

CASE STUDY

Building a global stage for independent musicians with CD Baby



With international growth in its sights, music distribution company CD Baby depends on the support of applingua to localize its vast library of online content.

Founded in 1998 by musician turned entrepreneur Derek Sivers, CD Baby is used by more than 650,000 artists to publish and monetize music on platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music.

While most CD Baby users live in North America, the company has developed a strong customer base elsewhere in the world, particularly in Central and South America. Translating and localizing content into Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese is key to the continued international growth of the business.

Tuning up for expansion

When Paula Humphries joined CD Baby in 2012, she was the first member of the team who could speak Spanish and Portuguese as well as English. *“Because of this, I became the person responsible for managing translation and localization,”* she explains.

Paula was relying on cloud based translation software Smartling to manage localization projects, using a combination of machine translation and her own multilingual skills to help CD Baby communicate effectively in Spanish and Portuguese. When the task became too large for her to tackle alone, she attended Smartling’s Global Ready conference to look for a solution.

“After trialing them (applingua) alongside several other translation services, I knew they were the right people for the job.”



“Our development team was publishing a lot of words on the website, and we didn’t have a good, streamlined system in place for translating and localizing it,” says Paula. “I found out about applingua from someone I met at the conference, and after trialing them alongside several other translation services, I knew they were the right people for the job.”

Smarter localization

Choosing applingua to localize CD Baby’s website and online content freed up Paula to take on new responsibilities when she was promoted to the role of International Marketing Specialist. With numerous marketing platforms to manage, she was keen to optimize the localization process as much as possible.

“My job includes getting emails sent out, banner ads written and marketing campaigns built,” says Paula. “I decided it would be good if we could have all these things translated quickly through Smartling. With the help of applingua, we figured out a workflow where our team can drop any files they need into a folder and request translated versions. It doesn’t matter whether it’s an InDesign file, a PowerPoint presentation or a Word document, Smartling extracts the text so that applingua’s translators can quickly localize it.

“This has turned out to be such a success that I’ve extended it to other departments within the company. It’s making our lives a lot easier. When you combine Smartling’s technology with applingua’s understanding of language, the results are just wonderful.”

“Whatever language we choose to translate our content into next, I feel confident and comfortable working with applingua”

A memorable support act

With CD Baby’s audience outside America continuing to grow, the company relies on applingua to ensure consistent and accurate communication.

“I could never go back to how we did things before we started working with applingua,” Paula says. “They go above and beyond, regularly checking in and making sure we’re getting the quality and the service we expect.

“I can always trust that when I set a date for something to be done, the guys at applingua will meet it and the quality of the work will be good. Fast turnaround and scalability are important to us. In the future we’ll be adding more languages, and with applingua we can use the same model and process that we already know. It’s a well oiled machine.”

CD Baby’s goal of helping independent musicians around the world is now being realized. With its percentage of non native customers currently at 45%, Paula expects that this figure will soon grow to the point where the majority of CD Baby’s users come from outside North America.

“The market in Latin America is booming, and we’re also seeing a lot of growth in India,” she reports. “We’ve now got representatives in nine countries, and we’re opening an office and call center in London to help look after our European customers. Whatever language we choose to translate our content into next, I feel confident and comfortable working with applingua.”

