

ISEO - International Search Engine Optimization

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This is in response to a post on [The Google+ SEO Community](#) entitled: "International SEO [Infographic]", posted 08-02-13 at 8:37 AM.

I recently lived for two years in Italy and created and optimized sites both in English and Italian so like any foreign language country you have two primary aspects... country and language.

There are three key ways in which to approach an international SEO campaign:

- ~ Optimizing for the Local Language
- ~ Optimizing for a Foreign Language
- ~ Optimizing for a Foreign Country in a Language which is Foreign to That Country

Optimizing by Local Language: Each country represents a language pool for search engines. The US is more like an ocean; being that the US and often the US and Canada have a massive amount of websites and hundreds of millions of people who speak the same language, which means a lot business competition, as well as a lot of SEOs competing to rank their clients. Also the level of professional SEO competition in many countries is light compared to others (like the US or the UK) as SEO is newer in those other countries and there are not as many resources for learning it in the language of the country.

Optimizing for a language which is foreign to the country: You can create a website in a foreign country which focuses on a language which is foreign to that country. This allows you to target the tourist, expatriate, traveling business and foreign-student market in that country. Italy is a great example of a one-country language as Italy alone speaks Italian. Creating a site in the US which is in Italian and which focuses on travel to the US for Italians (or even better would be to focus on travel to a particular city or tourist attraction such as the Grand Canyon) can be a great way to compete while remaining niche.

Optimizing for a foreign country in your language: Let's say you're in the US but you want to promote vacations, tours and hotels in Florence, Italy. You can create your site in the US and attempt to market it to those in the US where you'll be up against all others in this country who are competing against you. You can also, however, create your site in English and have it hosted in, and optimized for, Florence, Italy. This makes it a site which is actually local to the destination city. By being a local site you become a local resource and can compete with the large international websites such as TripAdvisor.com and others, because Google likes to present internationally relevant websites along side local ones. I did this with my site [FinditinRome.com](#) .

You have two areas of Search Engine focus: Outside of the US, except for countries like China, Google holds a strong domination of the search market. Therefore you can focus on Google.com (the US version which is found internationally at Google.com/ncr) or Google.country such as Google.fr in France or Google.it in Italy.

Americans living and traveling in foreign countries still use the US version on their computers and mobiles by setting their location or preference. Others who access Google locally reach the local country's version of Google - as going to Google.com without a change of preferences automatically redirects to the local Google version.

By using geo and language targeting you can optimize for, and gain rankings and traffic from, multiple versions of Google. Using tags such as "hreflang". See the [inforgraphic this comment pertains to here](#) - and targeting the content of your site to each language will help dramatically.

Not that many will go to another country to provide SEO services like I did, however this can be beneficial if you wish to provide SEO services to foreign companies wishing to either market to people speaking their language in your country or those speaking your language in another country.

Example 1: You're in the US and you find a French company that wishes to promote to the French-speaking community in the US. They'll provide the content, you speak that language or you obtain a translator, so the language part isn't a problem. You create NewFrenchSite.com in French or primarily in French with a second level language being English. This way the site is local to the US but in French which is commonly found in other countries but not very commonly found within the US search market. This means that the chances of you ranking highly for US-originated searches in French are high while also are the chances of ranking for a US-targeted search in French originating in France (meaning the person searching is writing the query in French using Google.fr or is physically located in France). NewFrenchSite.com provides a local-US website in French for both local US queries and is promoted on foreign search engines as a local-US result. You kill two birds with one stone.

Example 2: You want to promote your services to English-speakers in France so you create a site in English and host it in France (StudentsVisitingParis.com). You create all of your content in English, optimize it for English keywords and target it to both the local search engine version and the US version. This way when American (or English-speaking) students in France search for information in English on Google.fr about visiting Paris StudentsVisitingParis.com has a great chance of coming up. When students in the US are about to visit Paris and look for information on students visiting Paris StudentsVisitingParis.com also has a great chance of ranking as it's a local Parisian website in English.

Example 3: You're an SEO and your client receives a lot of traffic from Germany for its products. You do the research and find out that when they're searching for this product that the English name or the brand name is internationally recognized (e.g. "baby walker" or "Harley Davidson" as a brand). So when someone is doing a search in Germany on Google.de for "baby walker" then you optimize your site in the US for the German language but using both the English version of the term "baby walker" as well as the German version "" instead of "gehfri laufflernhilfe". You can also create a local German version of your site and optimize it there in the country so that you're competing locally for your international product.

Foreign domain names versus .com: I've found that you don't need to purchase a foreign domain extension (e.g. .fr, .it, etc.) to rank well in a foreign country as a .com is internationally recognized. This also makes it easier to obtain a foreign-language .com (e.g. DescouvrezNice.com which translates to DiscoverNice.com). Also most foreign language domain extensions require that you have a local tax ID or local presence. Though many can be purchased through agencies that act as a local face but these can cost.

International SEO can be powerful and rewarding. It just takes having resources for the language, local hosting, and some good knowledge of the target culture.