

Checklist

Expanding to Germany: Key steps for Scale-ups

Germany is often the first step for French scale-ups expanding in Europe. But success requires more than crossing the Rhine: you need to understand the market, build trust, and adapt both product and marketing.

This checklist draws on real-world insights shared at Next Market Live, Weglot's event on international expansion.

1. Confirm the market opportunity

Study local competitors

For example, Damae Medical researched Germany's dermatology landscape before entering and discovered that German practices operate more like US medical centers than French ones.

Analyze patient/client needs

The higher incidence of skin cancer in Germany versus Spain shaped how the company prioritized its products and marketing.

Discuss with peers

France Digitale, for instance, recommends meeting other founders who have navigated German expansion and discussing their journey to avoid common pitfalls.

2. Build a real local network

Attend German industry conferences

Damae Medical kickstarted its presence through collaborations with hospitals, after meeting their teams at Key Opinion Leader (KOL) events.

Organize in-person meetings on-site

Damae Medical hired a local team member from day one, starting with just one day per week to build an initial presence.

Leverage regional networks

Don't aim for Berlin by default—identify the right clusters for your sector (e.g., medtech in Munich, SaaS in Hamburg).

Join local trade shows and forums

Brevo stresses the importance of these events to understand trends and build first contacts. Attending these in-person will give you access to exclusive insights that would be harder to get by replying only on online research.

Partner with local experts

Zenchef, for example, worked with local agencies to tailor its go-to-market strategy to on-the-ground realities.

3. Hire the right profiles: local and senior

Recruit experienced native talent

This approach helped Damae Medical bring market feedback back to HQ and adapt their offer accordingly.

Use local recruitment agencies or your contacts' network

After testing out different methods, Damae Medical now prioritizes local referrals over traditional agencies.

Target experienced German professionals

Agorapulse hired a complete local team—BDR, content, and demand generation—to accelerate its market penetration.

Hire team members able to meet prospects face-to-face

In Germany, in-person interactions facilitate human relationships much better than video calls.

4. Adapt your offer and communication

Translate AND localize your website

Agorapulse completely redesigned its site for Germany and went beyond translation by revising the wording, adding German case studies, and incorporating local visuals.

Create tailored product sheets

Germans value detailed, technical, and object product descriptions and view them as trust signals. Damae reworked theirs accordingly.

Provide reassurance elements

These include German client logos, local certifications (e.g., TÜV, Datenschutz), GDPR documentation in German, and video testimonials from German doctors.

Integrate double opt-in in all marketing flows

This includes newsletters, demos, and any lead capture to align with German compliance standards and local expectations.

Host webinars in German with local experts

This helps demonstrate your credibility and, most importantly, how deeply you understand their market.

Ensure UX and legal compliance

France Digitale emphasizes mastering and complying with local regulations such as the GDPR and double opt-in.

Localize content with native professionals

Zenchef collaborated with German freelancers for SEO campaigns and relevant local content to create content that was on-point and truly resonated with their audience.

5. Structure your sales effort

Build a complete local team around each sales rep

Agorapulse pairs each rep with a dedicated BDR, content manager, and demand gen manager—all focused on the German market.

Allocate a dedicated marketing budget

Invest in advertising within German specialized media (e.g., SaaS press, healthcare publications).

Organize physical events

Zenchef developed ambassador programs and in-restaurant events to create strong local connections.

Target one region/hub before expanding nationwide

For example, start with Bavaria before moving into North Rhine-Westphalia.

Prepare German technical documentation

This includes essential materials like user guides, FAQs, and customer support all in native German.

About Weglot

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