



With an
all-new
technology
chapter
by Jost
Zetzsche

How to Succeed as a **Freelance Translator**

Third Edition



Corinne McKay

How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator

Third Edition

Corinne McKay

Disclaimer: This book is published by Two Rat Press and Translatewrite, Inc., who acknowledge all trademarks. All information contained in this book is believed to be correct at the time of printing. However, readers are advised to seek professional advice where necessary, as the information in this book is based on the author's experiences. The author of this book is not professionally engaged in providing legal, financial or career planning advice. Please send comments or corrections to corinne@translatewrite.com.

© 2015 by Corinne McKay. All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review, without permission in writing from the author. ISBN: 978-0-578-17007-7 eISBN: 978-1-483-56339-8

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction to the third edition

1 A quick start guide to freelance translation

- 1.1 Who can become a freelance translator?
- 1.2 Translator certification
- 1.3 Interpreter certification
- 1.4 Clients
- 1.5 Your range of services
- 1.6 Pricing and income potential
- 1.7 What you need to get started
- 1.8 Tax and legal issues
- 1.9 Your first year as a freelancer

2 Myths and truths about freelance translation

3 An overview of the translation business

- 3.1 What is a translator?
- 3.2 What does it take to become a translator?
- 3.3 Why do some freelance translators fail?
- 3.4 Improving your language skills
- 3.5 A translator's working environment
- 3.6 What kinds of work do translators do?
 - 3.6.1 Translation
 - 3.6.2 Editing
 - 3.6.3 Proofreading
 - 3.6.4 Voiceover
 - 3.6.5 Transcription
 - 3.6.6 On-site document review
 - 3.6.7 Machine translation post-editing

- 3.6.8 Software Localization
- 3.7 Who do translators work for?
 - 3.7.1 Working for translation agencies
 - 3.7.2 Working for direct clients
- 3.8 Agencies vs direct clients
 - 3.8.1 Working with individuals
- 3.9 A bit about interpreting
- 3.10 How do translators set their rates?
 - 3.10.1 Charging by the word versus charging by the hour
- 3.11 Professional Associations
 - 3.11.1 American Translators Association
 - 3.11.2 National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators
 - 3.11.3 American Literary Translators Association
 - 3.11.4 Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs
 - 3.11.5 International Association of Conference Interpreters
- 3.12 Certification for Translators
 - 3.12.1 American Translators Association
 - 3.12.2 Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Program
 - 3.12.3 State Court Interpreter Certification

4 Launching your freelance translation business

- 4.1 The start-up phase
- 4.2 Ways to start
- 4.3 The start-up checklist
- 4.4 Preparing to market your services
 - 4.4.1 The basics of writing a translation resume.
 - 4.4.2 A new resume for a new career
 - 4.4.3 The structure of your resume
 - 4.4.4 Your name
 - 4.4.5 Your tag line
 - 4.4.6 Your contact information
 - 4.4.7 Your objective
 - 4.4.8 Your summary of qualifications
 - 4.4.9 The body of the résumé
 - 4.4.10 The professional/related experience section

- 4.4.11 The education section
- 4.4.12 The professional development and memberships section
- 4.4.13 The computer skills and equipment section
- 4.4.14 The interests and activities section
- 4.4.15 What about a cover letter?
- 4.5 Finding your first clients
- 4.6 Building up your business
- 4.7 Starting a part-time translation business
- 4.8 Business skills you'll need

5 Setting up your office and your business

- 5.1 The ups and downs of working from home
- 5.2 Communication devices and services
- 5.3 Reference materials
- 5.4 Office setup
- 5.5 Organizing your business
- 5.6 Maximizing productivity
- 5.7 For working parents

6 Marketing your freelance services

- 6.1 Marketing to translation agencies
 - 6.1.1 Finding agencies to apply to
 - 6.1.2 Optimizing your application materials
 - 6.1.3 Keeping track of your contacts
 - 6.1.4 Following up on your contacts
- 6.2 Marketing to direct clients
 - 6.2.1 Identifying your target clients
 - 6.2.2 Using your existing network
 - 6.2.3 Expanding your network
 - 6.2.4 International business organizations
 - 6.2.5 Your local business news
 - 6.2.6 Trade publications
- 6.3 Making contact with potential direct clients
 - 6.3.1 Highly personalized e-mails
 - 6.3.2 Attending conferences and trade fairs
 - 6.3.3 Networking and referrals
 - 6.3.4 A website in your clients' language

- 6.3.5 Paper letters and postcards
- 6.3.6 LinkedIn groups
- 6.3.7 Free sample translations
- 6.3.8 Advertising
- 6.4 Making yourself findable
- 6.5 Marketing materials
- 6.6 Creating a website
- 6.7 Ten ways to please a translation client

7 Breaking into the direct client market

- 7.1 Why consider working with direct clients?
- 7.2 Potential drawbacks of working with direct clients
- 7.3 The direct client marketing mindset
- 7.4 If you don't know where to start
- 7.5 Untapped niches

8 Translation Technology

- 8.1 The bare necessities
- 8.2 What kind of computer?
- 8.3 Speech recognition
- 8.4 Which operating system?
- 8.5 What else?
 - 8.5.1 Searching
 - 8.5.2 Renaming files
 - 8.5.3 Dealing with PDFs
 - 8.5.4 Project Management/Invoicing
 - 8.5.5 Word counts
- 8.6 Translation environment tools
 - 8.6.1 Wordfast Classic
 - 8.6.2 memoQ
 - 8.6.3 Trados Studio
 - 8.6.4 OmegaT
 - 8.6.5 Memsource
 - 8.6.6 How to choose the right Translation Environment Tool
- 8.7 Machine Translation

9 Your online presence

- 9.1 Setting up a basic professional website
 - 9.1.1 Cost
 - 9.1.2 Buying a domain name
 - 9.1.3 Setting up website hosting
 - 9.1.4 Using domain name e-mail
- 9.2 Listserves and e-mail discussion lists
- 9.3 Online forums
- 9.4 Social networking sites
 - 9.4.1 LinkedIn
 - 9.4.2 Facebook
 - 9.4.3 Twitter
 - 9.4.4 Blogs
 - 9.4.5 Podcasts
 - 9.4.6 Pinterest and Instagram

10 Rates, contracts and terms of service

- 10.1 Setting your translation rates
 - 10.1.1 Gathering objective data about rates
- 10.2 Charging by the word versus charging by the hour 176
- 10.3 Rate sheets
- 10.4 When a client asks for a discount
- 10.5 Contracts or work for hire agreements
- 10.6 Terms of service
- 10.7 Questions to ask before accepting a project
- 10.8 Researching your potential clients
 - 10.8.1 Handling potentially problematic clients
 - 10.8.2 Recourse against non-paying clients
- 10.9 Payment terms and methods
- 10.10 International payments
 - 10.10.1 Wire transfer
 - 10.10.2 Foreign currency checks
 - 10.10.3 Overseas bank accounts
 - 10.10.4 PayPal
 - 10.10.5 TransferWise
- 10.11 Setting the stage for payment
- 10.12 When things don't go as planned
 - 10.12.1 Arbitration and dispute resolution

10.13 Cash flow issues

11 Research tools and methods

- 11.1 Sources for printed dictionaries
- 11.2 Web-based research tools
- 11.3 Installed electronic dictionaries
- 11.4 What to research

12 Taxes, insurance and retirement plans

- 12.1 Incorporating and planning for taxes

13 Beyond the basics of freelancing

- 13.1 Raising your rates
- 13.2 Six figures: increasingly doable?
- 13.3 Reviewing your own performance
- 13.4 Giving yourself a promotion

14 Basic translation techniques

- 14.1 Reproducing formatting
- 14.2 Inserting translator's notes
- 14.3 Noting errors in the source document
- 14.4 Reproducing register
- 14.5 Preparing a glossary and managing terminology.
- 14.6 Preparing a style guide

Resources

Glossary

Index

Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on the first and second editions of this book, encouraged me to keep writing, and suggested improvements for the third edition. Especially Eve Bodeux, Lillian Clementi, Chris Durban, Melanie Guedenet, Marian Greenfield, Jonathan Hine, Judy and Dagmar Jenner, Freek Lankhof, Karen Mitchell, Marianne Reiner, Jill Sommer, Karen Tkaczyk, Caitilin Walsh, Tess Whitty and Jane Wolfrum. A huge thank you to Jost Zetzsche for agreeing to write the technology chapter. The biggest thanks go to my family—Dan and Ada Urist and Bruce and LaNelle McKay, without whose love, encouragement and support it would be hard to succeed at anything at all.

Introduction to the third edition

The freelance translation and interpreting landscape has changed dramatically since 2006, when I wrote the first edition of this book. Happily, the industry is booming; the US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the demand for translators and interpreters will increase nearly 50% by 2022, which is great news for new and established translators alike. This demand has led to a corresponding increase in the number of people who would like to become translators and interpreters. This is also great news, because the next generation of translators and interpreters has to come from somewhere; but it presents some challenges to the industry as a whole. How do we assess or control quality in an industry with no barriers to entry? How do we strike a balance between our clients' needs in terms of quality, speed and budget? How do we find enough translators and interpreters to work in Middle Eastern, African and Asian languages that few native English speakers know? It's an exciting time to work in our industry, and I'm energized by the possibilities that the next decade offers us! Whether you're a student exploring the possibilities of translation and interpreting, or you're a veteran looking for some tips to rejuvenate your business, thank you for using this book as a resource, and feel free to join the conversation on translation-related topics on my blog [Thoughts on Translation](http://ThoughtsonTranslationthoughtsontranslation.com) thoughtsontranslation.com.

1 A quick start guide to freelance translation

You may be deciding if freelance translation is the right career for you; or you may want an overview of the basic concepts in this book. So, let's start out with an executive summary of what you need to know about working as a freelance translator.

1.1 Who can become a freelance translator?

In the United States, there are very few barriers to entry for someone who wants to start a business as a freelance translator. There is no standard licensing procedure for freelance translators; translator certification is not available for every language, and there are successful freelance translators from a huge range of backgrounds. In theory, almost anyone who has near-native skills in at least one foreign language and is a good writer in their native language can become a translator. In practice, the majority of successful freelance translators have several qualifications in common: nearly all have at least a Bachelor's degree and many have a Master's degree or higher, either in translation, in a foreign language, or in their area of specialization; they have lived or worked for an extended period of time in a country where their non-native language is spoken; they have excellent writing skills in their native language; they have in-depth knowledge of at least one specialization and they are very motivated to launch and run a business on a self-employed basis.

If you don't have a Bachelor's degree, it's not impossible to start a freelance translation business, but you may face some barriers that don't apply to translators with a higher level of education. It's more difficult (but not impossible) to meet the eligibility requirements for the American Translators Association certification exam; you may face competition from other translators with higher levels of education; you may face questions

from clients who wonder if you are qualified to do the job. So although there is no absolute requirement that translators have a college degree, it's certainly advisable to earn at least a Bachelor's before launching your business.

1.2 Translator certification

Many beginning translators wonder about the importance of being certified. Because translation is largely unregulated in the United States, there is not even a standard definition of what “certified” means. In general, when people talk about “certified translators” in the United States, they are referring to translators who are certified by the American Translators Association atanet.org, but they may also be referring to translators who have completed a university-level translation certificate program.

For most translators, ATA certification, if available in your language pair, is a plus but not a must. Some clients may insist on using ATA-certified translators, some may prefer to use ATA-certified translators and others may not care about certification. At the very least, a client who is browsing online to find a translator is probably more likely to contact the certified translators first. Translation agencies often have eligibility requirements for translators who want to work for them; one of the ways to meet that requirement may be ATA certification. Compensation surveys show that ATA-certified translators earn more than those who aren't certified. ATA-certified translators can also use the initials “CT” after their names. However, the ATA offers certification exams only for certain language combinations, the exams are open only to ATA members and taking the exam is a significant financial investment. If you would like to pursue ATA certification, you must first join the Association (as of 2015, individual membership is \$190 per year), then have your eligibility verified (\$35), take the exam at least once (\$300), and it is definitely advisable to take a practice certification exam before you take the actual exam (\$80 per passage); so it's a significant investment. With the overall ATA exam pass rate hovering around 20%, you also cannot be sure that you'll pass on the first try. When I took the exam in 2002, I failed the practice test by a small margin and then passed the real exam on the first try, so it's definitely possible!

1.3 Interpreter certification

For interpreters, the importance of certification depends on the type of interpreting you do and where you work. Court interpreters can be certified at the state level (various language-specific tests are available, check with your state court system for specifics) or at the federal level (tests are offered in Spanish, Navajo and Haitian Creole). In some states in the U.S., it is now difficult or impossible to find work as a Spanish court interpreter unless you have state or federal court interpreter certification. For other languages, there may be no certification exams at all. Medical interpreters can take certification exams offered by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (cchicertification.org) which offers the CHI and CoreCHI credentials, or the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org) which offers the CMI credential. Many elite-level conference interpreters are members of the International Association of Conference Interpreters aiic.net, which goes by its French acronym AIIC (pronounced eye-eeek), and you can read about the US State Department's Conference, Seminar and Liaison Interpreter exams by visiting state.gov/m/a/ols/c56573.htm.

1.4 Clients

Freelance translators and interpreters generally work for two types of clients: translation or interpreting agencies and direct clients. Translation agencies take on translation projects from end clients and subcontract the work to freelance translators, in exchange for a portion (often a significant portion) of the amount paid by the end client. In a best-case scenario, translation agencies allow their clients to focus on doing business and allow their freelance translators to focus on translating because the agency handles the non-translation aspects of the project. Translation agencies vary in quality. Some translators love working with agencies because it frees them up to concentrate on translation, while other translators avoid agencies because they prefer to have direct contact with their clients and don't mind handling marketing, billing, and collections in exchange for the higher income that direct clients offer.

Direct clients are generally businesses, but might also be individuals, government agencies, universities or any other entity that needs translation services. Direct clients may choose to work with freelancers because they want a more personal relationship with their translator, a higher degree of consistency and confidentiality, or because they want to have direct contact with the person who's working on their texts. As a translator, when you work with a direct client you handle every aspect of the project from the initial quote to the final invoicing and collections, and any issues that arise in between. Some translators enjoy this and some don't; some are well-suited to it and some aren't.

Before you start your freelance business, you should have an idea of the types of clients you would like to work with. Most beginning translators start by working with agencies, because they allow you to focus on translating, and because they can help you identify specializations that you enjoy and are good at. Working with direct clients can be very stressful for a beginning translator, but it may be something to consider if you have significant translation experience (for example if you previously worked as an in-house translator), or if you want to pursue a specialization that agencies don't generally handle.

1.5 Your range of services

In the U.S., most translators work into their native language only. So, if you are a native English speaker and learned Japanese as a second language, you would generally translate from Japanese to English. This policy generally holds true in the languages for which there is a large pool of qualified translators. In smaller-diffusion languages, translators may work in both directions (for example from English into Farsi and Farsi into English). Some translators also consider themselves native speakers of two languages; if you grew up speaking one language at home and one language at school, you might have native-level skills in both languages. In general, if you are offering translation services into your non-native language, you should explain to prospective clients what makes you qualified to do that. Interpreters generally work in both directions (for example Spanish to English and English to Spanish), for purposes of efficiency; if interpreters

worked in only one direction, clients would have to hire at least two interpreters for every job.

In addition to translation into your native language, you may wish to offer other services. Many translators do editing (generally defined as doing a quality check and revision of a translation by comparing it with the source document), proofreading (may involve comparing the translation to the source document or may involve reading the target document only) and glossary development (preparing a glossary for a certain project's or client's terms). Other services that translators may offer include transcription of audio materials, foreign language voiceover, alignment (matching the sentences in a source and target document so that they can be used in a translation memory program), cultural consulting, language lessons and more. Your range of services is really only limited by your skills and the demands of the market.

1.6 Pricing and income potential

Pricing is a huge issue for beginning and experienced translators alike. Many translators and interpreters base their rates on factors such as a) fear of ever losing a job because their rates are too high, and b) vague rumors and suspicion about what other translators and interpreters in their language combination are charging. This is a bad idea: the factors you should be considering include: a) how much you need or want to earn and how much you can or want to work; b) who your ideal clients are; c) how much you are interested in marketing/willing to market your translation services; d) what rates your target market will bear.

In general, translation agencies have specific rates or at least a rate range for each language pair, so if you want to work with the agency you will need to agree to the rate that the agency offers (but it's always worth asking for more!). You should always have a target rate in mind, but be aware that agencies may have little or no flexibility in the rates that they pay for each language combination.

When you work with direct clients, it is up to you to decide what rates to propose or insist on. You need to first determine what your profitability point is. For example you can either determine how much you want to earn per year, then divide that by how many hours you want to work and by how many

words you can translate per hour. In general, an experienced translator can produce between 400 and 600 finished words per hour, although there are many successful translators who fall outside this range, on both the high and low ends.

If you charge by the word, make sure to specify whether you will charge based on the source or target word count. For tasks such as editing and proofreading, many translators charge by the hour. For direct clients, you may wish to give a total price for an entire project rather than breaking down your price by the word or hour.

1.7 What you need to get started

Most freelance translators work from home. For a functional translation home office, you need a dependable computer that you back up regularly, a high-speed Internet connection, and a way to receive business phone calls. As technology improves, translators and interpreters have many more choices for how to set up an office: some translators work from an office that looks like a traditional office, with a desktop computer, multiple large monitors and a dedicated business phone line. Others work from co-working offices which offer the flexibility of working from home, plus the social aspects of working in an office. Still other translators have a totally mobile office setup with a laptop computer, electronic dictionaries and even a folding external monitor. If you use a laptop computer as your primary work computer (which I've done for about the past three years), make sure that a) you have an ergonomic setup, probably including an external keyboard and mouse, and b) your laptop is completely backed up, preferably using a "set it and forget it" syncing program that runs whenever your computer is online.

