'iFirefox' web browser on the cards

Rubric, a global language service provider (LSP), has donated its translation services to make Mozilla's Firefox Web browser available in isiXhosa, one of South Africa's official languages.

Françoise Henderson, CEO of Rubric, says the company completed the translation of 30,000 words into isiXhosa, and will continue to support Mozilla in the interests of broadening mother-tongue access to information.

"We're proud to be associated with a very noble undertaking," she says. But it will also have commercial spin-off, she adds. "For a long time, Xhosa-speakers have had to put up with being served in English. We expect this pathfinder project will stimulate interest in Xhosa-translated content, which in turn will boost translation requirements."

Spike of interest

Citing Common Sense Advisory's "Can't read won't buy" report, Henderson says 72.4% of consumers are more likely to buy a product when it offers information in their own language. "We also learn better in our own languages."

By rights, the announcement should lead to a spike in online platforms and products packaged and marketed in isiXhosa, she says.

"It is the second-most spoken language in South Africa after isiZulu, ahead of Afrikaans and English, and it deserves to have a dedicated browser, just as the others do," she concludes.

Community effort

Ian Henderson, Rubric chief technology officer, says Firefox is available in over 70 languages thanks to a fantastic community effort.

"Firefox is being developed along the lines of the latest thinking in software development - with a new version being released every six weeks. Alongside a large group of volunteer translators, our contribution of translation, project management and

quality assurance has added isiXhosa to the list of languages Firefox is available in," he says.

Mozilla structures its coding efforts as open source projects, so it is relatively easy for translators to contribute, he says.

Translators who want to become involved may contact firefox@rubric.com for more information.

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