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# MORAVIA IT REDRAWS THE MAP OF LOCALIZATION

*This Eastern European service provider combines strong technical capabilities with a service focus*

**JIM HEALEY**

Usually, when one thinks of major centers in the information technology (IT) industry, one envisions such locales as San Jose, California; Dublin, Ireland; and Seattle, Washington. Rarely does one look towards the countries previously known as, in Sir Winston Churchill's phrase, the "Iron Curtain" countries. But this situation is changing.

Located in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, Moravia IT is one of the largest localization companies in Europe and has rapidly become a key player in the global localization industry. The company has come a long way in its short history. Due to the hard work and focused vision of Eva and Rudolf Forstinger, the beginnings of Moravia IT grew out of the changes from Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in 1989. [Note: Czechoslovakia no longer exists. The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic became independent states when Czechoslovakia was dissolved on January 1, 1993.]

During the Communist regime, Eva and Rudolf worked as freelance translators of technical documentation and as interpreters. Eva acted as a sworn translator of Spanish and French, and Rudolf translated and interpreted from and to English, Hungarian and Spanish. Kati Forstingerová, General Manager and CEO, remembers that her parents worked at home for many years during the Communist regime. "This means that, contrary to people working in state-owned companies, my parents were accustomed to working hard



*Moravia IT management on the first-floor balcony of company headquarters in Brno*

independently. They were accustomed to making decisions and taking risks."

Eva Forstingerová recounts the formation of Moravia IT: "Immediately following the Velvet Revolution, a Translators Co-operative was founded in 1990, flexibly reacting on the challenges of a nascent market economy and on the beginning onslaught of information technology. Czechoslovak legislation of the period did not admit private enterprises at all. There were only state-owned enterprises and 'socially-owned' co-operatives. In early 1991 a law in the new Czechoslovak Commercial Code was passed, providing for the foundation of private enterprises, limited liability companies, joint stock companies and so on. As a result, the Translator Co-operative was converted

into a joint stock company." At this time the company was called Moravia Translations. In 2001, the company became Moravia IT to better reflect its core activities.

## **MORAVIA IT'S EARLY YEARS**

In its early stages Moravia IT started operations as a provider of Eastern European language solutions. Business manager Arturo Quintero says, "From the very beginning there were some clients who wanted us to do IT or who had needs for documents in the IT sector. These were typically photocopying and fax machines. This is how we started to have a focus in the IT industry." In 1994 the company became the first customer of TRADOS in Eastern Europe. It was at that time the

only company that had invested in the newest technology and could therefore work in electronic formats.

Moravia IT became a true localization business in 1995 as it undertook localization projects for Oracle, Hewlett-Packard, Corel and Lotus. Robert Pinkas, marketing and sales manager, says that these technology companies "found in Moravia IT a partner that could cope with bigger demands and use updated technology such as TRADOS. A company using TRADOS technology at that time was quite unique." The initial languages of the localization projects were Hungarian, Czech and Polish, but in time new languages were added to the list of targets for large software and hardware producers: Russian, Slovak, Croatian, Romanian, Turkish and Greek. Today, Moravia IT's achievements are more in completing projects into Western European and Asian languages.

Moravia IT now employs more than 200 people. Most of the administrative and technical staff are located in Brno because, according to Pinkas, "of centralized testing and engineering project management services." Part of the linguistic staff is also located in Brno. Other employees are located in Moravia IT's three branch offices in Bratislava, Slovak Republic; Budapest, Hungary; and Szczecin, Poland. "Through a long-term relationship which is preceded by a careful selection process," says Pinkas, "we cooperate with the best SLV vendors in each country where we offer our services. We are really fortunate and proud of our vendor base, and this goes even stronger for our three offices in the Slovak Republic, Hungary and Poland."

### CENTRALIZATION OF ACTIVITIES

The centralization of company activities in Brno is a key factor in Moravia IT's success. Libor Safar, Business Manager, says that customers benefit from the efficiency which results from the centralization of activities, "which includes testing, engineering and project management where our clients have always one single point of contact for any project activity and for all languages. The Moravia hub team cooperates with the in-country teams." Safar also notes that Brno has become "the major 'IT capital' of the whole country and the seat of many universities which provide Moravia IT with a large pool of potential new and highly qualified staff."

Besides centralization, other factors have contributed to Moravia IT's rapid success. Tomáš Kratochvíl, Operations Manager, believes that



*Moravia IT's Production Room #2*

Moravia IT's true value is the company's "multilingual approach to the management of localization projects. We possess the knowledge of various languages which helps projects to be delivered to customers on-time." According to Kratochvíl, clients deal directly with the head office in Brno and the centralized team. "Our project managers communicate with our teams in individual countries and effectively reuse experiences gained on first languages," he says. "By doing this, we reduce costs and time for subsequent languages. We calculated that our testers and software engineers spend only 60% to 70% of the time with subsequent languages as was necessary for testing and engineering the first language." Safar adds, "The fact is that 95% of all the projects that Moravia IT does are multilingual projects."

### RECOGNITION FOR MORAVIA IT

Recognition for Moravia IT's outstanding work is evident in the awards the company has received in recent years: Symantec's Best New Vendor in 1997; Microsoft's Excellence in Localization Award in 1997; Symantec's Preferred Vendor in 1998; Corel's Certified Partner in 1998; and Compaq's Best Localization Partner in Europe, Middle East and Africa in 2000.

Besides company recognition, there has also been individual recognition. Kati Forstingerová was the Czech recipient of the "Entrepreneur of the Year 2000" award presented by Ernst & Young Company which is given to a person who can take credit for building up and successfully developing his or her company. Forstingerová sees the award as an achievement for the entire company and not just for her efforts. "I was happy and excited to receive this extremely prestigious and widely known award," she says. "This award is not only for my achievement, but also it is an achievement for the entire company and all of my colleagues. It is a

great motivation to all of us for our future work and development."