You will also need office software, a way to keep accounting records and possibly a translation environment tool or translation memory software. Before you invest in translation-specific software, make sure that you need it and that you know which tool best fits your needs. See Chapter 7 for lots more information on translation technology!

1.8 Tax and legal issues

As a freelancer in the US, you can either work as a sole proprietor or as a corporation. If you are a sole proprietor, you declare your income on the IRS Schedule C form and pay self-employment tax on everything that you earn, minus your business expenses. In most states you don't need a business license to work as a freelancer, but check with your state government (generally the state Secretary of State's office) to make sure.

If you choose to incorporate, you can be either an S Corporation, a C Corporation or a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). It's best to talk to an accountant about which structure would be best for you. Working as a corporation may allow you to (legally) pay less money in taxes by taking some of your income as wages (which are subject to self-employment tax) and some as corporate profit (which is not subject to self-employment tax). However, corporations generally require more paperwork in the form of quarterly payroll taxes and/or a separate end of year tax return for the corporation.

1.9 Your first year as a freelancer

For the first six months to a year after you start your freelance business, expect to spend most of your time marketing and networking rather than translating. If you work in a high-demand language pair or specialization you may have a high volume of work sooner than this. One of the biggest mistakes that beginning freelancers make is to expect too much return from too little marketing effort. You may get really lucky, or you may have just the skills that clients are looking for, or you may want to work with very large agencies that give you high volumes of work, in which case you may be working full-time in a short amount of time. However, most translators will take the better part of a year to move past the initial startup phase. When I launched my freelance business in 2002, I sent out over 400 resumes in the first year, and it still took about 18 months until I was earning a full-time income.

To start out as a freelancer, you will need a functional office setup, a translation-targeted resume and cover letter, translation-specific business cards and possibly a basic professional website. Also, if you join some translation-related professional associations, you will probably get a listing on their website where you can describe your services.

If you are starting your business from scratch, the easiest and fastest way to find work is probably to start applying to translation agencies that you find in the directory of the American Translators Association or a similar entity. Go to the agencies' websites and then follow the application procedures listed there (usually under the Employment, Freelancers or Contact tab). If you have strong qualifications and well-written application materials and you apply to 10-20 agencies per week, you will start to get some work. If you would like to start out working with direct clients, follow a similar procedure. Research businesses that seem like they could use your services and contact them by mail, e-mail or phone, whichever method you are most comfortable with. Again, if you set high but achievable goals for the number of potential clients you will contact, you will find work.

2 Myths and truths about freelance translation

Many beginning translators have a lot of questions and misconceptions about the industry. So, let's look at a few myths and truths about freelance translation.

1. *Myth:* Anyone who is bilingual can be a translator. *Truth:* Knowing at least one foreign language is definitely a crucial skill for a translator, but it isn't enough. Translators have to be excellent writers in their target language and they have to know the specific terminology of the specializations that they translate in. Freelancers also have to be able to juggle multiple clients and deadlines and manage the business aspects of their work.
2. *Myth:* Translators translate in both "directions" of their language pair. *Truth:* In the U.S., the market is heavily geared toward translators who translate into their native language only.
3. *Myth:* Most translators do both translation (written language work) and interpreting (spoken language work). *Truth:* some freelancers do both translation and interpreting, but most concentrate on one or the other.
4. *Myth:* Most freelance translators are starving artists. *Truth:* The average full-time freelancer in the American Translators Association makes a little over \$60,000 per year. Six-figure income (or the part-time equivalent) is becoming increasingly common among translators who work with at least some direct clients, or who work fairly long hours.
5. *Myth:* Human translators will soon be replaced by machine translation and will be obsolete. *Truth:* Machine translation is

becoming more sophisticated all the time, but machine translation and human translators are good at very different tasks. Machine translation is great at “getting the gist” of a document or translating a huge volume of documents when speed is more important than quality. Human translators are crucial to conveying cultural nuances and producing high-quality translations of complex documents.

6. *Myth:* Translators have to be certified. *Truth:* If certification is available for your language pair (in the U.S., check the website of the American Translators Association atanet.org), it is definitely a plus if you are certified. Some clients may require certification for certain projects, but there are generally no legal or regulatory obstacles to working as a translator if you are not certified.
7. *Myth:* If you send out five or 10 resumes, you will probably have enough work to be translating full-time. *Truth:* For the first six months to a year that you are in business, expect to spend most of your time looking for work.
8. *Myth:* Most translators can translate 7,000-10,000 words per day. *Truth:* Speed and output vary, but most translators can produce 2,000-3,000 finished words per day. Some translators work much more slowly, translating as few as 250 words an hour.
9. *Myth:* Most translators charge by the hour. *Truth:* Most translators charge by the word for translation and by the hour for editing and proofreading.
10. *Myth:* You have to have a degree in translation to work as a translator. *Truth:* In the U.S., there are so few university-level programs in translation that most translators do not have a degree in translation. However, it’s definitely an asset if you do have a translation-specific undergraduate or graduate degree.
11. *Myth:* Translators do not need to have good computer skills. *Truth:* Translators do nearly all of their work on the computer. In order to be successful as a freelance translator, it really helps to be a fast

typist and to be comfortable using office software and possibly a translation memory tool.

12. *Myth:* Most freelance translators work in a large number of language pairs. *Truth:* In the U.S., most translators work in one or two language pairs. Outside of the U.S. where foreign languages are more widely taught in school, translators sometimes work in more language pairs.
13. *Myth:* The source (original) and target (translated) documents normally have the same word count. *Truth:* Different languages have radically different word counts. For example, most Romance languages use about 30% more words than English for the same text. For this reason, always establish whether you are charging your client for the source or target word count.
14. *Myth:* There is no way to find out if a translation agency is reliable to work with. *Truth:* There are several online rating services where you can read what other translators have to say about an agency. Among them are Payment Practices paymentpractices.net or the ProZ Blue Board proz.com.
15. *Myth:* Freelancers' clients deduct taxes from what the freelancer earns. *Truth:* As a freelancer, you are responsible for paying all of your own taxes unless a client hires you as an employee. If the client pays you more than \$600 in a calendar year, they must send you an IRS form 1099-MISC stating the total amount that they paid you.
16. *Myth:* Most freelance translators work for one or two clients. *Truth:* A good way to ensure a steady volume of work is to diversify your client base. It's a good idea to have at least four to six regular clients who send you work.
17. *Myth:* You can easily fit freelance work into your spare time. *Truth:* Freelance translation is a profession, not a hobby. If you want to translate just a couple of hours a week or only when you feel like working, you are probably better off volunteering your services rather than starting a freelance business.

18. *Myth*: Put up a website and clients will come. *Truth*: A website can be a great marketing tool for a freelancer, but it's certainly not enough. Surprisingly, many freelance translators do not have a website at all, so you are ahead of the game if you have a well-done professional website. Just don't depend on your website to do your marketing for you!

3 An overview of the translation business

3.1 What is a translator?

A translator is a human being who changes written words from one language to another, as opposed to an interpreter, who works with spoken language. If you know that the expression “speaking through a translator” is incorrect (because translators work in writing), you’re already ahead of most people!

Translators are also, by definition, fluent in more than one language. In the language industry, these are referred to as the *source*, or “from” languages, and the *target*, or “into” language, which is almost always the translator’s native language. So, for example, a translator who is a native English speaker and speaks German as a second language would translate from German into English. If you work in the most common language pairs, such as English paired with French, Italian, German or Spanish (known as *FIGS* in the translation industry), chances are that you will never translate into your second or third language, because the translation market in the U.S. is heavily geared toward translators who work into their native language only. If you work in a less common language pair, you might find yourself as the exception to this rule. A client might need a document translated from Thai into English, a job that would usually be handled by a native English speaker who has Thai as a second or third language. In practice, it’s often easier to find a native Thai (or Lingala, Malayalam, Fulani, etc) speaker who has English as a second language since there are many more native Thai speakers who also speak English than the other way around. In this case, the job might be handled by a native Thai speaker, and then proofread by a native English speaker.

In the United States, most translators work from one or two source languages; it’s extremely common for translators to have only one working language pair, like Spanish into English, or Japanese into English. In other

areas of the world where foreign languages are more widely studied, most translators work from at least two source languages, and often many more. It's not at all unusual to find Europe-based translators who work, for example, from English, Spanish and French into German, or from Norwegian, Swedish and English into Danish.

3.2 What does it take to become a translator?

Being multilingual isn't the only skill a translator needs, but it's certainly the most important. Translators learn their languages in many different ways; some grew up in bilingual households or countries, some learned their second or third language in school and then pursued experience abroad, some took intensive language courses or worked in a foreign country for several years, and it is also common for translators to become freelancers after working as military or government linguists. Almost all translators working in the U.S. have at least a Bachelor's degree, although not necessarily in translation. As a rule, most professional translators have at least some experience working and/or living in a country where their source language or languages are spoken; many translators lived and worked in their source language country for many years, or pursued higher education in their source language(s). In-country experience is a big asset for a translator, since translation work involves knowing not just the structure of the language to be translated, but the cultural framework that surrounds it. This isn't to say that classroom study doesn't produce excellent translators, but it's important to realize that to be a successful professional translator, you need *near-native* proficiency in your source language(s); if you're starting from scratch, a few semesters of part-time language class won't be enough. As a point of reference, the U.S. Government's Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center offers a program to teach Middle Eastern languages to government employees, and the *basic* program involves 63 weeks of full-time study.

Translators today work in almost every conceivable language pair; while the market in the United States has historically been very strong in high-volume languages such as French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, there is a potential market for nearly any language. In most language pairs, the amount of work available is proportionate to the number of translators in

the language. While there is obviously a great deal of English to Spanish translation work in the U.S., there are a correspondingly large number of translators in this language combination and a lot of competition from translators who live in countries with a lower cost of living than the U.S. There may not be as much work for translators of Swedish to English, but there are many fewer Swedish translators than Spanish translators living in the U.S., and the cost of living in the U.S. is probably lower than it is in Sweden.

In addition to near-native knowledge of their source language(s), translators need other skills too; probably the most important are excellent writing skills in their target language, in-depth knowledge in one or more areas of specialization and business management skills. Some would-be translators are in practice not very successful because they have weak writing skills in their target language, making their translations difficult or unpleasant to read. Highly specialized translators are among the highest-earning members of the profession; for example a bilingual intellectual property attorney, stock broker or biomedical engineer may earn many times the per-word rate of a “jack of all trades” translator with a B.A. in Russian. Some translators turn a previous career into an area of specialization, while others take additional courses in areas of specialization or learn specialized terminology from more experienced translators. Paradoxically, specializing can also lead to more work, not less, as the specialized translator becomes known as the go-to person in his or her area of expertise, whether it’s environmental engineering, textile manufacturing or annual reports.

The translation industry in the United States has made the transition to the independent contractor model, in which the vast majority of translators are self-employed and work for a variety of clients. As such, translators need business management skills such as the ability to find and retain clients, work on tight deadlines with little supervision or management, handle increases and decreases in work flow and cash flow and perform tasks such as bookkeeping, tax planning, and computer upkeep and maintenance. In fact, most self-employed translators spend 25–50% of their time on non-translation work, largely involving management of the day to day tasks of running a business, so these skills are just as important as translation-related skills in succeeding as a freelance translator.

3.3 Why do some freelance translators fail?

I work with a lot of beginning translators in my online courses, and when I follow up with students over the months and years after they finish the course, or when I talk to beginning/aspiring translators in general, some of them have “made it” as freelancers and some of them haven’t. Here are a few factors I’ve identified that can cause some freelance translators to be less successful than they might be, or to give up on the business entirely:

- Expecting too much return from too little marketing effort. I get a lot of inquiries from beginning freelancers who are very discouraged because they’ve “applied to over 30 translation companies and received no work.” I know I’ve said this a few (hundred) times before, but here it is again: during my first year as a freelancer, I applied to over 400 translation companies. Then, I sent every single company that responded positively a hand-written note with a business card, thanking them for their response and letting them know that I looked forward to working with them in the future.
- Expecting the startup phase to be shorter than it is. I think six months is the bare minimum that anyone can expect—two months to look for work, two months to do the work and two months to get paid. A year is probably more realistic, and I think that most freelancers reach “cruising speed” after about three years.
- Having weak language skills. Chris Durban, author of *The Prosperous Translator* (prosperoustranslator.com), often states that it’s hard to develop the linguistic and cultural competence that a translator needs without spending at least a year in your source language country. And don’t hang out with speakers of your target language the whole time you’re there!
- Not putting yourself out there. The simple truth of freelancing is that people cannot hire you if they cannot find you. They can’t refer work to you if they don’t know who you are. So whether it’s in person or online, or preferably both, you have to come out of hiding.
- Getting stuck on the low rate treadmill. This is a tough one. Most beginning translators don’t set out to be underpaid, but working is better than not working, and you have to start somewhere if you want to

break in to the industry. Many beginning freelancers tell themselves that in a few months or years, they'll trade up to better-paying clients. But if you're translating 10 hours a day just to pay the bills, it's hard to find that time, so you're more likely to stick with the low-paying bird in the hand.

- Remaining in denial about how much work it is to be self-employed. A wise self-employed person once said that being an entrepreneur means working 60 hours a week for yourself so that you don't have to work 40 hours a week for someone else. I'm a firm believer in avoiding perpetual overtime, but the essence of this statement is true. I recently gave a talk on self-publishing, after which many of the attendees commented that the idea sounded intriguing, but "like a lot of work." Yes! It is a lot of work, but I'm more interested in putting that work into my own project than into lining a traditional publisher's pockets. The same is true of being a freelancer. It's a lot of work! But the ability to make your own decisions and take responsibility for your own future makes it worth it.

3.4 Improving your language skills

If you'd like to work as a translator but your language skills are not yet up to par, you have a few options. The best, but most difficult, is immersion: living and working or going to school in a country where your source language is spoken. If you want to improve your French, without a doubt the fastest way to do it is to move to a French-speaking country for a year, work or go to school with native French speakers, and speak only French while you're there. If this isn't possible for you, university programs in translation and interpreting do exist in the U.S., although they are much less common than in other countries. However, nearly all medium or large colleges and universities offer advanced courses in the more widely spoken foreign languages. If you're trying to improve your language skills, be realistic; although it's certainly far from impossible to learn a new language at age 30, 50 or 70, it's also not going to happen with a few semesters of night classes. If you're starting from a beginner level or close to it, two to three years of intensive language study in a college-level program is probably a bare

minimum. If you have a solid foundation in a second or third language, for instance you studied it in school for 10 years including several trips to a country where the language is spoken, you might be ready to start translating right away.

Your level of education is also an important factor in launching your freelance translation business. While requirements for different translation jobs vary, nearly all translators have at least a Bachelor's degree and a high percentage have a Master's degree or higher. If you want to take the American Translators Association's certification exam, you need either a Master's degree or higher or several years of work experience as a translator.

3.5 A translator's working environment

The translation industry in the United States is heavily geared toward the independent contractor model. In the past, many large companies and even many translation agencies had staffs of in-house translators, but these jobs are now few and far between, and when they do exist would rarely be given to a beginner. In contrast to other professions where newcomers are expected to pay their dues as in-house employees and then enjoy the "reward" of freelancing, the translation industry usually works in the opposite way. Most translators start out as freelancers and may even remain self-employed for their whole careers, while most well-paid in-house translators are hired with years or even decades of experience. It's important to be realistic about whether the life of a freelancer is for you. While you'll have a great degree of control over where, when and how much you work, you'll also give up the security of a steady paycheck, benefits, paid time off, and a pension or employer-sponsored 401K.

Most freelance translators in the U.S. work from a home office, and there is no stigma attached to working from home; translators who rent office space outside the home are definitely the exception rather than the rule. The vast majority of a translator's work is done on the computer, so it's important to think about whether this work environment suits you. The almost constant use of a computer makes repetitive strain injury and eye strain some of the few work-related injuries that translators are at risk for.

There are many positive sides to a translator's work environment. Compared to other work-from-home jobs, translation can be very interesting and well-paying. Translation industry compensation surveys report that the average self-employed freelance translator earns slightly more than \$60,000 per year, and income of over \$100,000 per year is becoming more common among translators who work very long hours, work exclusively with direct clients or work in high-demand languages or specializations.

It is important to be realistic about the time and effort involved in reaching this level of income. Unless you work in a language pair and/or specialization that is extremely in demand, it may take a year or more to develop a regular client base that will allow you to replace the income from a previous full-time job, and you will probably need to send out several hundred resumes during that time. Before starting your freelance translation business, it's important to determine if you have the financial resources, time and energy to get through the startup period to the point where you are earning a reasonable and steady income.

Starting a translation business is a fairly inexpensive proposition. If you already have a home computer and high speed Internet access, you might make do with business cards, computerized fax service and a modest reference library, for a startup cost of only a few hundred dollars. To a large extent, freelancers can determine when and how much they want to work. While it probably makes good business sense to accept as much work as possible from your regular clients, on a day-to-day basis many translators work on their own schedule rather than from 9 to 5. A translator's eight hour day might run from 7:30–11:30 AM and 4:30–8:30 PM, and some translators vary their work schedules according to the schedules of their clients in other time zones. Today, most translation work happens remotely, and translators can live almost anywhere. The up and down nature of most freelancers' work loads also lends itself to using free time to take classes, pursue hobbies, travel or spend time with family.

