

The Art of the Global Gateway



Web Globalization Strategies
for Successful Navigation

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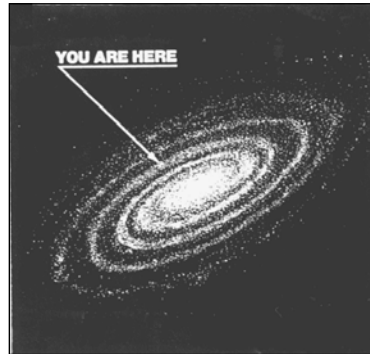
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Where am I?

The Internet is like the universe—constantly expanding.

Every day, millions of Web pages are added in hundreds, if not thousands, of languages.



Much of this expansion is due to corporate Web globalization; companies are spawning localized Web sites at a furious pace. Google now offers more than 115 different language interfaces. Dell offers more than 80 country Web sites; Deloitte has more than a hundred. These days, it is not unusual to see US-based companies launching Web sites for countries such as Latvia, Slovenia, South Africa, and Vietnam.

And they're just getting started.

But as this universe expands, the odds of Web users getting lost within it increase. And because you cannot control how people arrive at your Web site, you need to do all you can to ensure that, once they've arrived, they find where they need to go.

This book will help.

This book provides techniques and recommendations that have helped companies increase traffic to their local Web sites from

between 10% to more than 25%. Some recommendations are easy to implement; some take more time. But all are designed to help you create a more globally usable navigation system. That's because the information in this book is based on more than six years spent studying the evolution and challenges of global navigation.

During this time I've interviewed hundreds of marketing and Web executives to learn firsthand what strategies work and what strategies don't.

This book explains all the global navigation tools at your disposal and how to make the best use of them. You'll study a wide range of real-world Web sites—from IKEA to Philips to Google. You'll learn how to develop a global gateway that works today and well into the future. You'll learn how to save your customers and prospects from ever having to say "Where am I?" again.

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Part I

Select Language;
Select Country;
Global Gateway Basics

What's a global gateway?

In 1999, I first used the term “global gateway” to refer to the country pull-down menu a particular company was using on its Web site.

The term stuck.



Today, the meaning of global gateway has expanded a great deal, but it still effectively reflects the challenges and solutions of directing global Web users to local content.

A global gateway is much more than a pull-down menu. It is an umbrella term for the visual and technical elements you employ to direct users to their locale- and language-specific Web sites.



A global gateway is just one of four elements in a company's potential global navigation strategy.



These four elements will be explained in Part II. For now, begin thinking about your

customers and potential customers and how they find their way to your Web site. Where do they live? What languages do they speak? What search engines do they use?

The answers will play a large role in the strategy you ultimately choose. While every company needs a global gateway, every global gateway should be unique to the company and its customers.

The .com dilemma

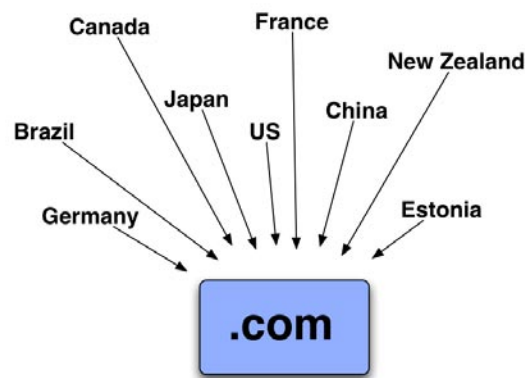
Based on a 2005 survey of multinational corporations, between 40% and 60% of traffic to their .com Web pages originated from outside of the US.

This trend has led to a dilemma many Webmasters and marketing directors are now facing: *How do you create a .com Web page that appeals to Americans while simultaneously redirects half of all other visitors (many of whom do not speak English) to local Web sites?*

This dilemma is the main reason why country domain names are so valuable—they take Web users directly to local content, bypassing .com entirely.

But most companies do not register country domain names for all markets in which they do business. To compound matters, some companies use their .com URL on all global advertising campaigns, ensuring a steady stream of international traffic to .com.

The solution to this dilemma is first a matter of understanding and then a matter of developing a global gateway that minimizes the many usability issues involved.



Between 40% and 60% of traffic to .com comes from outside the United States.

Americans think .com equals USA

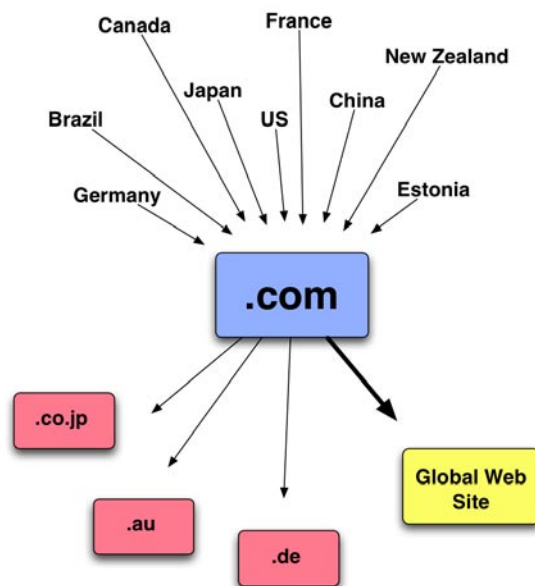
The fundamental challenge is that most Americans believe .com is synonymous with the US. What you must do is work to create a Web site that appears local to US residents as well as accommodating to non-US residents. That's where the global gateway fits in, as a sort of global "air traffic control," making sure everyone gets where they need to go.

For the near future, most companies will continue to use .com as both a US and global address. But others might also begin using another domain, such as .net, to host their global Web sites.

Companies like Panasonic and Sony already do this, allowing the US offices to use .com as the default US address.

Although the US has its own .us country domain, few companies use it. Volvo is one company that does use .us (profiled in Part IV).

It's too early to know for sure how .com will evolve as a global destination address. But if you implement an effective global gateway strategy at the .com address, you'll be in very good shape.



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