republic
- HiText s.a.**, Belgium
- International Software Products**, Netherlands
- JTS**, Korea
- MAGIT**, Poland
- Moravia IT**, Czech Republic
- Multilingual Computing, Inc.**, U.S.A.
- Multilingual Translations Management B.V.**, Netherlands
- Network Communications A/S**, Denmark
- Quality Translations**, Israel
- SA Jonckers Translation & Engineering**, Belgium
- SaudiSoft Co. Ltd.**, Saudi Arabia and Egypt
- Telelingua International**, Belgium
- translate.IT**, Germany
- Welocalize**, U.S.A.



*Colorado, February 13-14, 2003). What does GALA hope to achieve through visibility at these conferences?*

First of all, we are letting our industry and its various constituencies know that we exist and what we're about. At LangTech and the R.O.I. Expo, we will also have a chance to let our members exhibit to the audiences at those events, demonstrating our ability to work together to represent the industry while marketing the individual companies. GALA is participating in all these events to demonstrate our seriousness and willingness to be part of any and all solutions that improve the industry's status.

*Where do you imagine GALA being five years from now?*

In five years, we hope to have hundreds of companies in our membership from all corners of the globe.

We'd like to see some sort of industry branding campaign implemented, led by GALA and other industry organizations, that clearly explains what localization and globalization are, how indispensable they are and where the resources are to implement them.

We want to set up regular GALA programs to present the ILG industry and its companies to broad audiences.

Perhaps we will have a form of industry "watchdog" group in place that protects the image of localization and globalization and corrects the widespread erroneous information we see so often.

Most importantly, in five years GALA will be what its members want it to be.

*Do you have any final comments or thoughts on GALA with which you would like to conclude this interview?*

GALA is ready to work with any individual, company or organization to improve our industry's image and prospects. I believe we have, today, far too many divisions and rifts in our decidedly small global community, and it's about time we closed them. I'd like to see us work together in ways we never have before to make that happen. If we don't, as an industry we'll continue to be marginalized and commoditized, and our prospects will improve very little. We need leadership in our industry, and that leadership has to come from within. 🌐

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## Announcing the Creation of a New Industry Trade Organization



Real industry progress will come from working together to share information, fostering creative ways to promote ourselves and our industry, and offering clients unique, collaborative value. GALA offers a common forum where members can discuss issues, create innovative solutions, and present a joint – and more powerful – voice to the outside community.

GALA invites all companies that provide translation, localization, globalization, or internationalization products or services to join. For information, visit [www.gala-global.org](http://www.gala-global.org) or contact [info@gala-global.org](mailto:info@gala-global.org).