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A symbol of luck on St. Patrick's Day and throughout the year.



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Getting the Word Out

By Almudena Grau

Freelance translation is an important part of my professional life. I have not worked as a freelance translator, but I have been a client of translation services for several years as a project manager at a localization company. The ideas in this article are based on my experience of identifying, hiring, and interacting with many translators over the years and, in the process, learning which of their marketing techniques were most effective.

When entering the world of freelance translation, one of the first things you'll notice is the number of translators that are already there! With that level of competition, it is critical to make your offerings stand out for clients, and the most logical method to reach that goal is through effective marketing. The first step in marketing yourself is having a clear idea of what you are selling. For translators, this consists of translating into a particular language (or languages, if you are multilingual), the number of words you can realistically deliver per day, other value-added services you are able to contribute, and the rate at which you do the work. Once the basics are established, consider the qualities that set you apart from other translators. For example, your education, degrees, accreditations, work experience, client or project examples, subject matter specialties or concentrations, computer platforms, operating systems, software applications, Internet access speed, and whether you use translation memory software.

The decision to advertise your translation rates is a two-sided issue. Some translators, especially lately, prefer to include their rates in marketing materials so that this information is available up front. On the other hand, doing so may cut them off from some potential clients, in

addition to providing the competition with extra insight into their business practices. If your rate is a key selling point, advertise it. If not, then don't mention your rates until a potential client asks for a quote. Whatever you decide, be sure to research the average industry rates.

Once you have a clear understanding of your services and how they stand out from the competition, the next step is to convey that information to clients using a variety of

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formats. Some of these include listing your services and contact information on a professional website for translators, such as the ATA's online *Translation Services Directory*, *Aquarius*, and many others. When submitting information to these sites, provide more than just your contact information. Take advantage of the other profile categories these online listings make available—include your unique qualities and experience, as these will give clients a much more descriptive image of you. However, don't go overboard and become wordy. Stick to key words and relevant facts.

Another format you can advertise your services through is a brochure, although consider the added cost of designing, printing, and getting copies in the hands of potential clients. A popular approach that takes advantage of the latest technology is

developing your own website. Aside from being a great marketing tool that shows off your tech savvy skills and dedication, you can also post client testimonials and your availability calendar. If you periodically find yourself running low on projects, send your existing clients a short e-mail announcing your availability. I have a number of translators that take initiative and write me when they are looking for work. If a project comes across my desk that matches their skill set, I am happy to send it to them as it saves me time in looking for a translator that is available. However, use this technique sparingly, as it is a bit overwhelming to receive weekly e-mails from translators inquiring about projects.

A fairly simple marketing option is to contact localization companies and offer your services as a freelance translator for applicable projects. For this, you should have an updated résumé ready to send at a moment's notice. I'm always surprised when a potential translator doesn't have a résumé to submit to my company. This makes me question their professionalism, and I'm less likely to hire them.

It is much easier to *keep* good clients than to find good clients. It is also more *profitable* to continue working with existing clients rather than to find new ones. All the marketing in the world is useless for a translator who misses deadlines and provides poor quality. The key, then, is to keep clients happy so they have a reason to contact you again for future projects. One of the easiest things you can do to ensure repeat business is to reply promptly to queries of availability. When clients contact translators for a project, they will often assign the work to the first one that

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