

SE BYTES

LIONBRIDGE WEBINAR SERIES

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How to Architect Websites for Global Traffic

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WEBINAR





Overview of geo-targeting best practice, breaking it down to architecture, domain and site structures, use of hreflang, language selection tools and localization.

ARCHITECTURE


DOMAIN STRUCTURE

Should you use gTLD or ccTLD?

- Depends on structure of the business and the marketing teams
- You may be driven down a particular route by existing assets, there may be a specific site for the UK or Japan and you may need to incorporate that into a solution.
- The more sites you have, the harder to admin, which can make a ccTLD solution expensive, but with a gTLD solution you need to help Google to understand what page to show in each market. This requires a strong tagging solution
- If you try to use a gTLD to market to more than one country which use the same language, with 2 instances of that language, hreflang will help manage any duplication issues and allows you to tell Google which page to use.
- If you are a good local site on a ccTLD and decide to bring your business to another market, another ccTLD may make sense. For example a UK company with a .co.uk may choose a .de for the German market. They are going to need another site anyway because you can't market to Germany from a .co.uk (effectively). Might not need hreflang, particularly if the language for each site is unique.
- Overall the recommendation is a gTLD approach.

What about when you're using both?

- You use hreflang to make them aware of one another.
- This is a frequent situation, particularly for US companies which use a .com for the US and ccTLDs for non-US. The gTLD, .com, has a right to rank globally, so will compete with local TLDs in the same language, but also for branded terms, in all languages.
- If a company is using the gTLD approach and decides they want to target China, we would usually recommend a separate site on a ccTLD (.cn) on a local instance