On the downside (and of course there are some downsides to all of this!), as with other consulting or freelance work, some aspects of translation can be stressful and difficult to manage. Many translators are prone to the "feast or famine" phenomenon, with months of little work and months of too much work. Worldwide business acceleration has affected translation turnaround times, with agencies eager to have translations returned as soon as possible, sometimes within a few hours for a short project. Clients who pay late or

don't pay at all can cause major financial problems, especially for translators who live paycheck to paycheck. Translators who work in common language combinations like Spanish↔English may face pressure to lower their rates in order to remain competitive, especially if the client can find qualified translators in countries where pay rates are much lower. In addition, working from home has its ups and downs; even for an introvert, the life of the home office can be lonely, and time spent on (unpaid) non-translation work like accounting, marketing and maintaining computer systems can become frustrating when you'd much rather be translating! If you've never worked for yourself before, succeeding as a translator demands a high degree of self-discipline. With no boss in the next cubicle and a list of household errands to finish, it can be hard to focus on your work, and if you have a family or housemates, equally difficult to find a work-friendly time and space in your house.

However, most translators enjoy their work and like to talk about what they do and how they got started. The ever-changing nature of the job appeals to many people, since no day "at the office" is exactly like another. Another positive aspect of the job is that most translation clients value their translators and treat them as professionals who deserve to be fairly paid for their work. Even in the most common language combinations, the supply of qualified and capable (emphasis here!) translators often cannot keep pace with the industry's demand, resulting in a generally positive employment picture for translators and interpreters. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment prospects for translators and interpreters should grow faster than the average for all occupations until at least 2016.

3.6 What kinds of work do translators do?

As cross-cultural and multilingual communication become more important to the worldwide flow of business, translators and interpreters are employed in almost every conceivable business and government sector. From law to health care to finance, entertainment, information technology and advertising, translators and interpreters enable global communication. Some translators, especially those with specialized professional or technical training, might concentrate on only one subject area, such as pharmaceuticals, corporate finance, computer software or legal contracts. There are even translators

who specialize in seemingly obscure areas like fisheries management, shopping mall construction, stamps, or groundwater hydrology. Still others position themselves as non-specialized translators with concentrations in certain areas. In general, the more translators there are in a given language pair, the more specialization is required, and the smaller the translator pool, the less incentive there is to specialize. German to English translators in the U.S. almost certainly have specializations, but the same isn't necessarily true of the few Bosnian to English translators doing business in the same markets.

Although most translators in the U.S. are independent contractors, full-time jobs for translators and interpreters do exist, particularly in areas such as court and health care interpreting, web content translation, software localization, and translating and interpreting for the United States Government's various agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency. Translators who are experienced and/or qualified to work in more than one language pair may have a greater chance of being offered an in-house position.

Literary translators (translators who work on novels, plays, poetry or short stories) make up a relatively small segment of translators in the United States. This is because literary translation is typically not very well paid, and because Americans don't tend to read literature in translation, so there is a small market for the work of literary translators; approximately 3% of adult fiction published in the United States is literature in translation. Depending on your language pair, you may find a reasonable amount of work translating non-fiction books such as textbooks, guidebooks, cookbooks, etc. If you are interested in literary translation, the website of ALTA literarytranslators.org, the American Literary Translators Association, is an excellent resource.

Localization translators are a rapidly growing group in the industry. Localization, or the complete adaptation of a product such as a web site, product marketing kit, software program or advertising campaign into another language, used to be confined mostly to computer software. Now, software localization is probably the largest segment of the localization market, but it's certainly not the only segment. Businesses may hire localization agencies when they want to take a new product global and need culturally-targeted marketing advice in addition to translation services.

3.6.1 Translation

By definition, translation, the process of changing written material from one language to another, is a translator's core business activity. A few pointers here: unless you truly consider yourself to be a native speaker of two languages, you should be translating into your native language only, not into your second or third language. There are certainly exceptions to this, for example in small-diffusion languages where translators are hard to find. However if you work in English paired with a commonly translated language such as French, Italian, German, Spanish or Portuguese, stick to translating into your native language only. Translation is most often paid by the word, in some countries (specifically the United Kingdom) per 1,000 words, in some countries (specifically Germany) by the line, and less often by the hour. Make sure to clarify ahead of time whether your client will be paying you by the source or target word count, since these can differ by as much as 30%.

3.6.2 Editing

Translation-specific editing is a skill in its own right, which requires not just knowledge of the source and target language of the document to be edited, but also of the spelling, grammar and usage conventions of the target language. Editing (also sometimes called *revising*) is sometimes reserved for experienced translators, but if you enjoy editing it's worth offering it as an additional service. If you would like to offer editing services, consider taking some courses in editing that are specific to your target language. Editing is paid either by the word or by the hour, which has its pluses and minuses. If you charge by the hour, you know that you will be paid for all the time you put in on the project. Charging by the word will make your client happy because they will get a fixed quote before you begin the project; the only danger of charging by the word is that you can end up with a poor hourly rate if the translation requires extensive revision.

3.6.3 Proofreading

In the publishing industry, proofreading is usually defined as checking a proof copy of a document for publication, for example a brochure or

magazine article that has already been laid out and is ready to be sent to print. In the translation industry, proofreading and editing are often used interchangeably, to mean revising a bilingual text. If a client hires you to “edit” or “proofread” a text, make sure to clarify whether the client wants you to revise the translation using both the source and target documents, or simply proof the target document for target language errors.

3.6.4 Voiceover

Especially if you are a native speaker of a language other than English, voiceover work is an additional service you may want to offer. Voiceover work can take various forms. Your voice might be used to dub the voice of another person (for example in a television news broadcast) or on its own (for example as the voice track of an advertisement, or as the voice prompts for a phone system). Some voiceover work may even require people who speak English with a specific foreign language accent. Unless you do enough voiceover work that you want to invest in a home studio, you will probably be working at a professional recording studio. Voiceover work is normally paid by the hour and is handled both by translation agencies and by dedicated voiceover companies.

3.6.5 Transcription

Transcription, which involves making a written transcript of an audio (or sometimes video) recording, is another service that can be done from a home office. Although transcription work may not pay as much as translation, there is a strong market for transcription in English and in other languages. Some translators also offer “on the fly” transcription/translation, where the translator listens to an audio recording and instead of making a transcript in the source language, translates while listening to the audio. If you would like to offer transcription services and you will be working from an electronic file (as opposed to a CD or tape), it is helpful to have specialized playback software that allows you to control the audio file from your keyboard or using foot pedals.

3.6.6 On-site document review

Some translation clients, such as law firms, financial services companies, etc. may have cases or business dealings that require them to review large volumes of non-English documents in a short period of time. In these situations, on-site document review, where you as the translator would go to the client's office and summarize, either verbally or in writing, the content of those documents, can result in dramatic time and cost savings for these clients. After you have identified the general subject matter or content of the documents, the client can then decide which documents, if any, need to be translated. This type of work is normally billed by the hour; large corporations in major cities are probably the best potential clients for on-site document review.

3.6.7 Machine translation post-editing

Machine translation, translation that is done entirely by a computer, is becoming an increasingly important factor in the translation industry. Most people in the translation industry agree that the demand for the type of high-quality translation that human translators produce will always be greater than the supply of qualified human translators, so machine translation is not likely to replace human translators anytime soon. However, human translators are sometimes hired to post-edit machine translations, meaning that the translation is first done by a computer, then corrected by a human translator. This type of work can be paid by the word or by the hour.

3.6.8 Software Localization

An additional sub-specialty within the translation and localization industry is software localization, the process of translating software user interfaces from one language to another. For example, when a large software company produces multilingual versions of its applications, every piece of text displayed by the software must be translated into the target language, and in many cases the graphics must be altered as well. Software localization involves both bilingual software developers and document translators specialized in information technology, since the software's user interface,

help files, readme files, screen shots and incidental files (such as warranty information and packaging) must all be translated.

Software localization is an enormous industry in its own right, largely because computer users throughout the world now expect their software to be in their own language, and will naturally be more interested in purchasing software or visiting websites that they can access in their own language. Therefore, the software localization industry is a source of a large amount of work for bilingual software developers and for translators, and is currently one of the fastest-growing sectors within the translation industry as a whole. In addition, localization breeds localization; a localized web browser automatically creates a need for localized websites; a localized piece of software demands a localized manual to go with it. A useful resource for localization professionals is the Globalization and Localization Association gala-global.org. Software localization is often completed using different tools than those that are used for document translation; some computer-assisted translation tools can cross over between these two types of translation, and some cannot. So, it is important to investigate what tools will be required if you would like to look for software localization work.

3.7 Who do translators work for?

3.7.1 Working for translation agencies

Freelance translators have two general categories of clients: translation agencies and direct clients. First, let's look at how translators work through agencies. A translation agency, which may also refer to itself as a localization agency, translation company, or translation bureau, serves as an intermediary between freelance translators and end clients who need translations. The agency handles the administrative aspects of the translation project, interacts directly with the translation client and (hopefully) pays the translator and deals with any collections issues. Ideally, the translation agency should pay its freelance translators when their invoices come due (normally 30 days after the agency accepts the translation) whether the agency has been paid by the end client or not.

A translation agency is not an employment agency, and there is no fee involved for a translator to register with an agency. Translation agencies earn money by taking a percentage (possibly up to 50%) of what the end client pays for the translation. Freelance translators are often required to sign a confidentiality and non-competition agreement which states that they may not work directly for any of the agency's clients for some period of time, and that they may not disclose information about the agency's clients or projects. Like translators themselves, translation agencies can be either very general, "all languages, all subjects," or highly specialized, for instance translating only for the medical industry, or only translating between English and Korean.

In the unpredictable world of freelancing, translation agencies provide some measure of job security. When you work for an agency, you don't normally have to communicate with the end client directly, and in many cases the agency may even forbid you from contacting the end client. Instead, you translate the documents that the agency sends you, which means that you spend your time working instead of managing the project and handling the client's questions. Also, an agency that becomes a regular client may be able to provide you with steady work, and will often pay you even if the client is late in paying them. A good agency project manager understands the nature of translation work and can save translators a lot of time by handling questions that need to be sent to the end client or by making decisions about style and formatting issues. Many of the best agency project managers are or have been translators themselves. Agencies also provide some amount of protection for you as the translator. If you get sick in the middle of a project or find that you've accepted work that is beyond your scope of expertise, the agency may be able to find another translator to replace you. When you work with direct clients, you generally have to handle these types of issues yourself.

In exchange for the services the agency provides, you will give up some freedom. The agencies you work for may have fixed pay rates for each language pair, or may ask you to give discounts on large projects; of course it's up to you whether to accept or reject the agency's terms. When an agency becomes a regular client, you want to keep them happy, so it will be hard to say "No!" when they call you on Friday afternoon with a big project due Monday, disrupting your planned ski trip or home improvement project. Also, agencies vary in quality. While a good agency can be an excellent source of ongoing work and can allow you to spend a maximum amount of your time doing translation, not all agencies live up to these standards. An

agency may claim (rightly or wrongly) that you did a substandard job on a project for them, and then ask for or just impose a “discount” on the payment you agreed on. Or, an agency may not have much cash in reserve, and might not be able to pay you if the end client doesn’t pay them. Agencies also have their own set payment terms, and in most cases the terms aren’t negotiable. For example, agencies in the U.S. generally pay within 30 days from the date of the invoice or 30 days from the end of the month, while agencies in Europe take longer to pay, sometimes as long as 60 days from the end of the month or 90 days from the date of the invoice.

3.7.2 Working for direct clients

The other main option for a freelancer is to work for direct clients, meaning working directly for translation customers without a “middleman” involved. A direct client might be a medical device company that markets its products overseas, a patent law firm that handles international patent filings, a university that needs a multilingual website, or an individual who needs translations of official documents. The income potential of working for direct clients is attractive; in many cases you may be able to earn double the amount that you earn from an agency. Direct clients may also be willing to let you act as a “mini-agency,” subcontracting work to other translators you know and keeping a percentage for yourself to cover your administrative overhead. With a direct client the translator is often more in control of the payment terms involved; for example, the translator might be able to request payment in advance for certain services, an option that almost never exists when working through a translation agency.

There are some disadvantages in working for direct clients as well. When you work through an agency, it should be the project manager’s job to explain the ins and outs of the translation process to the client. When you work for a direct client, for better or worse there’s no one between you and the client. In cases involving a small project such as a birth certificate translation, it might take more time to explain the process to the client than it does to complete the translation. If the client has an unrealistic deadline, keeps changing his/her mind about the project specifications, or wants additional services such as desktop publishing, it’s up to you as the translator to deal with it. If the direct client doesn’t pay, there’s no one else to lean on for the money—you simply

have to handle it yourself, or hire a collection agency if things turn really sour. All of these aspects are worth considering before you decide whether to work through agencies or for direct clients.

Somewhere between an agency and a direct client is a small but growing group of freelance project managers. These individuals function somewhat like one-person translation agencies, and may handle outsourced translation for a larger corporation. This style of business combines some of the advantages and disadvantages of the agency/direct client model. Probably the most significant item to discuss up front is what happens if the end client doesn't pay or is late in paying the project manager who hires you, since unlike a large translation agency, this individual probably doesn't have the cash reserves to cover a large bill that goes unpaid.

3.8 Agencies and direct clients: not better or worse, just different

Some translators work only with agencies, some only with direct clients, and some work with a mix. My nutshell analysis is that agencies and direct clients aren't better or worse, they're just different; there are great agencies and problematic direct clients, and there are great direct clients and problematic agencies. To summarize the pluses and minuses of each:

Translation agencies are great, because:

- If the agency does its job right, you just translate. You are freed from such tasks as explaining to the client why the words aren't in the same order in the translation as they are in the original document, or explaining to the client that words like "software" and "information" are not pluralized as "softwares" and "informations" in English.
- If the agency likes you, they will keep you busy. They will fill your inbox with requests, rather than the other way around. They have a sense of what you do, and what the constraints of your job are. An agency knows that you can't translate 25,000 words in three days, and that most translators work only in one direction, and that conference interpreters are generally reimbursed for travel and lodging expenses, and so on.

But translation agencies have their drawbacks, such as:

- In the agency market, a translator can only compete on quality to a certain extent. It's in an agency's best interest to use the cheapest translator whose quality and reliability fit the agency's purposes. An agency that really likes you might pay you 10% more than what they pay their other translators, but they're not going to pay you 100% more, whereas a direct client might.
- They can't afford to be loyal to you. A direct client might shuffle deadlines, pay rush printing charges or have their own staff work on a weekend in order to snag a translator who they really love. But agencies rarely will: if you're not available within a reasonable amount of time, they'll call the next person on their list.
- Some agencies are not transparent about their teams and processes. When you work on a large project for an agency, the agency may refuse to let you communicate with the other translators. They may decline to tell you whether your work is being proofed a) by another translator in your language pair, b) by a speaker of the target language only or c) not at all.

Direct clients are great, because:

- At a certain point, you will reach "terminal velocity" in the agency market. You will be charging as much as even the highest-paying agencies will pay, and you can't increase your speed beyond a certain point if you want to maintain quality. So, the next logical place to look is the direct client market, where the price ceiling is much higher.
- The business relationship is between you and them. Normally, you can communicate either with the person who wrote the source document or the person who is going to use the target document. In 13+ years of working with agencies, I've been in contact with the document's writer or end user exactly zero times. To put it diplomatically, this model has its problems.
- Quality is a major competitive advantage. In the agency market, quality is a competitive advantage, but only within the constraints of the agency's budget; some direct clients may feel that they're willing to

pay whatever it takes to get a really good translator for their mission-critical documents.

- Questions and feedback are not only possible, but welcome. In the agency model, there's pretty much an impenetrable membrane between the translator and the end client; in the direct client market, the back-and-forth flow is what makes the work more satisfying and the translation more accurate and more readable.

But direct clients have their drawbacks, such as:

- Sometimes, they have no idea how you work, other than that you change documents from one language to another. 12,000 words for tomorrow? Some direct clients don't know that that's laughable. And while you're at it, why don't you translate into your non-native language? Or interpret for their upcoming conference? It's not their fault, it's just not their industry.
- They may need you only sporadically, or for huge amounts of work at one time. Some direct clients only need a translator for a small job a couple of times a year, for example when they issue earnings reports or press releases. Others may have an onslaught of documents (grant applications, RFPs) a couple of times a year, and then they need 100,000 words in a month. So you absolutely must have a partner or backup person if you want to be successful in the direct client market. Corollary: you really don't want to turn down their work if you can help it. In the agency market, you can pretty much accept and decline projects at will. As long as you accept at least some of the time, the agency will likely call you again. But if you bail out on a direct client at a key time, your relationship with them may be over, because they have to find someone else immediately (see reference to partner/backup above).

3.8.1 Working with individuals

Individuals (often, people who need official documents like birth certificates, educational records and driver's licenses translated for immigration purposes) can be great to work with, or can be a nightmare to work with, depending on how you set the relationship up. Individuals

represent an appealing market because their translation needs often don't justify a translation agency's overhead; so as a freelancer, you can charge a comparatively high rate while still charging less than what the individual would pay an agency. The keys to working successfully with individuals are:

- Promote the fact that you provide this service; create a dedicated web page for your official document translation services.
- Streamline the process: on your dedicated web page, list all of the information that someone needs in order to decide whether to hire you. Consider establishing a set price per page for official document translations. Avoid issuing custom quotes or negotiating about rates. Just say, "My fee is X dollars per page, so the total cost for your batch of documents would be Y."
- Ask for/require advance payment. This completely eliminates the risk of not getting paid, which is a major reason why many translators don't want to work with individuals.

