

A GALA Affair



Hans Fenstermacher writes on the creation of the new Globalization and Localization Association

The Globalization, Internationalization, Localization and Translation (GILT) industry is in a state of flux. Between the economic downturn, consolidation, and the continuing balkanisation of our industry, one of the biggest challenges we face is understanding and agreeing on what our industry is. Who are we? What do our customers really want? Why are our basic messages inconsistent or improperly understood? How can we raise our visibility on the world business stage?

On April 15 of this year, 15 localisation companies from 12 countries on four continents created a new trade association to try to find answers to these and other questions. Dubbed the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA), the association grew out of a less formal network of small- to medium-sized localisation service providers that had been working together for some time. GALA aims to represent the provider side of the industry, which consists of thousands of companies all over the world providing a wide range of products and services. The GILT industry has several fine organi-

sations already, but most represent a specific industry segment, cover only a limited geographic area, or are struggling to reconcile conflicting constituencies. The founders of GALA and other like-minded companies have seen the need for a fully representative, international trade organisation that works toward the betterment of the whole industry.

GALA's philosophy is based on the idea that industry progress will come from working more closely together to share information, fostering innovative ways to promote ourselves and our industry as a whole, and offering our customers unique, collaborative value. GALA offers a forum for discussing ideas, developing solutions, and creating opportunities for joint – and therefore more visible and powerful – representation within the industry and to the outside community.

The Association's mission statement is "to provide its members with opportunities to better meet their market needs, while reducing costs and increasing opportunities, and to offer their customers better service." This means taking concrete steps based on simple ideas:

- cooperating with each other on projects by means of a mutually agreed-upon Code of Conduct and a mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement (sharing a philosophy of quality and mutual respect);
- providing customers with joint solutions tailor-made to meet their needs (selling what customers actually want);
- reducing operational expenses by pooling our purchasing power (investing in ourselves for growth);
- increasing our members' knowledge base by frank information exchange (trusting and learning from each other); and
- creating business opportunities for our members so they can win new clients (making the market bigger).

One of the driving forces behind establishing GALA is the desire to give companies in our industry more opportunities to acquire bandwidth for their products and services. Many service companies, for example, specialise in a limited number of language pairs and/or domains, focusing on producing premium quality. Some technology companies have highly specialised tools, but find it hard to get exposure for their products. Membership in GALA enables these companies to expand the scope and volume of their activities through ongoing or project-based partnerships with other companies that share their philosophy or business model. GALA gives all companies alike the opportunity to

come to know and — critically — trust partners who can help them deliver what their clients demand.

GALA is run by an elected 3-person Board, which manages the affairs of the Association. The founding Board members are: Hans Fenstermacher (Chairman) of ArchiText, Renée Sztabelski of HiText, and Daniel Carter of International Software Products. Any company that meets the following eligibility criteria may join the Association:

- Bona fide company of any size providing translation, localisation, internationalisation, or globalisation products or services, including tools developers, training suppliers, and consultancies;
- Signature of and adherence to the GALA Code of Conduct and Non-Disclosure Agreement; and
- Payment of the annual dues.

GALA will actively help its members work together, promote themselves, and expand their reach through activities like: the Association web site (www.gala-global.org); member-only events to share information, improve efficiency and increase industry knowledge; matchmaking events to bring participating GALA members together with potential customers; joint representation under the GALA banner at trade events for industry verticals, so members can extend the scope of their sales and marketing in an affordable way; and a hard-hitting on-line newsletter (coming soon) that promotes interactive discussions and solution-building.

The new Association has also begun and hopes to help lead a cohesive, industry-wide effort to define and raise the industry's image. Other industries have successfully reinvented themselves by working together, frankly assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and pooling their resources to create a better environment for their products. So, too, GALA will work toward a better industry image, for the benefit of all of us in this space. ■

Hans Fenstermacher is president of ArchiText Inc. and Chairman of the Board of GALA. The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) is actively seeking new members from within the worldwide globalisation, internationalisation, localisation and translation community. For more information about GALA, please visit www.gala-global.org or contact info@gala-global.org.