



Snowflake

Perfectly timed software documentation thanks to machine translation

Snowflake im Fokus

Over **2,700** employees, branches in **19** different countries – Snowflake delivers the Data Cloud and is one of the world's leading Enterprise Data Management software providers. With their innovative platform that powers the Data Cloud, Snowflake helps customers to unlock the full potential of their business data.



From the very beginning, Snowflake's California-based founders and engineers have been driven by a passion for data. They wanted to share this passion with the world, so they decided to translate their data platform for the European and Asian Markets. The tight deadlines and rapid turnaround on Snowflake's frequent, regular release cycles made this a challenge, but Milengo's machine translation services proved to be up to the task – in fact, they turned out to be the key to greater cost efficiency in localizing Snowflake's user documentation.

A unique snowflake, born from the Cloud

Snowflake was founded in San Mateo, California in 2012 by two Oracle alumni. It was while working for the database specialist that they came up with the vision for a more user-friendly, cloud-based system of data management. Snowflake delivers the Data Cloud, a global network where thousands of organizations mobilize data with near-unlimited scale, concurrency, and performance. Inside the Data Cloud, organizations unite their siloed data, easily discover and securely share governed data, and execute diverse analytic workloads - resulting in Gartner's analysts naming the company as a "leader" in their 2019 Magic Quadrant For Data Management Solutions For Analytics.

1,000,000+

words translated

Costs cut by **36%**

1-week release cycles

Objectives

Punctual delivery
Customer satisfaction
Reduced costs
Automation

Languages

EN > DE/FR/JP

Type of text

Software,
documentation

Employees

2.700+
worldwide

Revenue

\$710 m

Industry

Enterprise
software

The challenge

In 2018, Snowflake's customer base tripled in size. In order to maintain this course of growth, the company decided to translate its products so it could expand beyond the boundaries of the English-speaking world. It was time to take the next step – so for the first time in its history, the Data Cloud company entered into a long-term partnership with a translation provider. In order for the relationship to be a success, Snowflake needed its new partner to deliver on three key requirements:

- ✓ **Punctual delivery:** Snowflake publishes new updates for its data platform solution on a one-week cycle. In order to keep up with these seven-day sprints, new features and documentation content would have to be translated on a rapid turnaround. Any delays would have a knock-on effect for the entire release cycle.
- ✓ **Consistently high-quality support:** When working with complex software, users rely heavily on high-quality technical support and regular documentation updates – both of which need to be provided in all the same languages as the solution itself. For software-as-a-service providers like Snowflake, support and training are crucial to the success of the product.
- ✓ **Low translation costs:** The user documentation for Snowflake is hundreds of thousands of words in length – and increasing all the time. With this in mind, it was clear right from the start that maximizing the efficiency of the translation process would be essential in order to stop the costs from spiralling out of control.

Machine translation opens the door

Milengo has 30 years of experience in the translation industry and has helped notable global players such as Infor and IBM to localize their enterprise software. With this impressive resume and the translation agency's transparent, consultative approach, it wasn't long before the Snowflake team knew they had found the perfect provider. Together, the newly minted partners settled on a two-pronged approach for the translation process: experienced human translators would handle the texts for the software itself and all of Snowflake's website and marketing content, while machine **translation (MT)** and standardized human **post-editing (PE)** would be employed for the user documentation. Milengo has been offering commercial MT services since 2012, and it was the company's status as an early adopter of the technology that helped it gain the customer's trust so quickly.

Start with a solid base, then keep on building

Milengo kicked off the collaboration by launching a pilot project in order to demonstrate the cost savings the machine translation solution could provide for Snowflake. The results of this project were then used to develop a specialized workflow with faster turnarounds and unparalleled low translation prices, which would work in perfect harmony with Snowflake's release cycle.

