

The Questions We Ask Before We Accept a Project

And why they save everyone time before a single deadline gets locked in.

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A Familiar Scene

A product team is gearing up to launch in Japan, Korea, and Indonesia. The UI string file is ready. The four-week deadline is on the calendar. The budget is signed off two levels up.

What *isn't* settled: whether buttons can hold translated text without breaking layout, whether half those strings are final or still placeholders, and whether "Indonesian" means general Bahasa Indonesia or the formal register compliance screens require.



None of that gets resolved until it becomes a mid-project scramble, because nobody asked before the deadline was locked.

Why Localization Projects Actually Get Stuck

Projects rarely fail because of bad translation. They fail because of **bad assumptions** made early and left unchallenged.

Scope Creep in Disguise

A "simple" product description turns out to need transcreation once someone notices the idioms don't survive a literal pass.

Platform Surprises

A CMS with no right-to-left support, or a character limit that works in English but breaks the moment Thai expands the string.

Market Assumptions

Traditional Chinese for Taiwan is not Simplified Chinese for mainland China. Treating "Chinese" as one line item causes real rework.

Tone Mismatches

A brand voice built for a US audience can land as too casual, or unintentionally rude, in a market with different formality norms.

THE STAKES ARE HIGHER NOW

Two Forces Making This More Urgent



The global economic climate is tighter: buyers scrutinize every budget and every partner more closely than before.

At the same time, data-handling regulations keep expanding. Clients now ask before handing over content: *Will AI touch our files? Where are they stored? Who works on them, and where?*

A project that can't answer those questions on day one can stall before translation even starts.

The Questions We Ask Before We Accept

A good onboarding questionnaire does more work than a good quote. Here's what we need to know first.

1 What platform is this content living in?

A help center, mobile app, regulatory filing, and marketing site each impose different technical constraints and each changes how we plan the work.

2 Which markets, specifically?

Not "Southeast Asia." Vietnam or the Philippines, or both, and whether the content needs to address urban and rural audiences differently.

3 How flexible is the deadline, really?

Not the date on the calendar — but the actual room to negotiate if a legal review or a design change pushes something by a week.

4 Who signs off, and how many review rounds?

Five stakeholders with no single decision-maker need a very different schedule than a project with one clear approver.

Questions Specific to Asian Markets

The standard Western localization checklist doesn't quite cover the complexity of Asian markets. We go further.



Writing Systems Within One Language

Simplified vs. Traditional Chinese, or Hanja alongside Hangul in certain Korean contexts, these are not interchangeable.



Regulatory & Cultural Review Steps

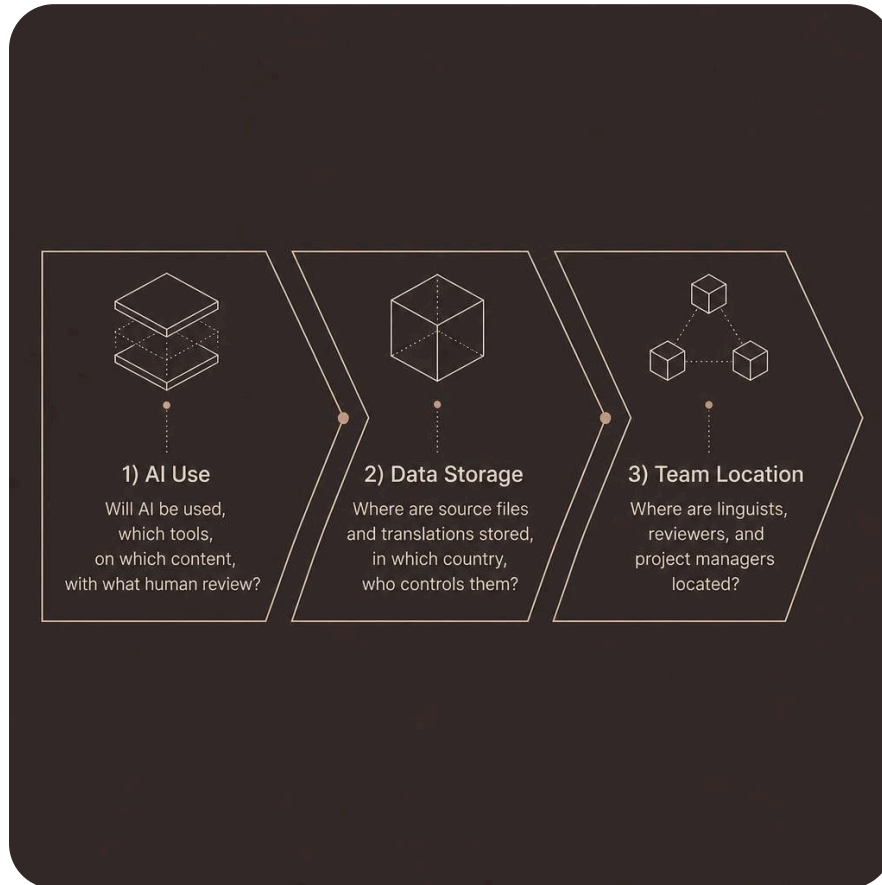
Medical device and pharmaceutical filings across the region require compliance review built into the timeline from day one, not discovered mid-project.



Tone & Formality Register

A brand voice built for one market can miss entirely in another. We ask who decided the tone, and whether that decision still holds across every target market.

Questions About How the Work Gets Done



Because of the wider regulatory climate, we now ask directly how the work itself is handled, before planning anything.

- **AI use policy:** Some clients want AI in the workflow. Others want it kept out entirely. Both are reasonable, we need to know which applies before we build the process.
- **Data residency:** Which servers hold source files and translations, in which country, and who controls access.
- **Team geography:** Some contracts and data-protection rules care exactly where linguists and reviewers are located.

The Real Value of Asking First

A structured pre-project assessment isn't paperwork. It's the fastest way to find out whether a four-week estimate is actually a four-week job, **before anyone's calendar depends on it.**

The cost of an unasked question doesn't show up as a typo. It shows up as a regulatory rejection, a relaunch, or a brand voice that lands wrong in a market the client cared about getting right.

Slower at the Start

The onboarding process takes more time upfront by design. It's built into how we take on every project, not layered on top of it.

Considerably Faster After

Every question asked before kickoff is a renegotiation avoided later, at the point where fixing it is far more expensive for everyone.

Planning a localization project? **Get in touch for a pre-project consultation.**