In the US, one complication in working with individual clients is the lack of a standard definition of "a certified translation." In some cases, a certified translation must be done by a certified translator; in other cases, a certified translation simply must be accompanied by a certification statement signed by the person who translated the document. If you are not ATA-certified, make sure to clarify with your individual clients about the certification requirements for their documents.

3.9 A bit about interpreting

As you explore a career in translation, consider whether you would like to focus your business exclusively on translation, or include interpreting in your range of services. Like translation, the market for interpreting depends largely on your language pair(s), and unless you do telephone interpreting, is more location-dependent than translation since you need to be in the same place as your clients.

Interpreting has several “modes,” the primary ones being simultaneous, where the interpreter talks at the same time as the speaker; consecutive, where the interpreter listens to the speaker and takes notes, then interprets what the speaker said; and sight translation, where the interpreter reads a printed document aloud in a different language from the language in which the document is written. Simultaneous interpreting is probably the most common mode, since it is used at the United Nations, in court, and in various other conference-type settings. Consecutive interpreting is often used during one-on-one business meetings, for example when a party to a lawsuit is giving a deposition in an attorney’s office. Simultaneous interpreting often requires the interpreter and the listeners to use some type of audio equipment such as a portable microphone and earphone receivers, while consecutive interpreting is most often done without equipment.

Interpreting demands very different skills than translation. While translators are stereotypically detail-oriented introverts who don’t mind spending an hour finding the perfect translation for a word, interpreters must be able to think on their feet and work with little or no advance preparation. Translators most often work alone at home, while interpreters are often literally in the spotlight, standing next to a court witness, hospital patient or head of state and communicating for him or her.

Until the advent of conference calling, interpreters had to be in the same place as their clients, and court and conference interpreting is still heavily dependent on on-site interpreters. However, over-the-phone interpreting is becoming more popular, especially in areas where it’s hard to find on-site interpreters. Many translation agencies also schedule interpreters, and courts, hospitals and schools may employ in-house interpreters.

One major difference between interpreting and translation is that interpreters often work in both “directions” of their language pair, so must be highly proficient in speaking their non-native language; many high-level conference interpreters consider themselves to have two native languages, rather than one native language and one or more second languages. Interpreters are paid by the hour or by the day, and pay varies widely. In some areas of the U.S., English↔Spanish court interpreters might make \$25 or \$30 an hour, while high-level conference interpreters might make \$700 per day or more.

As with translation, interpreters can choose whether to work with agencies, direct clients or both. Since interpreting is so location-dependent,

it can be really helpful to talk to interpreters who work in your local area in order to find out what types of clients they work for. For example in some areas, certain clients such as hospitals or courts may work only through interpreting agencies, while other clients such as law firms may be eager to work directly with interpreters. In addition, if you are qualified to do simultaneous conference interpreting, clients may be willing to pay your travel expenses to come to where their conferences are taking place.

3.10 How do translators set their rates?

Translators are generally paid by the word. The word count may be based on the source or target word count and may be calculated by the single word (most common in the U.S.) or per thousand words (most common in the U.K.). Payment is sometimes made by the line (most common in Germany), with a line being comprised of a certain number of characters (in Germany, generally 55). For projects where charging by the word would result in a ridiculously low payment, for example when translating an advertising slogan, translators are often paid by the hour. Translations of official documents such as birth certificates may be billed by the page. Many translators have a minimum charge for small projects, for example a flat fee for projects up to 250 words. It's also common for translators to add a premium for rush work, or to offer a discount for a large projects or ongoing work.

The actual per-word rate depends on your language combinations and specializations, and also on what your clients are willing to pay. Asking "How much do translators charge?" is like asking, "How big is a ball of yarn?" The variation in translation rates is enormous; if you visit online translation marketplaces such as Translators Cafe translatorscafe.com, or ProZ.com proz.com, you'll see an abundance of translators willing to work for just a few cents a word, while a highly specialized financial, legal or technical translator working for direct clients might make 40 or more cents per word. In addition, many translators are reluctant to publish or even discuss their rates for fear of being targeted by antitrust actions.

If you work for translation agencies, there may not be much room for negotiation on rates, and "setting your rates" may be more a matter of finding agencies that are willing to pay what you would like to earn. Agencies will

often ask you what your rates are, but just as often the agency already knows what it can or will pay for a typical project in your language combination, and is unlikely to give you work if you charge more than the “standard” rate. Some agencies will also tell you up front that you’re welcome to specify your rates, but that the agency prefers to work with translators who charge less than a certain number of cents per word. Beware also of charging too little. Reputable agencies may look askance at translation rates that are substantially below the average or standard rate in a certain language combination.

3.10.1 Charging by the word versus charging by the hour

Translators have traditionally charged by the word, with editors charging either by the word or by the hour. This method of billing has advantages and disadvantages for both translators/editors and their clients.

On the pro side, charging by the word, especially if the source word count is used, means that everyone knows in advance how much the translation will cost. A 10,000 word translation at 20 cents per word will cost exactly \$2,000, no matter how long it takes the translator to complete it. Charging by the word also allows more experienced translators to earn more money per hour, since they generally work faster than their inexperienced colleagues. Finally, charging by the word leaves very little room for debate or interpretation about what work is billable and what work is not; the translator simply issues an invoice for the number of words translated (just make sure to always agree in advance on whether you will bill for the source or target word count).

On the con side, charging by the word commits you to a fixed amount of pay for the translation, no matter how long it takes. In the example above, whether it takes you 20 hours to translate 10,000 words of straightforward text with very little to look up and no complex formatting, or 40 hours to translate complex tables and barely legible handwritten text, you still earn the same \$2,000. As discussed above, charging by the hour also leads to room for debate over what is billable and what is not. For example, should the translator bill for reading and responding to the client’s e-mails? Talking to the project manager on the phone? Proofreading the document after

translating it? Or should these tasks be absorbed into the hourly charge simply for translating the document?

When it comes to editing, there is the added variable of the quality of the original translation. If you edit translations that require almost no corrections, you will probably make the most money if you charge by the word, since you receive your agreed-on amount of pay even if you make very few changes to the document. On the other hand, charging by the hour protects you against having to extensively rewrite or even re-translate a poorly done translation at a low per-word rate.

3.11 Professional Associations for Translators and Interpreters

Professional associations are an excellent resource for both beginning and experienced translators and interpreters. At the international, national, and local levels, professional associations allow you to network with colleagues, pursue continuing education workshops and attend conferences related to the field. They also improve your credibility as a linguist. Being a member of a professional association shows that you have a network of colleagues and are willing to invest in your profession. Especially if translator or interpreter certification isn't offered in your languages, belonging to a professional association shows that you're serious about your work. Following is an overview of professional associations for translators and interpreters working in the United States.

3.11.1 American Translators Association

The American Translators Association atanet.org is the largest professional association for language professionals in the U.S., and offers membership to both individual linguists and translation companies; at this writing it has approximately 10,500 members. The ATA has various language and specialization-specific divisions that members can choose to join. Benefits for ATA members include a listing on the ATA website, a subscription to the monthly magazine *ATA Chronicle*, reduced rates to attend ATA conferences and seminars, and various affiliate benefits such as credit card acceptance,

retirement programs, professional liability insurance, etc. The ATA holds a large annual conference each year in the fall, and information about upcoming conferences is available on the ATA website.

The ATA administers its own certification exams, which are probably the most widely recognized translation credential in the U.S. As of 2015, individual membership in the ATA costs \$190 per year.

On the ATA website, you can also find information about local associations for translators and interpreters. The ATA is large enough that most parts of the U.S. have an ATA chapter or regional group.

3.11.2 National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators najit.org is a professional association for court interpreters and legal translators. NAJIT holds an annual conference, publishes the newsletter *Proteus*, and advocates for positive changes in the court interpreting and legal translation professions. NAJIT's website also includes a helpful list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about court interpreting. 2015 individual dues are \$105 per year.

3.11.3 American Literary Translators Association

The American Literary Translators Association literarytranslators.org is dedicated to serving literary translators and “enhancing the status and quality of literary translation.” Members receive a variety of publications about literary translation, such as *Translation Review* and *Guides to Literary Translation*, and ALTA also holds an annual conference on literary translation. 2015 individual dues are \$100 per year.

3.11.4 Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs

The Federation Internationale des Traducteurs fit-ift.org is an “association of associations” for translators, which gathers more than 100 professional associations for language professionals from all over the world. FIT does not

accept individual translators as members, but does hold a Congress every three years, which is open to individual translators and interpreters.

3.11.5 International Association of Conference Interpreters

Membership in AIIC aiic.net is open only to experienced conference interpreters who have worked a minimum of 150 days in a conference setting, and prospective members must be sponsored by three active AIIC members who have been in the association for at least five years. The AIIC website contains many helpful articles and links for aspiring and experienced interpreters.

3.12 Certification for Translators

As discussed in a previous section, the translation and interpreting professions are largely unregulated in the United States. Various professional associations and governmental entities offer certification, but these tests are restricted to certain language combinations. For example, organizations in the United States offer certification only in language combinations that involve English, so if you translate or interpret German into French or Japanese into Korean, there simply is no certification available in the U.S. Reliable and uniform certification is one of the most important issues facing the translation and interpreting professions today. Since no mandatory certification for translators and interpreters exists, there is little agreement on what makes a “certified” translator or interpreter. In some cases, linguists who have earned a certificate in translation or interpreting refer to themselves as “certified,” while to others, “certified” means having passed a nationally standardized examination.

At present, the ATA’s translator certification exam is a three hour written exam in which you translate two passages of 225- 275 words each. Until recently, all of the ATA’s exam sittings required candidates to hand-write their exams, but now there are starting to be some computerized sittings. One of the exam passages is on a general topic and everyone taking the exam in a given language combination must translate the general passage. For the second passage, candidates have a choice between

science/technology/medicine, or law/business/finance. In order to pass the exam, you have to earn a passing score on both passages and even if you fail only one passage, you must re-take the entire exam.

Before you invest in the \$300 (as of 2015) registration fee for the ATA exam, it's a good idea to take a practice test. Practice tests are available to ATA members for \$50 per passage, and you receive your graded passage back with comments. When you take the actual exam, it's important to keep in mind that a) you do not receive your graded exam back unless you pay an additional review fee of \$250, and b) the overall pass rate on the ATA exam is below 20%. So, it's well worth your while to spend \$50 or \$100 on taking one or two practice exam passages before you register for the actual exam.

There is a great deal of controversy over the value of being a certified translator. As a linguist, especially in a common language combination such as English paired with French, Spanish or German, becoming certified is one way to stand out in a large pool of freelancers. At the very least, a translation client who is browsing an online directory of translators will probably contact the certified translators first. In some court systems it is now difficult to find work as an English↔Spanish court interpreter if you're not certified, and some translation agencies may insist that for certain end clients or certain types of translations, you have to be certified if the option is available for your languages. In addition, the American Translators Association's most recent compensation survey (published in 2007), found that certified translators earn approximately \$6,000 per year more than their non-certified colleagues. Passing the ATA exam also allows you to include the designation "CT" (Certified Translator) after your name.

Although there are certainly some benefits to being certified, there are many successful translators and interpreters who have either failed the certification exams or are not interested in taking them. A certification exam can be a good test of your skills, but it also represents a somewhat artificial environment in which you're asked to demonstrate those skills. For instance, as a practicing translator you have the option and the responsibility to decline any work that you do not feel comfortable doing. During a certification exam, you are required to translate the passages that are presented to you regardless of whether they fall into your scope of expertise. At present, you are not allowed to use any electronic resources such as online dictionaries during the ATA exam, while very few translators rely exclusively on paper resources in their day to day work. So, it is up to you to

decide whether pursuing certification is a worthwhile option for your professional goals.

Following is an overview of the main certifying organizations for translators and interpreters in the United States. If you work in a language combination that doesn't involve English, an Internet search can help you find certifying organizations in a country where your languages are spoken.

3.12.1 American Translators Association

The American Translators Association atanet.org offers *certification* (formerly called *accreditation*) to translators in the following language pairs as of 2015 (↔ indicates that the test is available in either “direction”):

- Arabic→English
- English→Chinese
- Croatian↔English
- Danish→English
- Dutch↔English
- English→Finnish
- French↔English
- German↔English
- English→Hungarian
- English↔Italian
- Japanese↔English
- English→Polish
- Portuguese↔English

- Russian↔English
- Spanish↔English
- Swedish↔English
- English→Ukrainian

Candidates for the ATA certification exam must also fulfill an education and experience requirement before being allowed to sit for the exam. To fulfill this requirement, you must meet one of the following criteria:

- Certification or accreditation by an organization that is a member of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs.
- A degree or certificate from an approved Translation and Interpreting program.
- A Bachelor's degree and two years' experience working as a translator or interpreter (see ATA website for how to demonstrate your work experience).
- Less than a Bachelor's degree and five years' experience working as a translator or interpreter (see ATA website for how to demonstrate your work experience).
- Proof that you have taken the ACTFL (American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages) reading proficiency test in your source language and writing proficiency test in your target language.

If you don't have a degree or certificate in translation, the ACTFL test path is probably the fastest route to eligibility, but it represents an additional cost and logistical hurdle before you begin the ATA exam process.

3.12.2 Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Program

The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Program cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish/index.asp is perhaps the most widely recognized credential for interpreters in the United States. Passing this examination, most commonly offered in Spanish↔English but also in Navajo↔English and Haitian Creole↔English, earns you the designation *Federally Certified Court Interpreter*. The examination is rigorous, necessitating that the candidate maintain simultaneous interpreting speeds of up to 160 words per minute, and retain passages of up to 50 words in length for consecutive interpreting. FCICE candidates must first pass a written test with a score of at least 75%, and are then invited to take the oral portion of the exam, on which a score of 80% is considered passing. At present, the oral portion consists of a sight translation, simultaneous interpretation, and mock cross-examination, involving both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. The exam is offered on specific dates in specific locations specified on the program's website, so if you don't live near one of these cities, you'll have to travel there in order to take the exam.

A self-assessment of readiness to take the FCICE exam is included on the program website, and numerous preparation courses have sprung up in order to meet the growing demand especially for Spanish↔English court interpreters in certain areas of the United States. Other than the FCICE site itself, an excellent resource is Acebo, a language resources company run by highly qualified interpreter trainers. The Acebo website acebo.com has a section with "Tips for the Federal Exam," and also sells preparation materials for interpreting exams, the best known of which are *The Interpreter's Edge* and *The Interpreter's Edge Turbo Supplement*.

The advantage of having the Federally Certified Court Interpreter credential depends on where you live and what type of work you want to do. In areas of the U.S. with large Spanish-speaking populations, courts often have full-time staff interpreter positions, with standard pay for interpreters in the Federal courts set at \$418 per day and \$226 per half day as of 2015. As the FCICE credential becomes more well-known, many interpreters report that private clients such as conference organizers and law firms are more likely to insist on using federally certified interpreters. Because of the rigorous nature of the federal certification examination, it is usually seen as a reliable indicator of a quality interpreter.

3.12.3 State Court Interpreter Certification

Court interpreter certification at the state level is much less standardized than at the federal level. Some states such as Washington, New Jersey, California and Colorado have active programs to certify court interpreters of Spanish and other languages as well, and strongly suggest that courts use only certified interpreters. Other states are moving toward this type of model, while still others have no certification procedures at all. For information on what's available in your state, the best source is the National Center for State Courts www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification.aspx. In 2015, the NCSC listed the following oral examinations on its website: Arabic, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Marshallese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish and Vietnamese.

The value of obtaining state certification depends again on where you live and what type of work you'd like to do. In states where certification is becoming better known, it may be difficult or impossible to find work as a court interpreter if you're not certified.

4 Launching your freelance translation business

4.1 The start-up phase

If your goal as a freelance translator is to work full-time, the length of your start-up period may vary from a few months to more than a year. Various factors will affect the amount of time it takes you to find a base of regular clients and spend your time working instead of looking for work. If you have existing contacts in the industry, a degree in translation or interpreting or a degree in a specialized area that is in demand in the industry and you market yourself aggressively, you may be working full-time within a few months. For most translators, it is advisable to count on a start-up phase of six months to a year, and it may take as long as two years until you are busy all the time.

At first, this may seem like a daunting proposition. However, just like someone who opens a consulting firm or a furniture store, you are starting a business, and your start-up expenses will be relatively low compared to the costs associated with starting a brick and mortar business or a business that requires employees in addition to yourself. The keys to a successful start-up phase are assertive marketing, careful financial planning and realistic expectations. While someone looking for a salaried job may send out 25 or 50 applications, you may need to contact 300–500 potential clients during your first year in business. The main start-up expense of your freelance business will be your time, so you will need to plan financially for a period of spotty income. However, if you do the start-up phase correctly, you will then have a profitable and intellectually stimulating business for as long as you want to keep running it.

4.2 Ways to start

As discussed in the previous section, remember that starting a freelance business is like starting any other type of business. Fortunately, the direct costs associated with starting a translation business are low: a reliable computer, office software and maybe a translation environment tool, a high-speed internet connection, business cards, basic reference materials and a business phone are about all you need to get going. The real cost of starting a freelance translation business is time: if you only have five hours per week in which to start your business, you may be able to make some extra income but you won't be working full-time in three months. On the other hand, if you want to devote yourself full-time to starting your business, you will need to plan for how you will support yourself until you have a steady stream of work. Following are some ideas on ways to start your business.