The MT-PE process was initially used to translate Snowflake's user documentation from English to French. When this proved a success, the same approach was adopted for the German-language market. To date, this process has yielded over 1 million words of translated text for Snowflake, cutting the company's translation costs by around 36%.



Turbocharging translation with the power of data

With the huge quantities of data Snowflake processes every day, automation and streamlined processes are a must. As such, speed and efficiency were always going to be essential when it came to planning the company's translation processes, as keeping up with its rapid release cycles would otherwise prove impossible. In response to this requirement, Milengo provided a rigorously tested MT system based on the latest developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and neural networks. Milengo's localization experts also went one step further, coming up with a highly automated system for the translation management process in order to speed up the workflow and reduce manual file handling efforts.



Automated processes for agile software development

The Milengo LanguageDesk customer portal enables customers to commission translation projects and monitor their progress in real-time. In an environment where punctual delivery is critical to success, this premium automated approach is the perfect complement to Snowflake's Agile workflows. The Snowflake team uploads the content they want translating directly to a shared hot folder. Once the translation is complete, Milengo synchronizes it with Snowflake's document management system via the same direct route.

The source files Snowflake provided proved particularly challenging from a technical perspective, as the machine translation did not automatically separate the mark-ups (elements that tell the software how to display certain items of content) from the text that actually needed to be translated. In response to this issue, Milengo's Engineering team developed a special file preparation script to protect Snowflake's mark-ups and prevent the formatting of the source files from getting damaged during machine translation. This also saved the customer from having to pay more for the extra work that might otherwise be required in order to repair the damaged formatting.

Figure 1: Original content of the *.po files provided by Snowflake

```
msgid ""CRLF
"To quit a program, use the :code:`!quit <program name> in <time in seconds>` command. Refer to the
:doc:`Commands Documentation </user-doc/commands>` for more information about the command."CRLF
msgstr ""CRLF
```

Figure 2: Milengo's translation-optimized script

```
msgid ""CRLF
"To quit a program, use the <untranslatable>:code:`!quit <</untranslatable>program name</untranslatable>> in
<</untranslatable>time in seconds</untranslatable>>`</untranslatable> command. Refer to the :doc:`Commands
Documentation </user-doc/commands>` for more information about the command."CRLF
msgstr ""CRLF
```

Reliable service quality in a competitive market

Machine translation works best when all the right pieces slot into place: choosing the right technology, professional preparation and post-editing of the translation files, technology management, quality assurance, and the use of properly trained and qualified post-editors. When all these boxes are checked, machine translation truly is a well-oiled machine – and with its certification in accordance with the international **post-editing standard ISO 18587:2018**, Milengo provides the perfect example of such a system.

Snowflake's machine-translated user documentation has left the Silicon Valley company with satisfied customers and helped them hold their own in an incredibly competitive data warehousing space.



” We needed the highest quality translation in the shortest time possible. Machine translation with post-editing has exceeded all our expectations, while also reducing our costs.

– Yitzik Brenman, Sr. Manager, Documentation Snowflake



Outlook

In 2020, Snowflake landed the biggest IPO valuation to date for a software company on the New York Stock Exchange – a great indication of the provider’s potential for growth. And the company already has one eye on its future, too, with plans in place to use machine translation to tap into the Japanese market. Milengo is ready for this challenge and raring to go, with all the tools in place to handle the higher project management workload, larger language teams and more complex technical processes that the increase in target languages and translation volume will entail. In short, the outlook for Snowflake and Milengo couldn’t be better – and their shared success story looks set to continue for many years to come.



Let's talk!

If you'd like to find out more about our translation solutions for enterprise software and documentation, please contact us at sales@milengo.com

Milengo is an ISO 17100 certified language service provider with over 30 years of industry experience. With a strong emphasis on consultation, we design tailor-made translation and localization strategies for customers in the IT, hardware, mechanical engineering and e-learning sectors. In doing so, we focus on the central requirements of these markets: industry-specific linguistic expertise, speed and cost efficiency.