



# Challenge 2000

The ins and outs of localizing the Windows 2000 operating system.

**M**icrosoft enlisted localization vendor Bowne to help drive the global release of Windows 2000 by contracting them to localize six languages—French, German, Brazilian Portuguese, Danish, Japanese, and Korean. *Language International* recently sat down with a few members of Bowne's W2K team to gather their thoughts about this monster localization project.

#### **Language International: What were the biggest challenges in localizing Windows 2000?**

**Bowne:** Initially, one might think the biggest challenge was the quantity of words to be processed in the required time frame—2.8 million words over six months. And, as you might imagine, more emerged as the project progressed.

Soon after we started, it became clear that some of the tools we were using had to be fine-tuned for this project. Bowne worked closely with Microsoft and Trados to optimize the performance of TagEditor together with Trados Translator's Workbench. We paid close attention to cross-component consistency, as changes

in the software terminology had to be replicated throughout the online user assistance. And finally, to make things more interesting, Bowne was requested to transform a four-week delta into a sim-ship for German!

#### **LI: Are there any major improvements in Windows 2000 in regard to internationalization or international support?**

**Bowne:** In fact, this is one of the cool new features of Windows 2000. There is a version of the product called Multilanguage which allows for the deployment of different language versions across different sites. This is going to be great for multina-

tional corporations, as it will go a long way to reduce the footprint of maintaining software worldwide (see [www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/2000/02-14w2kmulti.asp](http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/2000/02-14w2kmulti.asp)).

**LI: What tools do you use in the process that are particularly helpful and noteworthy?**

**Bowne:** The combination of Trados and TagEditor was very useful, as it managed the required file formats very efficiently, while guaranteeing linguistic consistency across teams, improving turnaround times, and reducing costs at the same time. Praise needs to go to Microsoft Visual SourceSafe as well. This tool locks user access to the files, preventing two different people from working on the same file simultaneously, and stores different versions of the files across time, allowing for easy recovery in case of errors.

Equally important were the Bowne project-management tools that permit visibility and control over cost, time, and quality regardless of the physical location of the teams. Bowne has developed a suite of tools that are integrated with Microsoft Project and provides project managers with an up-to-date view of the project, both from the financial and the operations point of view. In addition, Bowne has deployed an internal Web-based tracking tool called FastTrak that records project information worldwide, making it available to everyone within the organization; we share this information with selected clients now, and in the future with all clients through an extranet code-named "Extraglobal."

**LI: Microsoft is known as a tough customer in the industry, yet Bowne seems to work well with them. Can you describe why you think the relationship works so well?**

**Bowne:** Why would you say that Microsoft is a tough client? Microsoft is a very demanding client in terms of quality requirements and deadlines, but we have always found them to be fair and reasonable, and open to discussion with Bowne as partners. And we get to work on some very interesting projects, like Encarta, MSN, Office 2000, Visual Studio, etc. Bowne has a longstanding relationship with Microsoft that has allowed us to build an impressive track record with this client. Over time we have built trust and respect between both teams, and this really facilitates communication.

In addition, Bowne has a dedicated account-management team responsible for tailoring our solutions to their requirements. Finally, credit needs to go to the production teams in the different countries.

**LI: Lots of people talk about simultaneous release. How common is true simultaneous release, or is it greatly over-hyped? What techniques have you developed that allow for simultaneous release?**

Sim-ship is not really common for projects of this scope. Superficially, many people speak of simultaneous shipment but they

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achieve this by holding back the release of the source (English) language version. Windows 2000 US/German was a true simultaneous release to manufacturing (RTM) and we believe that we will see more of these in the future, as deltas between the source product and the localized languages become shorter every year. Sim-ship means striking a constant balance between cost, time, and quality (e.g., When do you do updates and how many?).

It requires a lot of flexibility—we sent staff on-site to Redmond for the final phase of the process—and motivation for all involved. Maybe we are a bit biased, as we are project managers, but we think that the combination of professional project management supported by technology and training is what enables the successful management and the potential for simultaneous shipment of projects of this magnitude and complexity. Bowne Global Solutions has built project-management-specific tools, like FastTrak and the customization to MS Project we described earlier, and provided extensive training to our project managers. We think the successful RTM sim-ship of the German release of W2K is a testament to these techniques.

**LI: What were the biggest hurdles in localizing Windows 2000?**

**Bowne:** Using tools that were still being developed, extensive file management and tracking requirements, and keeping the team motivated on cloudy days and nights (and weekends).

**LI: Can you share any interesting anecdotes relating to the localization of Windows 2000?**

**Bowne:** In the Munich office, we had a bonsai plant nicknamed the "Win2K bonsai." It was difficult to keep because of its high maintenance and it started to shed its leaves. John, our engineer, said: "If this bonsai recovers, the project will go well. If not, then God help us." It lost more and more leaves until it was all dry. This, as you can imagine, was very distressing and a bad omen. So we painted a leaf with a green felt pen—and it helped!

*Bowne Global Solutions MS W2K team members interviewed for this article included: Angelika Haas, manager of Microsoft Team, Germany  
Pedro Gómez, business development manager, Spain  
Young Jeh Kwon, application localization group manager, Korea  
Marc Giroult, Microsoft product group manager, France*