- Start slowly. While continuing to work another full-time job, devote five to 10 hours per week to starting your translation business. Look for clients who have projects that are small and that do not have to be completed on a rush basis. These might include translating official documents (birth certificates, school transcripts etc.) for individuals, legal aid agencies, consulates or immigration attorneys; or working with translation companies in your area that need someone to handle small projects. This situation works best if your current job might allow you to slowly cut back your schedule as your translation work expands.
- Work a part-time job and freelance part-time. Working part-time, for example teaching foreign language courses, working at a library or book store, doing editing or transcription work in your native language, etc. can be an excellent way to pay your living expenses while you start your translation business. One good option is to find part-time work that you can do from home on a freelance basis (editing and transcription are good possibilities here) so that you are also available to take on translation work as it comes in.
- Start full-time. If you can afford it, devoting all of your work time to starting your freelance business is definitely the quickest way to get going. In order to do this, you have to have either a substantial savings cushion (count on six months to a year), another means of support such

as a spouse's or partner's income, or be willing to take out a loan to support yourself.

4.3 The start-up checklist

The length of your start-up phase will vary depending on your language pairs, specializations, flexibility and previous experience in the translation industry. The same is true of the types of clients you'll be working with, a topic that we'll address later in this book. As a general rule, most beginning translators will be working with translation agencies, although some "experienced beginners" may want to work with direct clients. Following is a checklist of some tasks that you will need to complete during your first year in business. These are in roughly chronological order; some tasks may not apply to you at all, while you may need to repeat others several times in order to get your business up and running.

- Phase 1: Research and Preparation
 - Learn about the translation industry. Visit the website of your national, regional and/or local translators associations. Contact several working translators to ask about their experience in the industry and their suggestions for a beginning freelancer. Read some blogs and websites written by experienced translators.
 - Research the competition. Look at the online profiles and websites of translators working in your language combinations; see what specializations and services they offer and whether they publish their rates.
 - Write your translation-targeted resume and cover letter and make sure they are error-free. If you live in your target language country, consider having these documents translated into your source languages so that you can contact as many potential clients as possible.
 - Research the types of clients you would like to work with. Visit some translation agencies' websites and click on "Careers,"

“Freelancers,” “Employment” or other likely links to see if the agency is accepting applications and what information they ask for. If you find any translation agencies that work primarily or only in your language pair, make a note of them. If you would like to work with direct clients, think about whether you need additional people, such as an editor, to work with you.

- Ensure that you have a reliable and functional home office. You will need a reliable computer with a good backup system, a comfortable and quiet place to work, and up-to-date software. Consider whether you need a dedicated business phone line and/or faxing capabilities.
- Have translation-specific business cards printed and always (always!) have some with you.
- Set your range of rates.
- Phase 2: Initial contacts
 - If you have any existing contacts in the translation industry or with direct clients who might need your services, contact them and let them know that you have launched your freelance business.
 - If you plan on working with translation agencies, set a schedule that will allow you to contact 300–500 potential clients during your first year in business, assuming that you would like to be working full-time in six months to a year. The membership directories of translators associations in your source and target language countries are excellent sources of contacts, but always contact an agency by going to its website and following the application process listed there.
 - Contact any potential clients in your local area (translation companies, international chambers of commerce, businesses that work in your source and target language countries, etc.) and ask for an informational interview.

- Consider whether you need additional marketing materials such as a website, brochures, marketing postcards, etc.
 - Actively network with other translators: get involved in your local translators association, in a Division of the American Translators Association, online translation portals and/or in non-translation specific associations such as local freelancers' groups, your local World Trade Center or chamber of commerce.
- Phase 3: Follow-up and growth
 - Keep a log of all of the business contacts you make (this can be electronic, on paper, or any method that works well for you) and any contacts who send you a positive response, even if it's just "thanks for your application, we'll contact you if we need you." Every two to three months, contact these people again and let them know what new projects you have been working on, and that you are still interested in working with them if they need you.
 - If you have time, send a handwritten thank-you note with a business card in it to everyone who responds positively to your initial contact. In the sea of e-mails that these recruiters and project managers receive, your card will stand out and show that you are eager to work with that company.
 - When you start to get some work, ask your clients for feedback on whether you met their expectations and whether you could do anything to better meet their needs in the future. If the client is happy with your work, ask for a testimonial to share with your prospective clients.

4.4 Preparing to market your services

Whether you're just starting out as a translator or moving from in-house to freelance work, finding your first clients is one of the biggest challenges

you'll face. Before you start marketing your translation services, you will need a well written, error-free resume and cover letter; writing these can be a challenge if you do not have much translation experience. Especially if you do not have a degree in translation, it's a good idea to have some translation experience before you start looking for freelance clients. This experience could be paid or unpaid, but your resume will be much stronger if you have even a few specific examples of translation work that you have done.

4.4.1 The basics of writing a translation resume

Having a translation-targeted resume is the most crucial first step in starting your job search. Since some translation agencies will look *only* at your resume, it's especially important to have a strong one, as your cover letter may never be seen by the person responsible for assigning projects. If you are e-mailing your resume, you should send it in either Microsoft Word format or as a PDF. Whatever the format of your resume, it is absolutely imperative that it is well written and contains *no errors* in grammar, spelling, style or usage. Remember, you are applying for language work—why would a potential client trust this work to someone whose own application materials don't show evidence of good language practices? Let's look at some important features of a well written translator resume.

4.4.2 A new resume for a new career

As a beginning translator, the most basic purpose of your resume is to convince a potential client to take a chance on you instead of giving the job to a more experienced linguist. Many beginning translators fail because they use the same resume that they've been using to apply for in-house jobs in other industries. If you are not familiar with writing a resume, or with writing one for the U.S., large online job search sites such as Monster.com monster.com have extensive "career search help" sections that can help you get started and learn how to format your resume. Even if you are familiar with how to write a strong resume, spend some time on the Web looking at how other translators present themselves so that you can avoid the mistakes that other translators make.

The first step in the resume revision process is to think about and research what your potential clients are looking for in a translator. Obviously they want someone who knows at least two languages, but on top of that, think about what your clients are seeking and what skills you can offer that you've already developed in your current career. For example, translators need to be able to work independently on tight deadlines without supervision from a boss. Translators work on computers almost all the time, and need to know how to use computers efficiently. Translators also need excellent writing skills in their target language and excellent communications skills to work well with clients. Specialized translators need to know terminology in their areas of specialization. Some or all of these skills may be transferable from your current career. Therefore, it can be a good idea to start out your resume-writing process by thinking about or even writing down the key career skills you've developed that will make you a good risk to a new client.

4.4.3 The structure of your resume

This section will focus mainly on writing a resume for use in the U.S. However, it is a good idea to have resumes in both your source and target languages so that you can apply to translation agencies or direct clients in your non-native language countries. Make sure to follow good translation practice yourself and have the resume in your non-native language proofread by a native speaker. Following are some factors to consider when preparing your resume for use in the U.S. or abroad.

- A resume for use in the U.S. is quite streamlined compared to what's expected in many other countries. It is generally only one page long, two pages at most, and does not include much personal information other than your name and contact information. If you are going to be posting your resume on the Internet, you might consider removing your physical address from that version of your resume, or you might want to use a post office box as your work address. A U.S. resume can be organized either chronologically (usually starting with your current job and then going in reverse), or functionally (using categories such as **Professional Qualifications, Skills Summary** etc.). A resume for the U.S. is *always* typeset (not hand written), and uses lots of active verbs,

promoting the person's accomplishments: "established," "created," "managed," etc. A U.S. resume, as compared with resumes for other countries, also tends to emphasize what the prospective employer will gain from hiring the candidate, rather than what the candidate would like to gain from the employer.

- A resume for use in Europe is often referred to as a C.V. and contains much more personal information. It is common to list your date and place of birth, citizenship(s), marital status, and sometimes even number of children. A scanned photograph is also sometimes included. For a resume intended for the U.S., note that this type of information should *never* be included since anti-discrimination laws prohibit employers from asking for certain types of personal information. European resumes also tend to be less promotional in nature, and use more passive and descriptive language such as "responsibilities included..."
- An Asian resume is much more comprehensive than a U.S. or even a European one. For example, while on a U.S. resume you would seldom include levels of education below college or professional school unless you didn't attend these, on a resume to be sent to Japan or China your **Education** section might include every school you attended starting with kindergarten, which would reveal insights into your family's socioeconomic status.

4.4.4 Your name

The first item on your resume will be your name. Here are a few factors to consider when selecting the name you will use professionally:

- You may want to clarify your gender. In your source language culture, your name may be gender indeterminate, making it awkward when potential clients don't know how to address you. If you want, you can solve this problem up front by identifying yourself somewhere on your application materials as "Fouad Tarkari (Mr.)" or "Ms. Poonam Prakash."

- Choose one name and spelling, and use it consistently. Especially if your name involves any transliteration, pick one version and stick to it. Going by different names can also present payment problems when the agency writes a check or tries to complete a wire transfer under a different spelling of your name. For example if you use a hyphenated last name, make sure to always use the hyphenated name, never just one of the names or the other.

4.4.5 Your tag line

A tag line that summarizes what you do, such as “English to Japanese Financial Translator,” “Registered Nurse and French to English Translator” or “ATA-Certified Danish to English translator” is a great way to allow potential clients to quickly screen your resume. At a minimum, always prominently state your language pairs immediately below or next to your name.

A line with your specializations can also be helpful. For example, your first tag line could be “German to English translator” and your second could be “Specializing in medical and pharmaceutical translations,” or “Specializations: legal, financial and marketing translations.” All of this “sound bite” information will allow prospective clients to quickly determine if they have a need for your services.

4.4.6 Your contact information

You need to include some type of contact information on your resume, but how much to include is up to you. Some translators include their mailing address and some don't, some include just a general geographical location such as “Utah, USA” or “New York metro area.” Before you send out resumes, make sure that you have a business phone number to include. Some translators choose to make their cell phone the business phone line, some have a separate land line installed and some use a custom ring number that runs over their regular home phone line. You should also include your e-mail address, and make sure that it is a professional one. The best e-mail address, because it is the most permanent, is one that is associated with a domain name that you own, for example yourname@yourdomain.com.

If you will be dealing with clients in various time zones and countries, it can also be helpful to include your time zone, which is normally expressed as a number of hours ahead of or behind Greenwich Mean Time, i.e. GMT+3, GMT-7, etc.

4.4.7 Your objective

If you are applying for freelance work, it is not usually necessary to list an objective on your résumé, since it is obvious that your goal is to find new freelance clients. The space that an objective takes up can be better used for other information.

4.4.8 Your summary of qualifications

This section, which goes below your name and contact information and might also be called a **Profile** section, is key to getting started as a translator. If the first item on your resume is a detailed description of your ten years of work as a financial planner with no mention of language skills, clients may not even make it to the **Education** section to find out that you're actually bilingual in English and Japanese and interested in financial translation; with a summary of qualifications you highlight this fact right away. A good way to research what qualifications your potential clients want is to read some translation agency websites; after all, you'll be delivering a good deal of the product that they're promising their clients. Including some of these desired characteristics is a good way to start your resume on a positive note. Following are some sample summaries of qualifications for career changing translators.

For a finance professional who works from English to Japanese:

Profile: Native speaker of U.S. English, B.A. and M.A. in Japanese including one year of residency in Japan. Ten years of successful self-employment in the financial planning industry. Excellent computer skills including office software and Internet research. Large collection of specialized bilingual dictionaries; recently completed online translator training course. Accustomed to meeting numerous deadlines per day and providing superior customer service.

For a nurse who works from Spanish to English:

Profile: Fully bilingual registered nurse, grew up in Spanish--English bilingual household with numerous extended visits to Mexico. Registered nurse since 1995 including three years' experience providing primary care to limited English proficiency (LEP) Spanish-speaking patients.

In-depth knowledge of Spanish and English medical terminology including confidential handling of medical records. Excellent written communications skills including chart and medical report writing.

4.4.9 The body of the résumé

Next, you'll have to decide whether to structure your resume functionally or chronologically. If the type of translation work you're seeking is somewhat related to your current work, you might opt for a chronological resume. For example, if you're currently a lawyer and would like to do legal translation, your resume can be structured fairly traditionally. If you're breaking off on a completely new path, for example if you've worked as a physical therapist for five years and would like to do website translation, you may opt for a functional resume in order to highlight your general skills rather than your specific work experience.

When you're writing your first translation-targeted resume, you should highlight any experience you have, both in the areas of language and subject matter. If you studied abroad in Mexico in 1975, include it. If you belong to a local translators association, include it. If you recently attended a conference on estate and will terminology, include it. If you just taught a French class for elementary school students, include it. Obviously you can't fabricate resume details, but if you're planning to make translation your full-time or only job, it is fair to refer to yourself as a "self-employed freelance translator" (including your language pairs) and describe the work you are doing now. As your translation experience grows (and it will!), change the format of your resume to reflect this.

4.4.10 The professional/related experience section

Here, you should list any translation or translation-related experience that you have. If you have done previous translation work even on a volunteer basis, you should include it right at the beginning of this section so that prospective clients will see it first. If you have work experience that is related to what you will be doing as a translator or that demonstrates your foreign language abilities (for example editing, teaching foreign language classes, writing in your target language), you should include it as well.

If you are applying for freelance work, it is usually acceptable to have gaps in your employment history, and it may be better to omit jobs that are completely unrelated to translation. In addition, if you have a gap in your employment history because you took time off to raise children, take care of aging relatives, follow a spouse's job relocation, etc., don't feel the need to explain them unless a client asks. In general, clients are much less concerned about a freelancer's employment gaps than they would be about a full-time employee's.

In your professional/related experience section, try also to highlight transferable skills. For example if you have ever been successfully self-employed, or worked in a job that involved tight deadlines, or done work that involved writing or editing, make sure to emphasize that experience. In addition, if any of your jobs required you to learn terminology associated with a specialized field (medicine, banking, law, computer hardware/software, automotive, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, marketing, etc.) make sure to include that.

4.4.11 The education section

You should include some information about your education, at least any undergraduate and graduate degrees you have earned. At a minimum, you should list the degree you earned, the name of the college or university, the location of the college or university and your major or specialization. You do not have to include the year you graduated if you do not want prospective clients to know your approximate age. If you took courses toward a degree but did not complete the program, you can include that information as long as you specify "20 credits toward Master of Arts in Art History" or something similar. If you studied abroad or participated in a special program in which you used your foreign language skills, make sure to include that.

4.4.12 The professional development and memberships section

Especially if you are starting out with little to no translation experience, showing that you are a member of some translation-related associations and/or have recently done some translation-related professional development is a real boost to your resume. You can include a short section with a bulleted list, such as “Member, American Translators Association” or “Member, New York Circle of Translators,” and also list any translation-related conferences, workshops or courses that you have participated in.

4.4.13 The computer skills and equipment section

If you need to fill some space on your resume and/or you have specialized computer equipment or skills, consider including a section on computer skills and equipment. For example, if you already know how to use a translation environment tool you will stand out from the pack of beginner translators. If you are proficient in the use of software for desktop publishing or web design, this is also an asset. If you choose to include this section, make sure to keep the information current so that you do not appear outdated when new technology comes on the market.

4.4.14 The interests and activities section

This is another section that you can include or omit depending on your preferences and how much room you have on your resume. Listing your interests and activities is certainly not necessary, but it serves a few purposes. First, in an industry where business is conducted almost entirely by e-mail and phone, this section helps clients get to know you a bit as a person. Also, you never know when a client will have an unusual translation that requires someone who knows the terminology of a particular activity, such as sailing, rock climbing, sign language or photography.

4.4.15 What about a cover letter?

Because most translation agencies have their own application processes, you generally do not need a formal cover letter if you are applying exclusively to agencies. If you are interested in doing direct client work, you may be sending your materials through the mail, in which case you should use a formal cover letter. Most of the time, you will either send a short e-mail cover letter, or include a paragraph or two in the “Additional Information” field of a translation agency’s online application.

Your e-mail cover letter should be short and to the point. Keep in mind that many translation agencies receive several thousand translator applications per year, and whoever receives your e-mail is unlikely to take the time to read the usual five-paragraph cover letter. Instead, pare down your message to the essentials. If you have a specialized qualification such as an MD, PhD, MBA, etc., make sure to prominently state that (even in the subject line of your e-mail).

Sample Cover Letter

To the attention of *Name of Prospective Client*:

I am a freelance Spanish to English translator based in San Francisco, California, and I would like to offer my services to your agency. My primary specialization is financial translation.

I launched my freelance translation business after a successful ten-year career in banking. Having worked in a variety of roles in banks with many Spanish-speaking customers, I have a strong background in financial terminology in both languages. Some of my recent translation projects include: (name a few), and I recently attended the annual conference of the American Translators Association to expand my network of colleagues in the industry.

With each translation project I undertake, my goal is to turn a new client into a regular client; I guarantee a prompt response to your e-mails and phone calls. Please let me know if you would like to speak further about how we might work together.

4.5 Finding your first clients

If you’re starting out by applying to translation agencies, remember to follow their application procedures in order to maximize your chances of getting work. Most agencies have a translator application form on their websites; the “Contact Us” or “Opportunities” sections of agency websites are good

places to look for these. Although it feels impersonal to apply for work this way, resist the urge to distinguish yourself by sending in a paper resume if the agency requests an electronic one; what seems to you like a personal touch will only create more work for your potential client, and may get your application materials tossed without a second look. Along the same lines, most agencies prefer not to be contacted by phone unless you are applying for a specific position that they've advertised. If the online application form includes a "Comments" field, this is the place to ask for an in-person meeting or introduce yourself as a new translator in the area if the client is local. For translation agencies in the United States, the website of the American Translators Association atanet.org is a good place to find the agency's web address, and the agency's profile on the ATA website may also indicate if it is currently accepting applications from new translators.