### MEETING COMPAQ'S NEEDS

A "win-win" partnership is how Rainer Schnuettgen, Localization and Certification Manager at Compaq, describes his company's relationship with Moravia IT. Compaq has been working with Moravia IT since 1999, primarily using its localization services. "We needed a partner who was able to offer on-time, high-quality translations and related services at an adequate cost," says Schnuettgen. "Key to the success of a localization partnership with Compaq is a highly

professional project management team who not only administers on-time the deliverables in production, but also anticipates problems, makes recommendations and advises on technical issues."

Schnuettgen lists what makes working with Moravia IT so successful: "They have a passion for localization and an enthusiasm and high commitment to us as the client. These are the differentiating factors that are critical for Compaq in a business partnership."

This focus on customer satisfaction has been present throughout Moravia IT's history of working with clients. According to Pinkas, "quality at Moravia IT means understanding our customer's requirements for the services we supply; setting a chain of specifications that define these requirements; and then consistently conforming to the specifications at each step of the marketing, production activity and teamwork process." Safar adds, "Meeting our customers' needs is our primary objective."

### WORKING WITH ORACLE

Oracle, presently one of Moravia IT's largest customers, is another example of a working partnership that has developed over the years. In the mid-1990s Oracle was looking for a supplier in Eastern Europe. According to Quintero, Oracle approached their existing suppliers, most of whom were Western European companies. Oracle needed a solution in Eastern Europe, so they also looked at translation businesses in that region, businesses with possible experience in doing localization. "So, when Oracle approached and said, 'We would like to work with a company with experience of recycling text with a special technology,' they asked if we had any experience with this," says Quintero. "Oracle later said that they were very impressed because they found few people in the



Kati Forstingerová, CEO of Moravia IT

West at that time with experience using TRADOS. They were very surprised to have found a company in Eastern Europe with previous TRADOS experience."

Oracle and Moravia IT have been working together continuously now for more than six years. Bettina Reichart, Vendor and Language Services Manager for Central and Eastern Europe for the Oracle Worldwide Product Translation Group (WPTG), praises Moravia IT's "stable and reliable cooperation." Reichart relates that Oracle uses Moravia IT for the "translation of software and on-line help for the Oracle E-Business Suite into four languages: Czech, Polish, Slovak and Hungarian. The products range from financial applications, discrete manufacturing, Internet procurement and human resources to order management and business intelligence systems." Reichart goes on to say that Moravia IT is best at "high-volume projects which require complex, integrated engineering, project management and language management capabilities."

**OVERCOMING GEOGRAPHICAL PREJUDICES**

When talking about Moravia IT, Reichart brings out a very important point about the company's location in Eastern Europe: "I don't want to

hang on to geographical prejudices, but Moravia IT successfully blends the strong technical capabilities common to Central and Eastern European-based companies with a business acumen and service focus more typically associated with Western ones." The staff at Moravia IT are only too aware of how they might be seen in some Western countries. Quintero comments, "For some businesses in the United States, they are unaware of how technically skilled a company working in Central and Eastern Europe can be."

Pinkas, who lived in the United States for ten years, has first-hand experience with how Eastern European companies are viewed. "The fact that a company is located in Eastern Europe does not mean that it is not able to deliver global quality," he says. "It is difficult for Westerners to overcome the stereotype of looking at an Eastern European

"Because our headquarters are in Eastern Europe," she says, "many companies do not realize the amount of business we do in localizing into Western European and Asian languages. We are a global player with great potential."

**WHAT'S AHEAD**


Controlled growth is in the future for Moravia IT. According to Kati Forstingerová, "We see a clear path of growth for Moravia IT. In developing the company, we have applied two generic principles: focused strategy and differentiation. Instead of trying to be the largest, we have always focused on a smaller number of clients and meeting their needs better than anyone else. We have also made an effort to identify what our clients value the most and tried to differentiate our company by doing this uniquely."

Quintero agrees with the planned growth of Moravia IT. "Our company has grown organically, and we are not interested in purchasing or acquiring other companies," he says. "Also, Moravia IT is privately owned, and there are no investors. Thus, there is no pressure for quick returns on investment or profit reporting. We are able to focus on our customers and meeting their needs."

No longer will "Iron Curtain" countries be overlooked by companies with localization needs. Through its commitment to quality and its dedicated staff, Moravia IT has done much to focus attention on this geographic region. As Kati Forstingerová observes, "Moravia IT is a global player with great potential." 🌐

**Moravia IT at a Glance**

**Offices:** Brno, Czech Republic (global headquarters); Bratislava, Slovak Republic; Budapest, Hungary; and Szczecin, Poland.  
**Employees:** 219  
**Years in Business:** 11  
**2000 Revenues:** \$6 million  
**2001 Revenues est.:** \$8 million  
**Translation Tools Used:** TRADOS in version 3 and 5 as main translation tool supported by internal tools and add-ins  
**Localization and QA Tools Used:** For localization, we are mainly using special tools provided by customers and also Alchemy CATALYST. For QA on on-line documentation, we are using HtmlQA and HelpQA tools from SDL International. The QA process is also supported by internal tools and tracked in the central QA database.



company like Moravia IT as being able to provide solid and reasonable — actually, above reasonable — services. Moravia IT is a company that has grown incredibly, has had a great deal of business success and has first-rate minds. So, it is on a superb level technologically that is not seen in 90% of the companies in the western world."

Kati Forstingerová sums up best the position of Moravia IT in the localization industry.

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