

GALA Takes the Stage

A brand-new industry association for companies from the translation, localization, internationalization, globalization and “related” industries

by Bert Esselink

According to the GALA website, "the Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) is a non-profit association whose mission is to promote collaboration between all companies providing products and services in the translation, localization, internationalization, and globalization industry." It was established by 15 localization companies from 12 countries in April 2002.

Language International met up with one of the founders, Daniel Carter from International Software Products in the Netherlands, to talk about this new initiative.

Language International: Could you explain what GALA's primary objectives are?

Daniel Carter: First I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me and give me a chance to talk a little bit about GALA and our goals. When we first created the Association, we felt it was essential to create an organization that is responsive to what our member companies are asking us to do. Based on member feedback, we have 3 areas we're targeting for the rest of the year:

1. Create a platform to share information for mutual benefit of all members. We have already launched a skeleton website and are adding to it on a weekly basis. In addition, the members are actively working together and sharing experiences to solve real day-to-day and strategic problems.

2. Create new business opportunities. This can be by working together to bring in new clients, or creating market opportunities for our members so they can win new business. We are currently in the planning phase for our first events and are open to ideas from our members, the industry, and are listening to what our clients, the buyers of our services, tell us.

3. To find ways to reduce operational expenses. We are about to launch a purchasing platform that will lead to concrete savings for our members.

LI: Is GALA filling a necessary gap between the Localisation Industry Standards Association and national translators' organizations such as the ATA?

DC: Great question! We saw a need to create a new association for the suppliers to the translation, localization, globalization and related industries. We are a supplier only association. And, we are restricting membership to *companies*. We believe that the issues that vendor companies in our industry face are not being adequately addressed by other associations.

We hope that by working together in an open environment to offer real solutions and really contribute to the success of our member companies.

LI: Do similar initiatives to GALA exist in other industries?

DC: Many industries have trade organizations that essentially do the same thing as GALA. They give companies operating in the same business areas ways to share information and work together to improve and expand the market for their products and services, so they can serve their customers better. We believe we need an organization like this very badly too, because our industry is so fragmented and under-valued, especially considering its importance to global business.

LI: What are the main benefits GALA offers to companies active in translation and localization services?

DC: As I mentioned earlier, we feel it is important to provide concrete value to our



Renée Sztabelski

members. So, helping them solve their problems through a support network, be more efficient, sharing ideas and creating solutions to their day-to-day problems. Second, we want to help our members win new business. Third, we want to find creative ways to save them money through initiatives such as the purchasing platform. We have other ideas for the future, but we are focusing on these goals for now.

LI: Can individuals, such as independent consultants or freelance translators, become members of GALA?

DC: No. To keep a sharp focus and provide the most benefit to our members, the association is restricted to vendor companies.



Daniel Carter

LI: What are the advantages of GALA for the buyers of localization and translation services?

DC: I think everyone would agree that this is a tough time for the entire industry. Especially in the technology arena, our clients are being severely affected by the economic slowdown. By working together as vendors, we can present our clients with better solutions for their translation and localization efforts, save them money, get products out the door sooner, and improve quality. In the end, it just makes good business sense. We're also looking at ways to promote our industry and hopefully increase the number of buyers for our products and services.

LI: Why do you feel now is the right time for this new initiative?

DC: We feel that the current associations meet some of the needs in the industry, and we are actively working with some of them already. Hans Fenstermacher, our President, recently gave a presentation at the ATA Translation Company Division conference. We will also be at the Euro Translation Company Association conference in London this September. Many companies felt their voice was not being



Hans Fenstermacher

heard or that they were not getting what they needed from other associations. We are creating an association that will be driven by the members and responsive to their needs.

LI: There is a GALA code of conduct and standardized non-disclosure agreement. You are also working on a set of by-laws. Please explain the nature of these by-laws.

DC: These are simply the rules the association follows for day-to-day and ongoing activities.

LI: Any company can currently join GALA, and will probably use it as a marketing vehicle. Will GALA offer some sort of accreditation for its members?

DC: This is something that has been discussed. We don't have an accreditation program set up at this time, but we could have one in the future, if the members feel strongly about going in that direction.

LI: Although GALA aims to be open and transparent, chances are that some companies will start cooperating more closely than others. Would you consider this a potential danger to the transparency of the organization?

DC: No, we don't feel that this is a potential danger. Quite the contrary, we encourage our members to share informa-

tion and work together. I think it would be much more of a problem if we would try to control which companies work together and how they do it. What GALA provides in this area is the opportunity to meet potential business partners and form collaborative solutions for the good of our customers.

LI: Will GALA create a portal where knowledge about localization and translation practices can be shared between the members?

DC: Yes, especially as we are rapidly growing, we feel that this is one way to effectively share information and provide value to our members.

LI: When will the first GALA event be organized, and what will be on the agenda?

DC: The details of the first events are still being worked out. As much as I would like to share this with you and your readers, it's premature. We will keep you updated as soon as the agenda and other specifics are finalized.

LI: How will you measure the success of GALA?

DC: I think this will come from the members themselves. I am convinced that we need to demonstrate real value to our members. We need to offer solutions that save them money, help them solve their

problems and be more efficient, and create opportunities for them to win new clients. If we do this, our membership will continue to grow and we will have a healthy industry association for years to come.

LI: Do you think the localization industry would have looked different if GALA had been launched 5 years ago?

DC: Yes, I do. I have been involved in localization for over 15 years and have seen the industry go through a number of transformations. I think we could have made a difference the last 5 years and I am certain that GALA can have a positive influence in the future. We are still such a young industry and there is much we can learn from other industries and each other. By working together, we can go much faster and get further. Our immediate objectives are modest but achievable, our members and the industry will provide the goals and direction for the future.

For more information about GALA, visit www.gala-global.org or contact info@gala-global.org.