Whether applying to translation agencies or direct clients, there are a few basic rules to follow. You're applying for language work, so your application materials should be *error-free*. Make sure that everything you send out is proofed by yourself and at least one other person. When sending inquiries by e-mail, use a clear subject line, such as "German-English freelance translator inquiry." Don't disguise your intentions or make your message look like a response to an e-mail from the agency. State your language pairs prominently. Start your e-mail with a sentence such as, "I am a freelance English to Spanish translator and I would like to offer my services to your company."

Looking for work with direct clients has some positive and negative points for a beginning translator. As a newcomer to the profession, it can be helpful to have some of the safety nets that a translation agency offers; for example when you work for an agency, your work is almost always proofread before being sent to the end client, which guards against a true disaster if you make a mistake. However, direct clients may be more likely to give work to a beginning translator, especially if the client wants to work with someone local. Whereas a translation agency has a wide range of translators to choose from with no geographic restrictions, a direct client who wants to work with someone local has a bigger incentive to work with someone new.

If you'd like to work with direct clients, any large businesses, hospitals or school systems in your area are worth contacting, even if they don't have obvious international ties. Probably the best source of direct client contacts is international business organizations such as international chambers of

commerce, since you can be sure that the member companies use your non-English language in their business operations. Joining one of these organizations is also an excellent way to network with potential clients. Following is a list of the websites for some international chambers of commerce in the United States:

- New York chapter of the French-American Chamber of Commerce
faccnyc.org
- New York chapter of the German-American Chamber of Commerce
gaccny.com
- Chicago chapter of the Italian-American Chamber of Commerce
italianchamber.us
- United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
usmcoc.org
- Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the U.S.
kocham.org
- Japanese-American Chamber of Commerce, Silicon Valley
jaccsv.com
- Polish-American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois
polishamericanbusiness.com
- Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce htsacc-usa.org
- Greek-American Chamber of Commerce
greekameranchamber.org
- Danish-American Chamber of Commerce in New York
daccny.com
- Spain-US Chamber of Commerce spainuscc.org
- Vietnamese-American Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota
vietnamesechamber.com

- Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce of Florida
brazilchamber.org
- Dutch-American Chamber of Commerce of Seattle
daccseattle.com
- Asian Chamber of Commerce of Arizona asianchamber.org

Whatever route you'd like to take toward finding your first clients and building up your business, following are some tips that are applicable to almost every freelance translator's startup phase:

Be realistic. If you've never worked as a translator or interpreter before, starting out by contacting the United Nations or accepting a 90,000 word document on nuclear power plant safety procedures probably isn't the best way to start. Look for projects that you can do a great job on, and then use those projects to build up your business. Realize that depending on your languages and specializations, it may take a year to build up a base of regular clients.

Network, network, network. The translation industry is strongly driven by name recognition, and other translators are an excellent source of referrals for your new business. Talk about your business with everyone you know, and give them a business card; strike up a conversation with the receptionist in every office you wait in, and leave a business card. Volunteer for your local translators association and get to know the experienced translators in your language pair; prepare an "elevator speech" (a few sentences that summarize what you do) and be ready to give it to anyone who asks you about your job!

Think locally. Especially if you present yourself better in person than on paper, start out by asking for in-person meetings with every translation or interpreting agency in your local area. Don't make this an aggressive sales call; use it as an occasion to learn more about the agency's work and how you might fit in. Don't be dissuaded if local agencies "have no work in your language combinations right now." By asking for an in-person meeting, you'll position yourself to step in when their needs change.

Blanket the field. One of the biggest mistakes beginning translators and interpreters make is to assume that they will be working full-time after sending out five or ten inquiries. On the contrary, you should expect no more than a one percent return rate on your cold-contacting efforts. A good start (emphasis: *start*) if you'd like to be working full-time would be to send out 300–500 resumes during your first year in business. Your prospective clients may include translation agencies in the U.S., agencies in countries where your other languages are spoken, and companies in your area that could use your services.

Join some associations. Membership in a professional association establishes your seriousness as a linguist, and allows you to make contact with colleagues in your area. Even for established linguists, referrals from colleagues are an important source of work. If you're very resourceful and very lucky, you may even find a colleague in your language combination who is willing to take you on as an assistant or send some extra work your way.

Keep in touch. Instead of just firing off e-mails or making phone calls and then waiting to hear back from your potential clients, keep a log of the person you talked to or e-mailed with and what he or she responded to your inquiry. As you get more experience, periodically contact these people to let them know that you're still interested and available. Let them know what types of projects you've been working on, and let them know that you would be happy to help them out with similar jobs.

4.6 Building up your business

Once you've landed your first few clients, your business will probably grow more quickly. Freelance work tends to build on itself; once you are working most of the time you should be able to taper your marketing efforts back somewhat. In general, even a successful freelancer must spend at least ten percent of his or her time on marketing; for beginning translators this figure may increase to as much as 50 percent, and for those who have been in the business for many years, the pressure to market may fall by the wayside. However, many marketing experts caution that, "If you're not marketing,

you're dying." While this advice may seem extreme, it's important for even experienced translators to prepare for the loss of a major client or a downturn in the economy by keeping up a steady flow of outbound promotion.

It's also important to distinguish between marketing for more work and marketing for better work. After a few years in business, many competent translators are busy most of the time, and do not need to market for more work. However, many of these people make the mistake of stopping their marketing efforts because they don't need more work. Marketing can lead to better work as well; work that pays a higher per-word or hourly rate, work that is more interesting, more flexible, or more ongoing, thereby lowering the translator's administrative costs. Being busy all the time is an excellent precursor to raising your rates; once you're busy all the time, you can charge higher rates because you are not as dependent on each project. Following are some ways to keep your income growing after you've made it through the startup phase:

Please the clients you've got. While marketing to new clients is a worthy and even necessary endeavor, it's far less time-consuming to keep your existing clients than it is to find new ones. If you're interested in building a sustainable business and a healthy income, regular clients who come to you are key, since they allow you to spend your time working rather than looking for work. Doing a great job on every project, responding promptly to phone calls and e-mails, never missing a deadline, and being there for your clients in a pinch will help turn new clients into regulars.

Ask for referrals and testimonials. Preferably after you've just done an "above and beyond" job for a client, tactfully let him or her know that your business continues to grow thanks to referrals from satisfied clients. Better yet, ask your happy clients to put their experiences with you in writing to be posted on your website or included in future marketing materials.

Spread the word. As mentioned in the previous section, keep a log of all of the professional contacts you make, and periodically update these potential clients on your recent projects. The definition of "periodically"

is up to you, but an appropriate frequency might be every one to three months; more often and your messages will grow annoying, less often and the agency representative may not remember you at all. It's possible to accomplish this task with a minimum of effort, by using a personalized e-mail such as this one:

Dear Name of Contact:

I am a freelance French to English translator registered with your agency, and I'd like to update you on some of my recent projects, in the event that you have similar needs in the future. In the past few months, I translated and managed the editing for a 90,000 word computer literacy manual, translated two large documents of international airport construction specifications and translated an auto parts manufacturing quality manual. In addition, I recently completed a course entitled "French for Lawyers," which covered the terminology of French legal institutions. I've attached my updated resume for your consideration, and I look forward to the opportunity of working together in the future.

Keep cold-contacting. Many experienced translators estimate that approximately half of their new clients come from cold contacts and half from word of mouth referrals. Whatever your level of experience, cold-contacting is important. If you're looking for agency clients, most agencies allow you to enter your information into their online database through the agency's website. For direct clients, it's always best to contact a specific person, preferably someone who works in communications, marketing, international affairs, etc. If you're actively trying to build your business, set some concrete goals for the number of cold contacts you would like to make per week or per month.

Keep networking. In a profession largely populated by independent contractors, networking gets you in touch with your colleagues and clients, either in person or electronically. Attending events for linguists is a great way to meet colleagues who may be in a position to refer work to you. If you're looking for direct clients, consider joining a professional association in your target industry, for example an association for the pharmaceutical, financial or legal industry. Other networking endeavors worth considering are speaking to high school and college students considering careers in translation, teaching a class on

getting started as a freelance translator or interpreter or taking on an intern from a local high school or college foreign language program.

Get creative. Sending your resume to potential clients is important, but other marketing tactics can be as effective or more effective, especially with direct translation buyers. Put together a file of work you've done for previous clients (with their permission) and send it to prospective clients, offering to do the same for them. Present a compelling reason for potential clients to spend money on translation, i.e. "Are Spanish-speaking Internet users finding you, or your competition?" "Few Americans who visit France speak French, yet few French hotels and restaurants have websites in English," etc. For a potential "big fish" client, show your work—translate the prospect's brochure or website homepage, lay it out attractively, and ask for a meeting to discuss how you can help the client's business grow by making it more international. Starting an e-newsletter or blog with information for your prospective clients is also an excellent way to spread the word about your services.

Become an expert. Writing, speaking and consulting about translation and interpreting are great ways to get your name recognized. Contact professional journals in your specializations and offer to write an article about translation issues in their industry; write a booklet on *Tips for Translation Buyers* and send it to potential direct clients; speak at professional conferences; post an article on *How to Speak Successfully When Using an Interpreter* on your website—by now you've got one, right?

4.7 Starting a part-time translation business

Depending on your financial and time resources, it may not be possible for you to make freelance translation or interpreting your full-time job right away. Starting a part-time business is a viable option, as long as you are careful to run your business in a professional way. Part-time freelance businesses can be split into two categories; taking on part-time translation or interpreting work in addition to another job, and taking on part-time translation or interpreting work as your only job.

If you already have another job and are interested in sideline work as a translator or interpreter, it's possible, and many successful freelancers start out this way, waiting until the translation or interpreting work can pay the bills before quitting their existing job. In this situation, you have the advantage of taking as long as you need to build your business up to the point where it replaces your current income. However, you also have the challenge of staying productive and available to both your full-time employer and your translation clients. The translation industry is extremely fast-paced; especially if you work with translation agencies, your clients may need an immediate response when they contact you. If you'll be combining part-time translation work with a full-time job, it's important to choose your clients carefully so that you don't end up being unavailable when they need you. For example you might look for non-rush work that has a longer deadline, or you might work translating official documents for individuals rather than for agencies or large businesses.

If you either don't want or don't need to work full-time, starting a part-time freelance business as your only job is a possibility as well. Depending on your geographical location and language pairs, your main challenge may be limiting your workload to your desired schedule. In theory, the on-call nature of most freelance translation and interpreting work lends itself well to part-time work, since it seems like you should be able to simply accept or turn down projects as your schedule allows. In practice, this isn't always the case. When a regular client calls, it's hard to say "No," since you want to help them out and keep them as a client; when no one calls, you can't do much about it except use the extra time to market yourself. Still, many freelancers can and do make a go of it part-time. The main guideline is to organize and run your business just as professionally as you would if you were working full-time; your clients don't need to know that you work part-time unless they ask, so don't give them a reason to suspect that you're less committed than someone who works 40+ hours per week.

Part-timers of all flavors should pay special attention to business expenses as a percentage of income. Keep in mind that all of your expenses are distributed over a smaller number of billable hours than they would be if you worked full-time. Part-timers may want to limit expensive computer system upgrades unless they are absolutely necessary, or may want to set a strict budget for professional association memberships and conferences. If you work part-time, make sure that you check IRS policies about how much

money you need to earn in order to claim business expenses as a tax deduction.

4.8 Business skills you'll need

As a freelance translator or interpreter, you'll be exchanging the freedom of self-employment for the responsibility of finding your own work, charging a fair rate for this work, making sure you get paid, tracking your own tax liabilities, and many other tasks. In this section, we'll take a look at the non language-related skills that make for a successful freelance business.

Marketing. Unless you have a pre-existing client base, for instance a former employer who is interested in hiring you as a freelancer, you'll need to be able to market yourself. "Marketing" sounds like a scary and imposing concept at first, but if you've ever applied for a job, you've marketed yourself. Working as a freelancer is just a matter of applying for work over and over again until you build up a group of regular clients. One of the most important elements of marketing yourself as a translator or interpreter is to determine your comfort level with various sales techniques such as cold-contacting, networking, and public speaking.

Communicating. People do business with people they like, so while you don't want to grovel, it's important to hone your communications skills where your freelance business is concerned. First, you have to actually *do* the communicating; answer all business-related phone calls and e-mails as soon as possible, always within the same business day and preferably within an hour, and change your voice mail message or e-mail auto-responder when you'll be out of the office for more than one business day. Be honest about your availability and don't promise miracles that you can't deliver. Second, you need to communicate in a way that is positive and professional. Answer the phone cheerfully; when someone contacts you for work, thank them for thinking of you. When you call a client back and they've already found another linguist, thank them for contacting you and ask them to keep you in mind in the future, rather than getting angry that they didn't wait for your response.

Accounting. Like marketing, this is a concept that sounds frightening if you've never done it before. Especially if you've always worked as a salaried employee, working as a freelancer will require much more record-keeping than you've done before. However, at its most basic level, accounting for a freelancer consists of keeping records of your income and expenses, something that is definitely within your grasp. As with marketing, the most important aspect of accounting is to do it; record every payment as soon as you receive it and save receipts for every business expense in order to minimize your headaches at tax time.

Using technology. For translators, the days of pen and paper work are long gone, and you'll need to know how to use, at a minimum, the Internet, e-mail, and office software such as word processing and spreadsheet programs. Translation memory software can increase your productivity, and depending on your languages and specializations may be necessary to running a viable business, since some clients require that you use them. You may also want to look into speech recognition software if you dislike typing or if you type slowly.

Billing and Collections. As a freelance translator or interpreter, you'll usually be responsible for billing your clients yourself and following up if they can't or won't pay. For most freelancers, a simple system of sending invoices by e-mail is enough, and you can keep track of your invoices either with a spreadsheet or on paper. Billing is the fun part, because your work is completed, and the expectation is that you'll be paid on time. When this doesn't happen, the situation is less sweet. You'll need to learn how to deal with clients who won't pay because of disagreements about issues such as the quality and timeliness of your work, and with clients who can't pay because of their own poor financial situations.

Dealing with highs and lows. While this is more of a psychological skill than a business one, it's one of the most important assets that a freelancer needs. Whether you're translating, interpreting or selling siding, the market goes up, and the market comes down. Unless you're either very lucky, a great planner, or both, you'll have weeks where you want to unplug your phone so that clients will stop calling, and weeks where you

feel like you'll never be called by a client again. To make it as a freelancer, you'll need to deal with these peaks and valleys on several fronts. Most practically, you'll need to develop a budgeting strategy that keeps you from spending too much when your checking account is full and going into debt when work is lean. Mentally, it's important to be productive even when you don't have much paying work, for instance by contacting new potential clients, updating your website, or catching up on your accounting.

5 Setting up your office and your business

In order to be successful as a freelancer, you need a physical space that is conducive to doing good work. Most U.S.-based freelancers work from a home office. If you'll be working from home, try to set up a space that you use only for work so that you can take a home office deduction on your taxes (ask an accountant about the specifics). If your home is too small or too noisy to work in or if you find that you work better outside the home, you have a few options.

First, you might look into renting an office outside your home. Depending on the cost of office rent where you live, you may be able to find a reasonably-priced small office space. Or, you might investigate the option of subletting a desk from a company that doesn't use all of its office space. There are also a growing number of options for people who want a non-traditional "office-like" environment. For instance in many cities you can now find co-working environments that combine some of the aspects of an Internet café and a traditional office, where you can rent desk space either as needed or by the month. If you like working in a casual environment but you get lonely or aren't productive when you work from home, this might be a good option for you. Also, if you can work productively on a laptop (negatives include small screen and poor ergonomics), you may want to just head out to a coffee shop that has wireless Internet access when you need a break from the home office.

5.1 The ups and downs of working from home

Especially if your current job involves a long commute, inconvenient hours or an unpleasant work environment, the thought of checking your e-mail in the morning while still wearing your pajamas and drinking a cup of coffee can seem like a slice of paradise. For many translators who work from home, the

situation is an all around win, allowing them to be more in control of their schedules, work at times of the day when they have the most energy, and spend more time with family. At the same time, other freelance translators fail at self-employment primarily because they cannot work productively from home.

It's important to realize that there are jobs for translators that don't involve working from home as an independent contractor; for example you might find translation or project management work with a translation agency, technology company, hospital, school, etc. However in most cases you'll find the most work opportunities and highest pay by working for yourself. Many work-from-home consultants identify a few key personality traits that successful independent professionals share, for example: they are self-starters or "go-getters" who need very little external motivation; they understand their own positives and negatives; they are able to make good decisions quickly; they are energized by healthy competition rather than feeling intimidated by it, and they have a high level of self-discipline and willpower.

You'll want to assess where you stand on the issues presented by these questions, and also consider how well your current life situation lends itself to working independently from a home office. For example, do you have a location in your home that can be used as a home office? Keep in mind that in most (but not all) cases, in order to tax-deduct your home office expenses, your office must be a separate area that is used exclusively as an office; so if you set up your computer in a corner of the guest room, it's not an office. Does your family or living situation lend itself to working productively from home? Can you set guidelines for your spouse, roommate, children, etc. on times that you are "at work" and not available except in the case of an emergency? If you have small children, can you afford to pay for child care while you work, even if you're not making a lot of money at the start? If you're planning on translation as your primary source of income, do you have six to nine months' income in savings to live off while the business gets going? It's important to consider these issues before you find yourself in a bad situation, and to see the relationship between planning and business success.