 <https://www.lionbridge.com>

>  /de

>  /fr


>  /es

>  /it

>  /zh-hant

>  /sv

>  /ko

>  /zh-hans

>  /ja

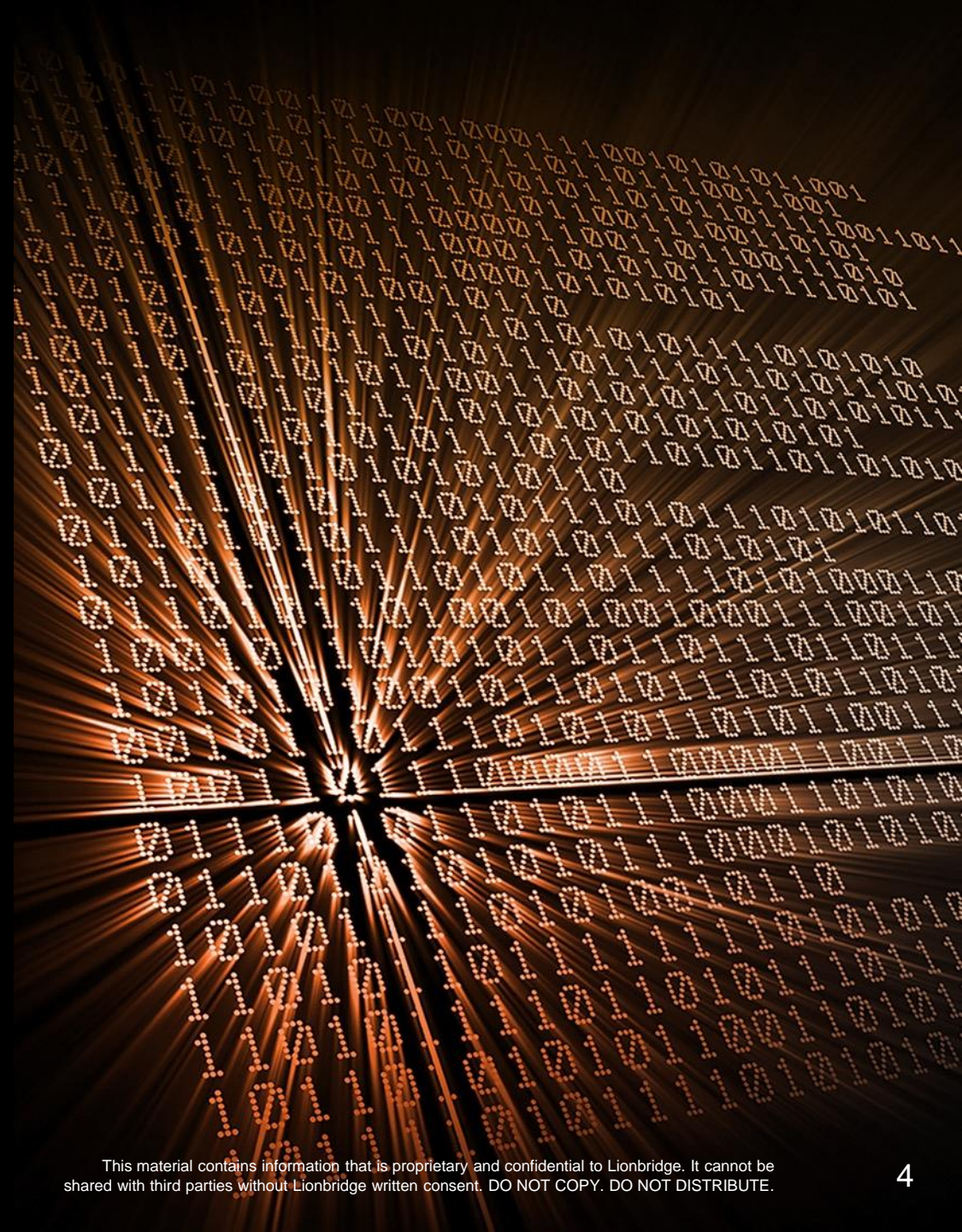
ARCHITECTURE

URL STRUCTURE

You can separate the language content in 3 ways:

1. Directories, you would use a structure that matches the approach to language on the site. If the site is targeting at language level, the directories would be /en/, /fr/ and /de/, for example. If you are targeting at country level the directories may be /en-gb/, /en-us/, /fr-fr/, /fr-ca/, /de-de/ etc.
2. Subdomains can also be structured / named in a similar way. The difference with a subdomain is that technically it is a different site. Technically less leverage of the global domain but “internal” links could be more effective.
3. Language parameters, only mentioned because it is still in use on some sites (Google), this approach is fraught with issues and is not recommended e.g. on navigation, parameter is dropped leading to multiple language versions trying to get indexed on the same URL.

It is recommended to consistently use ISO standard both for the hreflang tags but also when defining the structure of the site. Language-locale / ll-cc, use lowercase for consistency.