5.2 Communication devices and services

As a freelance translator, you need to make it easy for clients to contact you when they want to offer you work. At the very least, you need some sort of business phone line and easy access to your work e-mail. Phone calls are becoming less of an issue as more communications move online, but you need some way for clients to contact you by phone. Options include a dedicated business phone line (possibly overkill, but isolates your business phone calls to that number only), a second line (through your phone provider or a service like Line2 line2.com, or simply using your existing cell phone as your work phone number. Just make sure that your outgoing voicemail message sounds professional.

Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services such as Skype skype.com are also very useful, especially for calling overseas clients or setting up conference calls or videoconferences. For example, Skype's basic service is free, so you can use your computer to make unlimited free calls, including conference calls and video calls, to anyone else in the world who has a Skype account. You can also call regular phones with Skype using credits that you purchase on the site. There are a variety of paying VoIP services such as Vonage vonage.com that can give you a dedicated business phone number over your Internet connection.

There are also telecom services such as Google Voice google.com/voice that allow you to give your clients one phone number as your contact information; you then choose where that phone number rings. For example you can set your Google Voice number to ring on your land line, your cell phone or both. You can also add features such as text transcription of voicemail, so that the service will send you an e-mail with a transcript of your voicemail messages.

5.3 Reference materials

Terminology resources are essential to a translator's work; as time goes on, more and more of these resources are electronic (fee-based or free), while some translators still use paper dictionaries, especially for very specialized topics. A longtime resource for paper dictionaries, InTrans books, went out of business in 2014; Schoenhof's Foreign Books schoenhofs.com is still in business, and other translators in your language pair can undoubtedly provide recommendations for online and electronic resources. In the event that you

find yourself working without Internet access, it's a good idea to have at least one electronic dictionary installed on your main work computer.

Make sure to include some writing and style resources in your arsenal of reference materials. A style manual for your target language is a must; so is a monolingual dictionary for your target language and a thesaurus or synonym dictionary. Remember, you're not just changing words from one language to another; you're writing!

5.4 Office setup

Humans weren't really designed to sit at a desk and type 40+ hours a week, so you need to make your office setup as ergonomically sound as possible. Make sure that you have a comfortable desk chair that encourages you to sit with proper posture; when you sit in the chair, your knees should make a 90 degree angle and your feet should be comfortably on the floor. Likewise, your forearms should be parallel to the floor when your hands rest on your keyboard and you should just be able to touch your monitor screen with your fingertips when you are sitting upright.

Because you will be reading and typing a lot, make sure that you have a large monitor (or preferably two monitors if your computer can support them) with good resolution and a keyboard that feels good when you type on it. Translators use all kinds of ergonomic setups to help them work more comfortably and efficiently. For example some people use Dvorak keyboards, specially-designed ergonomic keyboards or ultra-clicky keyboards to avoid hand and arm strain.

If you don't like using a standard office chair you might try a balance ball; these balls look like enormous beach balls and require you to engage your core muscles to sit on top of them. Some people find them unstable to sit on, but they can put less pressure on your lower body than a traditional office chair does. In addition, balance balls are inexpensive so it's a low-risk proposition to try one. An even more radical "exercise desk" option is a treadmill desk. You can purchase a purpose-built treadmill desk if you have a large budget, but it's easy to make your own from a new or used walking treadmill. Simply find a treadmill that has side rail arms that can support a desk surface, and attach a piece of plywood to the tops of the rails. Then, you can either place your laptop on the desk surface or set your desktop computer

up so that you can use your keyboard on the desk surface. Many treadmill desk users report that after an initial adjustment period, they can walk up to one mile per hour while typing with similar accuracy to when they are sitting in a chair. So, instead of spending your work day sitting in front of your computer, you can walk in front of the computer and get some exercise while you work.

5.5 Organizing your business

When setting up your office, prepare for your business to grow. Scribbling down an invoice number, date and amount on a scrap of paper works fine if you're only sending out one invoice per month, but as your work volume increases, sloppy business practices will leave you with no business at all, and at risk of a tax audit. Following are some tips for organizing your translating or interpreting business for maximum productivity.

Track billings and income. This can be done either electronically, for example by keeping a spreadsheet of your outstanding invoices and accounting software to log your income and expenses, or with hard copy, by using a white board to keep a list of invoices and a ledger notebook for recording income and expenses.

Track your payment status. It may sound obvious, but this is crucial to making money! Failing to follow up with latepaying clients will quickly deplete your resources, while sending "overdue" notices before it's time will win you few repeat customers. Make sure that your payment tracking system has at least two steps, so that if you forget to do one, you're likely to have done the other. For example when a client pays you, record the payment in your income log or spreadsheet, *and* file the check stub in the client's folder. When you're following up with latepaying clients, make sure to mark first notice, second notice, etc. in your invoice log.

Track your deadlines. If you're a full-time freelancer, you may be dealing with many clients each month. Keep track, either via a spreadsheet or in writing, of the clients you're currently working for and what you should

be doing. For example a translator might log the date a project was assigned, the length of the project, the client's name, whether the project has been submitted, whether the client has been invoiced, and whether the invoice has been paid. At the very least, keep a list of upcoming deadlines somewhere that you have to look at it at least once a day; don't depend on your memory to do this for you!

Know where your time goes. Especially if you're hoping to freelance full-time, it's crucial to know how much you're working and how much you're actually making per hour. This can be as simple as writing on your calendar how many hours you worked and for which client, or can be done electronically too. This also helps you calculate your overhead expenses by showing how much time you're spending on non-billable work such as marketing and accounting.

Keep track of your business expenses. Depending on your tax and living situation, some or all of your business expenses such as office supplies, Internet access, auto mileage, phone bills, and even home office expenses like a portion of your mortgage payment and utilities may be tax deductible. However, you can get in serious tax trouble for deducting these expenses without having accurate records such as receipts and an auto mileage log.

Choose a reliable accounting system. There are a variety of ways to do your office bookkeeping, from a paper ledger book to a spreadsheet to a full-spectrum accounting software package. Whatever you choose, they key is to use your system consistently so that you don't end up wondering how much money you actually made or how much you spent on office expenses.

Keep only one calendar. One of the beautiful things about working from home is that you're not usually on a set schedule; one of the downsides of this is the tendency to double-book appointments or deadlines so that you end up scheduling a phone conference and a dentist appointment at the same time. Keep one calendar with personal and work appointments and deadlines to avoid conflicts. This is critical if you are an interpreter juggling many client appointments, but is also helpful for translators, too

—record *all* appointments, deadlines, and social plans so that you are never double-booked.

Use a prioritized to-do list. One of the keys to remaining productive, especially in a home office setup, is to avoid interrupting your work to perform the many small administrative tasks that come up. When you remember something that you need to do, such as send out an invoice, respond to an e-mail, or update your website, don't perform the task right then unless absolutely necessary. Instead, record it, either on paper or electronically and prioritize it, for example as low/medium/high, or today/this week/when time allows. Then when you need a break from working, tackle the tasks in order of priority.

File! Instead of piling things on your desk to be lost, recycled, etc., force yourself to file anything that you're not using immediately. For example, keep a file for receipts to be entered into your business expense log, then transfer the receipts to a file for that year's business expenses once you've entered them.

5.6 Maximizing productivity

One of the advantages of self-employment is flexibility, but many translators and interpreters struggle to remain productive without the structure offered by a full-time job for an outside employer. All too often, what could be a successful freelance business founders when the translator or interpreter opts to clean closets, organize the basement or take an exercise class rather than working.

Following are some suggestions for staying on task when you're on your own time clock. If you already have above-average time management skills, you may be able to establish a productive routine without putting any of these measures into practice. If you're constantly overcome by the urge to procrastinate, consider putting these systems into practice from day one!

- Strike a balance between enjoying the flexibility of freelancing and getting things done. Too little flexibility will leave you wondering why you're freelancing in the first place; too much and you won't be

earning any money. For example, block out certain times during which you allow yourself to do non-work activities such as exercising, grocery shopping, going to medical appointments, or getting together with friends. Limit non-work activities to these times only and consider yourself “at work” the rest of the time.

- Set quantifiable goals. Instead of amorphous targets such as “contact more new clients,” draw up a list of concrete objectives that you must meet, such as “send out 20 resumes per week and follow up ten by phone.”
- As much as possible, consider yourself “at work” when you’re working from your home office. Close your office door. Don’t answer your home phone unless you’re expecting an important call, and let your family know that you are not to be interrupted except in an emergency.
- Limit the time you spend reading and responding to e-mail. This can be a huge time drain for freelancers, especially translators who are often contacted to provide quotes on translation projects. Unless you’re expecting an important message, give yourself a set time to check e-mail, for example every hour on the hour for a maximum of ten minutes. A corollary to this is keeping separate personal and work email accounts so that you are never tempted to spend work time on personal correspondence.
- Take a break by doing something useful. When you’ve had as much oil and gas terminology as you can stand, decompress for a few minutes by reading articles on a translators’ website, writing a “tip of the day” for your website, or emailing a client to check in.
- If you’re contacted frequently for the same information by prospective clients, make this available with as little effort as possible. Post your resume on your website so that you can refer clients there. Keep a list of questions to ask new clients (rate, word count, subject matter, time of appointment, deadline, payment terms, etc.) within eyesight in your office so that you don’t have to think about it when prospective clients call or e-mail you.

- Depending on your degree of self-discipline, you may want to use an hour-by-hour calendar or electronic scheduling program to plan your day. This can be especially useful if you work on a tight schedule or if you have trouble forcing yourself to do non-paying tasks such as marketing, accounting, etc.

5.7 For working parents

Translation and interpreting are excellent career options for working parents. As a freelancing mom or dad, you can often customize your work schedule around your family schedule. For example, you might choose to work while your children are at school and then for a few hours in the evening, leaving your late afternoons and early evenings free to spend with your kids.

For freelancers who have already built up a thriving business before having children, keeping the business going is primarily a matter of finding reliable child care. This might involve paying for child care, working opposite schedules with the other parent, and/or working during the hours that the child is sleeping.

If you're starting your business and your family at the same time, deciding if and when to schedule child care is a significant concern, as paying for child care when you're not earning money can quickly deplete your financial reserves. One translator who started her freelance business three months after her daughter was born comments:

When I started out, I worked mostly at night and on weekends so I didn't have to pay a babysitter when I had no idea how much I would be making. After my first year, I hired a sitter four mornings a week after estimating conservatively on the financial side, and after two years my husband was able to quit his job and work part-time, so now he takes over when I'm working.

As a working parent, one of the keys to a successful business is to capitalize on the advantages of your situation; rather than seeing your time constraints as a problem for clients, look for ways in which you can use them to advantage. As an interpreter, you might offer to work nights and weekends at weekday rates, minimizing your need for expensive child care and giving

your employer an incentive to use you more. This could be especially valuable in settings such as hospitals, where interpreters are often needed outside of regular business hours. As a translator, you might offer to be available after hours, so that clients can get a jump on the next day's business by sending you a project to start as their work day ends, or you might look for clients in other time zones who will appreciate your unconventional schedule as an addition to their own work hours.

6 Marketing your freelance services

Marketing is probably the most overlooked aspect of running a freelance business: most beginning translators radically underestimate the amount of marketing that they will need to do in order to develop and maintain a viable base of regular clients. Once you've moved past the startup phase, it's important to maintain regular marketing efforts so that you can avoid the feast or famine phenomenon that plagues many freelancers, and so that you can raise your rates when you want or need to. In this chapter we'll look at marketing techniques for finding work with translation agencies and with direct clients.

Remember to set realistic expectations for your marketing campaigns. If you are cold-contacting translation agencies, do not expect a return rate greater than 1–2%. If you would like to find four to eight agencies that will become regular clients, plan on applying to at least 300 to 400 agencies during your first year in business. This target is realistic if you break the work up into smaller chunks and market consistently; just make sure that you are not expecting too much return for too little marketing effort.

If you are targeting direct clients, your marketing work will probably involve fewer actual contacts, but more time spent on each of those contacts. For example, while it takes only a few minutes to apply to a translation agency, you might spend many hours researching a potential direct client before trying to sell them your services. You may also need to contact a direct client many times before you make a sale; as with marketing to translation agencies, just make sure that you aren't expecting too much for too little effort.

6.1 Marketing to translation agencies

When you start out as a translator, your first clients are likely to be translation agencies (also referred to as translation companies). If you already have significant translation experience or your skills are in a high-

demand language pair or specialization, it may be worth marketing to direct clients right away. But if your goal is to get your business up and running as quickly as possible, agencies are probably your best target. Once you have your application materials prepared, applying to agencies is a relatively quick and easy process but it is important to have your application strategy in place before you start applying.

Marketing to translation agencies is not difficult, because agencies are nearly always on the lookout for qualified translators. However, marketing to agencies is generally a high-volume process, so it's important to know where to find potential agency clients and how to increase your chances of being offered some work.

6.1.1 Finding agencies to apply to

You will probably want to apply to agencies in both your source and target language countries. Translation industry professional associations are good sources of agency contacts, but make sure to use these sources wisely. When you find an online directory of translation agencies never use the listings to contact agency owners or employees directly. If you do this, your application materials will probably be deleted without ever being read. Instead, go to the websites of the agencies you would like to apply to and follow the instructions that are given there; normally agencies have either an online application form or a specific e-mail address to use for your resume.

Translation industry client rating services are another good source of potential agency clients. For example, if you purchase a subscription to Payment Practices paymentpractices.net, you can use the site's Search function to find agencies that have been rated highly by other translators. For example, if you set the Payment Practices Reliability and Translator Approval scores to be greater than or equal to 4.5 (the maximum score is 5) and you look for agencies with multiple reviews, there is a good chance that these agencies are reliable to work for. You can also limit a Payment Practices search by geographic area, which can be a good way to find reliable agencies outside your home country.

Asking other translators for recommendations is another good way to find reliable agency clients. It's important to exercise discretion if you ask for recommendations from other people in your language pair; small agencies

may need only two or three translators in each language combination, and you don't want to encroach on a colleague's main clients. So, it's best to either ask for recommendations from people who do not work in your language pair or to ask colleagues in your language pair to refer you to agencies that they know are actively looking for more translators.

6.1.2 Optimizing your application materials

When you apply to agency clients, keep a few key factors in mind. First, always follow the application process that is spelled out on the agency's website; if you can't find this information, call the agency and ask for the preferred way to submit your application materials.

Remember that your application to an agency is your first exercise in following directions for this potential client. Follow the agency's application instructions to the letter so that your first impression is a good one. It is a good idea to have your resume in several different formats (for example PDF, Microsoft Word and plain text) so that you can send whichever format the agency requests. Always try to include some sort of cover letter—even on an online application form there is often a field for comments or additional information, so you can paste your cover letter there. If the agency requests that you submit your resume as an attachment to an e-mail, paste your cover letter into the body of the e-mail.

Remember that you have only a few seconds to grab the attention of the person who is reviewing your application materials. Most small and medium-sized agencies do not have human resources departments, so your resume is likely to be reviewed by a project manager who is squeezing this task into his or her regular responsibilities. Make it easy for an agency employee to immediately see if you fit what the agency is looking for: put your language pair under your name at the top of the resume and create an easy-to-read bulleted list of your relevant experience. If you are responding to a specific job announcement, state this in the first sentence of your cover letter; the same is true if you are being referred by a translator who already works for the agency.

6.1.3 Keeping track of your contacts

Once you've sent in your application materials to a potential agency client, make sure to keep a record of the agency's name, the date you applied and any other relevant information. For example, some agencies require that you provide your rates when you apply to them. If you do this, make sure to keep a record of what rates you listed so that you will know how much to charge the agency if they contact you with a project. You can keep your records on paper, in a spreadsheet, or by using a more elaborate contact management software package, but the important thing is to log your contacts in a reliable way.

Keep track of the response that you receive from all of your prospective clients, especially if you receive anything more than an automated "we'll keep your resume on file" message. If a real person responds to you, even to tell you that the agency has no work for you right now, note this in your contacts file because it is worth following up on. If an agency requests that you follow up with them in a certain amount of time, make sure to note this so that you can do so.

6.1.4 Following up on your contacts

Following up on cold contacts is very important. How much follow up you do will depend on how much time you have and how much you are interested in the potential client. If you have time, try to get your business cards into as many prospective clients' hands as possible. For example, you might send a short handwritten note ("Thank you for responding to my inquiry about working with you and please let me know if I can help you with any German>English projects in the future") and a couple of business cards to everyone who responds to your initial application. Then you might continue to contact those people every few months afterward.

Mass e-mails are never a good way to follow up on your contacts. Even if you want to follow up by e-mail, make sure that the e-mail is addressed to a specific person, and make sure that you have a specific reason for contacting the person.

6.2 Marketing to direct clients

Marketing to translation agencies is largely a numbers game; if you're qualified and you resolve to apply to five translation companies a day, at some point you'll hit critical mass and work will start coming in. Marketing to direct clients is much more nuanced; there are fewer obvious sources of contacts, you may need to convince clients that hiring you will improve their bottom line and you need to decide how best to approach these potential clients.

With agency clients, your time will mainly be spent completing agencies' application processes. With direct clients, you'll spend much more time researching your potential clients and deciding how best to approach them; a hastily-done mass marketing campaign targeting direct clients is unlikely to generate much business for you. So, put a good chunk of time into planning your campaign before you make the initial contact.

One of the keys to direct client marketing is to expand your contacts beyond the translation industry—if you stick with associations, e-mail lists, networking sites etc. that are primarily frequented by other translators, you'll have a hard time finding direct clients. Think about where your prospective direct clients are likely to be getting their business-related information. What associations do they belong to? What trade journals do they read? What online groups do they belong to? Then, position yourself as an information source in those places.