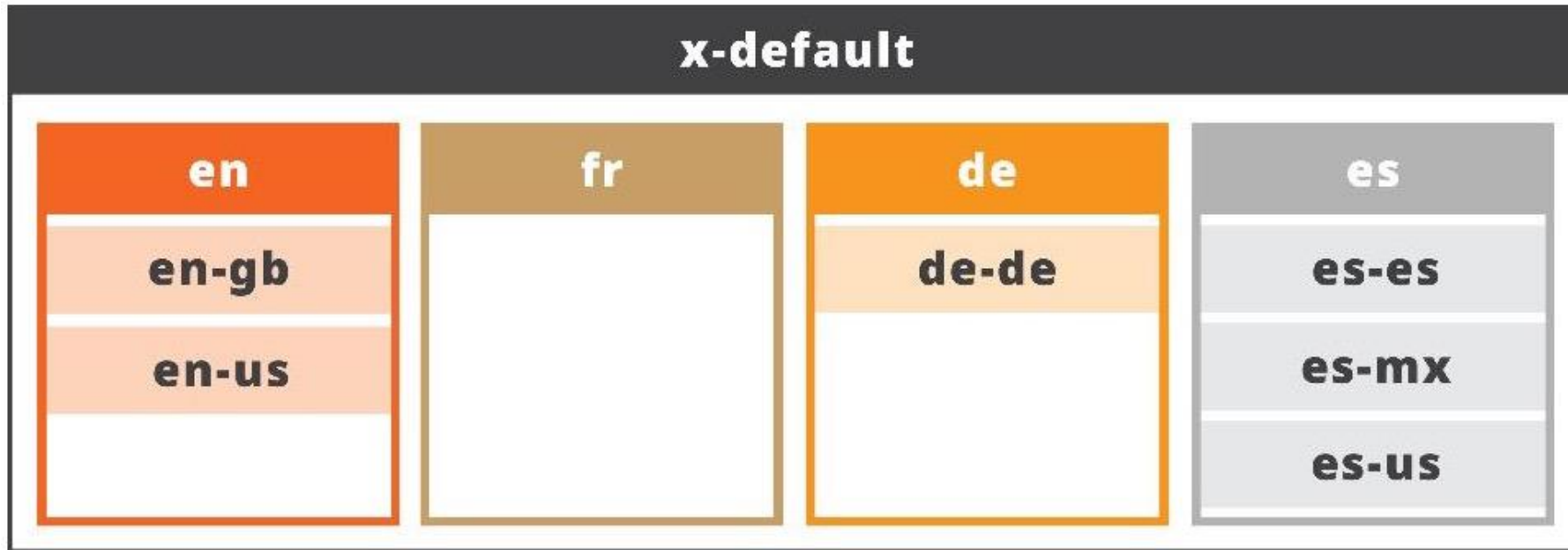


HREFLANG

TAGGING SOLUTIONS



x-default



- en-us
- en-gb
- en
- es-es
- es-mx
- es-us
- es
- de-de
- de
- fr
- x-default

HREFLANG

HOW TO IMPLEMENT



- The two main ways of implementing hreflang are in sitemaps or in the <head> of your HTML page. You can also use HTTP Headers but this approach is uncommon.
- Both are equally valid, Google probably processes the tags faster in the <head> but there is no benefit technically from either approach.
- For some clients, who use WordPress or other common CMSs, plugins are available, they usually implement hreflang in the <head> of the page. Not all CMSs have this capability but custom implementations are possible using the APIs and querying for page variants.
- Sitemap implementations don't impact code on page. Sitemap can be external to CMS. This is useful if your implementation is across multiple CMSs, multiple sites, multiple ccTLDs or even multiple gTLDs.
- Use hreflang when pages are essentially the same but in different languages.
- Not all pages require hreflang. If a page is unique to a language or market and has no variants, then hreflang is not appropriate. This can happen if a product or service is unique to a certain market.
- You might have different products in two different markets. Service offerings might be different, especially with regulatory differences such as EU vs UK vs USA.
- To map this correctly, find a common identifier no matter what country it is in.
- Export all URLs across all domains, and then map what is one to one. Even though products may have similar names, ensure they have the same attributes and features.
- Hreflang tags should be applied on all localized pages (and the source pages).
- Every version of a page should have the same hreflang tags, including a self-referencing tag.
- Tags must accurately reflect the language of the on-page content.
- Language level fall-backs are usually recommended, this allows you to direct users to their most appropriate language page, if their country is not listed in the rules.

HREFLANG

X-DEFAULT AND LANGUAGE LEVEL FALLBACKS

- Many companies target specific countries but will accept business from other countries, particularly if they already cover the user's language.
- You may not want to have different language versions of a page for all the different markets you cover.
- A German user should always see a German page, if one is available, an English user should always see an English page.
- You may also want to select a page for users to see if their preferred language is not part of the languages on the site. On most sites, an English version of the page is selected (not always).
- Language level fallbacks are usually recommended, this allows you to direct users to their most appropriate language page, if their country is not listed in the rules.
- A language level fallback can be a separate page or it can map to an existing page. The hreflang tag for a language level instruction is "en", "fr" etc, there is no reference to the region. Language only tags are allowed, region only tags are not.
- The global fallback is the x-default tag, on most sites this would map to the US page or the global English page, but a client can choose another option, particularly if the site has no English version.

```
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9" xmlns:xhtml="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
  <url>
    <loc>https://www.testsite.com/de/page1</loc>
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-us" href="https://www.testsite.com/en-us/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-gb" href="https://www.testsite.com/en-gb/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="en" href="https://www.testsite.com/en/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="es-es" href="https://www.testsite.com/es-es/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="es-mx" href="https://www.testsite.com/es-mx/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="es-us" href="https://www.testsite.com/es-us/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="es" href="https://www.testsite.com/es/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="de-de" href="https://www.testsite.com/de-de/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="de" href="https://www.testsite.com/de/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="fr" href="https://www.testsite.com/fr/page1" />
    <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="x-default" href="https://www.testsite.com/en/page1" />
```

LANGUAGE AND REGION SELECTION TOOL

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

- The language selection tool is a frequently neglected aspect of an optimized international site.
- It should be available in desktop and mobile and should be in a prominent position on both.
- Ideally it should be coded so that the links are crawlable by bots (ideally not JavaScript) using the href attribute.
 - This has a positive impact on SEO, international pages are easier for bots to find and crawl.
 - This has a positive impact on the internal linking on the site.
- The tool should work page-to-page, when a user selects a language, they should land on the same page in the chosen language / country.
 - This is the best user experience and ensures the user has an uninterrupted journey, even when they change language / country. More likely to convert.
 - Combined with the crawlable links this can have a positive impact on internal linking to international pages, each translated or localized page, has a minimum number of links, based on the number of languages / countries.
- All language / country options should be included.



LOCALIZATION

CONTENT ANALYSIS

- The content on the site should be available in the languages of your target audience. Users like to buy in their native language, they are more likely to convert if this is the case.
- Different content items have different values, for localization, this means you need to invest more in the important pieces of content and may choose to invest less in content which isn't pertinent to converting a user.
 - Translation is the basic offering in this area and a site that is fully (and well) translated, gives a user the opportunity to interact and convert.
 - Localization is recommended, particularly when you have multiple versions of the same language. If you have a page for the US and one for the UK, they should be different, otherwise why would they both exist.
 - Optimization is recommended for valuable content, which needs to perform in search results and is important to the conversion of users.
 - Standard optimization, keyword research, and optimization of translated content, works well for pages which need to perform in search.
 - Advanced optimization, in-depth SEO research, transcreation of content using the research. For pages which need to perform in search and have a high monetary value (revenue / conversions).
- Metadata is particularly important for SEO and should always be included in the solution, whether it is translation, localization or optimization.
- Ensure no mixed language pages exist, ensure all on-page content is in one language.





THANK YOU

Breaking Barriers. Building Bridges. Everywhere.



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