6.2.1 Identifying your target clients

If you want to work with direct clients, you first need to decide what types of clients you'd like to find. In order to do this, you need to be clear on what your specializations are and what types of translation work you like and are good at. If you already work with translation agencies, think of the types of end clients whose documents you work on, and the types of work you feel most comfortable with. Especially if you are marketing to direct clients for the first time, it's a good idea to stick with the kinds of documents that you have successfully translated many times before.

When you think about your target clients, think about your own work style as well. Do you thrive under pressure or do you avoid rush work at all costs? Do you encourage your clients to call you whenever they need you, or do you

like to stick to a 9-5 schedule with weekends off? Do you prefer working with clients in the country where you live, or with international clients? Think about how you can take your own constraints and market them as advantages. For example, if you live in a time zone that is far removed from your clients' time zone, you can offer for them to send you work at the end of the business day so that you translate while they are sleeping and return the work for the start of the next business day. If you are starting a translation business while working another job, you can offer to do night and weekend work whenever your clients need it. Just make sure that in your rush to find direct clients, you give some thought to whether the client is a good fit for you rather than just trying to sell the client on your services.

6.2.2 Using your existing network

Undoubtedly the best way to approach a direct client is through a personal referral, either by someone who already freelances for this client or by someone who works in-house for them. So, a good first step in a direct client marketing campaign is to think of people you already know who would be good sources of introductions to potential clients. Obviously, the best kind of personal referral is one where your contact can directly pass your resume to someone who is in a position to hire you; for example if you have a colleague who works in a different language pair for a direct client that needs translators in your language pair, or if you know someone who works in the localization or international marketing department of a large company. However, don't discount people in your network who can either introduce you to pivotal contacts (for example the director of an international chamber of commerce) or who can tell you the name and title of the person at their company who hires translators. Having a specific person to contact is infinitely better than a "Dear Vice President of International Marketing" approach, so make whatever use you can of the contacts you already have.

Offering to work as a backup for translator colleagues who do direct client work is another good way to use your existing network. In this case, you could offer to either subcontract work from your colleague or to have the colleague's client work with you directly when your colleague is busy or on vacation.

6.2.3 Expanding your network

If you don't currently have any contacts who can help you find direct clients, or if you've already made use of all of your current contacts, think about expanding your network. In today's work environment, networking websites such as LinkedIn linkedin.com offer excellent opportunities for tactfully cold-contacting people you would like to add to your network. For example, if you are a member of some LinkedIn groups related to your specializations, you have an excellent source of potential contacts. Look over the profiles of the people who are members of the same

LinkedIn groups that you belong to, then send connection requests to the people who look like potential sources of work for you. You don't have to hide your intentions or be overly aggressive, you can simply say something like, "I am interested in expanding my network of contacts in your sector/country and wondered if I might add you to my network."

If you want to pursue this strategy, make sure to do it in a professional and tactful way. Never send mass e-mails to multiple potential contacts. Always explain where you found the person's contact information and why you are contacting them.

6.2.4 International business organizations

When you start to research trade associations that your prospective direct clients might belong to, make sure to research international business organizations. International chambers of commerce and world trade associations are excellent places to start. Most medium to large cities in the United States have a world trade association. An active world trade association can be an excellent place to find direct clients, because you can meet prospective clients at the association's networking events and educational sessions and get to know them in a low-pressure situation. In addition, some world trade associations authorize their members to use the association's membership directory for marketing purposes. If you join your local world trade association, you might even offer to present an educational session on best practices for buying translations, or on how businesses can make the most of their translation budgets.

If there is an international (i.e. French-American, German-American, etc.) chamber of commerce for your non-English language or non-U.S. country, it may be an excellent source of potential direct clients as well. The appeal of an international chamber of commerce as opposed to a world trade association is that you have a higher chance of meeting clients who are in particular need of your language. For example, if you translate from English to Chinese, you may make some excellent contacts at a world trade association, but you will probably also meet lots of companies looking for translators who work in other languages. If you can find a Chinese-American chamber of commerce, you're virtually guaranteed that all of its members have some type of need for Chinese language services.

If there is a world trade association or appropriate international chamber of commerce in your local area, your first step after joining it should be to introduce yourself to the association's president or director. Don't make this a sales pitch—just call or e-mail to introduce yourself as a new member. If you are feeling outgoing or if you get a positive response from the director, invite her or him out to coffee or lunch (at your expense, of course!) in order to learn more about what the association does and how you can fit in.

6.2.5 Your local business news

If you're in the direct client market, it's very important to read and follow your local business news. Nearly every major metro area in the U.S. has at least one local business journal and many larger metro areas have several publications worth looking at. You may be able to subscribe to your local business journal for free; if not, you should at least be able to read the publication's website or receive e-mail updates for free. After you do this for a while, you can decide if it's worth paying for a subscription or not.

If you read your local business news for a while, you're likely to start noticing some trends, and noticing which companies do business in your non-English language countries. When you see a business news item that alerts you to a potential client ("German solar power company selects Dallas for its flagship U.S. office"), you should look for as many points of contact as possible. You might contact anyone involved in marketing, international affairs or localization within the company that is profiled, but make sure to notice whether the article also identifies the local government employee who

helped facilitate the deal, or the name of a U.S.- based company that the international company will be partnering with. Once you've found some names, start contacting by e-mail, mail or phone, congratulating the company on its international expansion and offering your services as a high-quality translator or interpreter.

6.2.6 Trade publications

Your local business news will tell you what's happening in the business scene in your area, but you also need to know what is going on beyond your local area, especially in your industries of specialization. Even the advertising sections of these publications are worth reading, since you might find a company advertising services that mesh with what you do. For example, if you are a financial translator and you see an advertisement for a financial planning firm that works in your source and target languages, the firm might be a good potential client.

6.3 Making contact with potential direct clients

When you're marketing to translation agencies, it's easy to contact them: simply go to their websites and follow the instructions that you find there. With direct clients, the process is a little more nuanced. Most importantly, you want to choose a marketing technique that feels sincere to you—if a marketing technique feels unpleasant or awkward to you, it won't be effective.

6.3.1 Highly personalized e-mails

Also known as “warm e-mails,” these are short e-mails (about 125 words or less) that you target specifically to one potential client, highlighting a connection between you and them and offering your services, but not in a hard-sell way. For more on this technique, see episodes 17 and 29 of Tess Whitty's podcast *Marketing Tips for Translators* marketingtipsfortranslators.com, in which she interviews warm e-mail marketing guru Ed Gandia. Disclosure: I took Ed Gandia's warm e-mail

marketing class and loved it! Highly personalized e-mails are appealing because they combine the immediacy and ease of an e-mail with the personal appeal of a paper letter—the prospect can read them in under a minute and just click “reply” to get in touch with you. I’m potentially biased because after taking Ed Gandia’s warm e-mail marketing course, I landed a book translation contract on my third warm e-mail; but I think that this technique offers a good balance between the time you invest and the potential return on that investment. To launch a warm e-mail marketing campaign, start looking for clients with whom you have a logical connection: maybe it’s a local connection, maybe it’s a specialization connection, maybe the client recently won an award that you could comment on, or appeared in the local business news for an accomplishment that you could mention. Make sure that your e-mail focuses on that connection, and on what you might be able to do for the client.

6.3.2 Attending conferences and trade fairs

While there is no magic bullet for finding direct clients, attending conferences and trade fairs for people who work in your specializations (better yet, in your source language countries!) is probably as close as you’ll get. For in-depth information about this technique, listen to my podcast interview with French to English orthopedics translator Joanne Archambault, under the Listen tab at speakingoftranslation.com. The obvious downside of attending conferences and trade fairs is that they can be expensive and time-consuming; but if you’re looking to really kick your direct client business into gear, there’s nothing like being the only translator attending the annual “must-attend event” for clinical trial coordinators, or immigration attorneys, or patent agents, or software user interface designers, and so on. Additionally, you’ll learn a lot about your specialization simply by attending these events—make sure to take lots of business cards and to follow up with every potential contact that you meet. One key factor in this technique: if you attend conferences in your source language country, your listening and speaking skills in your source language must be excellent (and some translators’ are not). Also, be prepared for the booths at trade fairs to be staffed by temps, or by entry-level employees; don’t expect to meet the director of international marketing on the first try. But come armed with your own marketing

materials, pick up some samples of the company's multilingual materials, and then follow up.

6.3.3 Networking and referrals

Colleagues can be an excellent source of referrals to direct clients, especially in countries where the business culture is strongly based on relationships. For example, while many clients in the U.S. are receptive to an “out of the blue” contact (for example, a warm e-mail), many clients in other countries and cultures may not be, and may prefer to do business with someone who comes to them via a referral. In this sense, networking with other translators can be really helpful to your direct client business; especially translators who have a lot of contacts in your source language countries and may run into clients who need a translator in your specialization. Always remember to thank people who refer clients to you!

6.3.4 A website in your clients' language

Bilingual or multilingual websites are a great idea, but a website exclusively in your clients' language can be a real attention-getter. First, it makes you seem more approachable; clients don't have the added barrier of contacting you in a foreign language. Second, it allows you to target clients in a way that many translators don't: on the clients' own turf. Third, it's efficient for you—a “set it and forget it” way of having a web presence in your source language. Especially if you translate into English, you may find that very few translators in your language pair think of having a source-language-only website. If you can't or don't want to create a whole website in your source language, at least write, “Feel free to write in [your source language]...” on the contact page of your website.

6.3.5 Paper letters and postcards

In our e-mail-heavy world, anything sent through the postal mail stands out. Sending a paper letter (like a cover letter to apply to a traditional job) or a well-designed marketing postcard is a good way to grab a prospective

client's attention. Paper letters offer the advantage of allowing you to enclose things, such as your resume or a business card. Postcards have the advantage of being fast and easy to read; even in the course of moving a postcard from the incoming mail stack to the recycling bin, a prospective client has to at least look at it! The downside of paper marketing materials is that, unlike an e-mail, the client has to take an additional, deliberate action in order to contact you. Instead of just clicking "reply" on an e-mail, they have to open up an e-mail window and type your address, or pick up the phone and call you. But paper letters and postcards definitely make more of an impression than a cold e-mail does, and they can work well in relatively traditional industries like law and publishing.

6.3.6 LinkedIn groups

LinkedIn linkedin.com groups are the online counterpart to client-side conferences and trade fairs. Every translator should belong to at least a few LinkedIn groups for your specializations. Chances are, you'll be the only translator in the group; then when a translation-related question pops up, you're the logical person to answer it. Don't be overbearing or use the group for overt marketing purposes. Just hang out, learn about your specialization, and then be ready to answer questions if someone asks. If you can find groups for your specialization, in your source language, even better!

6.3.7 Free sample translations

These can be time-consuming, but highly effective as marketing tools. We've all come across horrible translations in our language pairs; when these are intended to promote a company's highquality products and services, the effect can be worse than having no translations at all. At the same time, any existing but poor translation can be a great marketing tool if you revamp it and send it to the company or individual in question with a diplomatically worded letter complimenting them on their effort to reach out to people who don't speak their language, and pointing out that working with a professional translator (such as you!) could help them reach their business goals more effectively. For more on this topic, see thoughtsontranslation.com/2014/03/03/bad-translations-as-a-marketing-tool.

6.3.8 Advertising

If you're going to do any direct advertising for your business, make sure that it is targeted, measurable, or both. Ads in general-interest publications or websites aren't likely to yield much business, but an ad in a conference program for professionals in your specialization might—so might an online ad placed on websites that your target clients frequent. Online ads are appealing because they're trackable (you can see how many people click on your ad), and with services like Google AdWords google.com/adwords, you can generally set a daily budget, after which the ad simply stops running. Ads are also a good fit if you offer a specific service that people might search for online: for example translating official documents for individuals.

6.4 Making yourself findable

Your direct client marketing strategy should include two basic tactics: finding potential clients and helping potential clients find you. It's important to be findable because you probably don't have time to send marketing materials to every direct client that could potentially use your services, and there are probably many potential direct clients that you would never think to market to. So, you need to make it as easy as possible for these types of clients to find you. Following are a few tips to help you with this:

- Make sure that you have an active and updated profile on the website of any translators associations you belong to. List your specializations and write a strong and concise description of what you do and what types of clients you work with. Make sure to keep your contact information updated and revise your profile at least once a year to reflect your current situation.
- Post at least a basic profile on a few online networking websites. In order for potential clients to find you, it's a good idea to have a profile on LinkedIn linkedin.com and any comparable sites for your non-English languages, and any similar sites related to your specializations. These types of sites rank very highly in Internet searches, so it is a real boost to your findability to have profiles on them.

- Use a descriptive e-mail signature. Nearly every e-mail program or web-based e-mail service allows you to include a standard block of text at the bottom of your e-mails. It's a good idea to include at least your language pairs, website and phone number in your e-mail signature so that everyone who receives an e-mail from you knows what you do and how to contact you.
- Create a website and/or blog and update them regularly. Blogs are an attractive option because they are indexed by Internet search engines much more quickly than traditional websites are. You can also incorporate a blog into a traditional website so that part of the site is fairly static and part is updated regularly. Make sure to prominently state your language pairs and contact information on your website or blog.
- Write guest posts for other people's blogs. If you don't want to commit to maintaining your own blog or if you want to expand beyond the readership that you have on your own blog, writing for someone else's blog is an excellent option. Make sure that your guest post includes a link back to your own website if you have one; if you don't have a website, you could include a link to your LinkedIn page.
- Write articles for trade publications. Whether you'd like to write for translation industry publications or for publications related to your languages or specializations, articles are a great way to get your name out to potential clients. You can also include articles that you've written in a marketing package to send to potential clients.
- Do pro bono work. This could take the form of volunteering your translation services to worthy organizations (possibly in exchange for some publicity) or volunteering with your local or national translators association. Just make sure that when you take on unpaid work, you treat it as seriously as you would a paid assignment so that you establish a reputation for reliability.
- Do outreach work. Especially if you are involved with your local translators association, there are probably many opportunities to speak at high school and college career fairs, chamber of commerce events

and similar gatherings. These are excellent low-pressure opportunities to get to know people outside the translation industry and hand out your business cards.

6.5 Marketing materials

A freelance translator's most basic marketing materials are a well-written resume and cover letter, but there is definitely a place for other marketing materials as well, especially if you are marketing to direct clients. Given the widespread availability of high quality and low cost marketing collateral pieces, it's worth experimenting to see what materials might be useful to you.

Some sort of marketing pieces are very helpful when you attend a conference or trade show, since most of the other attendees probably have fairly generic marketing materials. At a translators association conference, virtually all of the attendees will bring a resume and some traditional business cards, so even something simple like a marketing postcard can help you stand out.

Postcards are a low-cost marketing tool. Expect to pay 10–25 cents per postcard for four-color double sided postcards from online printers such as VistaPrint vistaprint.com, Overnight Prints overnightprints.com, or Got Print gotprint.com. If you take the time to make your postcards attractive, your potential clients may keep them for that reason alone. Postcards are easy to store and to hand to people, and you don't need a huge amount of text and graphics to make a nice looking postcard. You can also use postcards to follow up with people after conferences and trade shows by writing a personal message on the back of the card.

Brochures are another reasonable marketing option, but they are more expensive to create, require more text and graphics and are physically less durable than postcards. If you enjoy graphic design, don't mind hiring a graphic designer or know someone who could help you with the design, brochures can be a good choice because they allow you to include much more information than you can put on a postcard.

Once you progress beyond postcards and brochures, there are a dizzying array of marketing pieces ranging from small and inexpensive (ballpoint pens, magnets) to larger and more expensive (personalized flash drives, desk calendars). On the one hand, these items can be useful because you have

something durable to give to prospective clients, and everyone can use these types of items. On the other hand, a cheap pen or notepad is unlikely to make much of an impression on a high-paying client. For these types of clients, you may be better off selecting a less generic type of gift.

6.6 Creating a website

Whether you are looking for clients in your local area or worldwide, a website can be an excellent way to market your freelance services. In the past, it was difficult and expensive to create a professional-looking website and few translators had a good website. Now, if you're reasonably tech-savvy you can create a basic but professional business website yourself.

A simple website can serve as a virtual brochure for your services, and a more complicated website can include a blog, contact or project quote forms, sample translations and more. If you don't currently have a website, it's probably best to start with a brochure-style site that features your services, experience and contact information. If you already have a website, you might want to think about adding some more interactive features such as a blog.

Remember to follow a few basic rules of good web design:

- Don't have pages that scroll to infinity; you should set your web pages up so that they require little or no scrolling to view the whole page.
- Don't use huge image files or animations; go with smaller, faster-to-load graphics and make sure to include ALT tags (text that is displayed if someone has the images turned off in their browser or is using a browser for the visually impaired).
- Don't bury the important information; visitors to your website should be able to find your name, language pairs and contact information without clicking through layers of links to get to them.
- Make sure that your site is readable; check the font, font size and colors in a variety of web browsers. If you want to use a background on your pages, make sure that it doesn't obscure the text on the page.

- Conduct some basic usability testing on your own site; ask a few friends to browse your site and tell you if they can easily and quickly find the information that a prospective client would be looking for.
- Make sure that all of the pages on your site have a consistent look and feel; use the same color scheme, font and basic design for all of your pages.
- If you have time-sensitive information on your website (for example “News,” “Availability,” “Recent Projects,” etc.) make sure to keep it updated so that your site does not look stale.

When it comes to actually creating your site, you have a variety of options. You can pay a professional web designer to create the site for you, you can create it yourself and hand-code the HTML or you can use a content management system such as WordPress wordpress.com or SquareSpace squarespace.com to develop and maintain your site. Whichever option you choose, make sure to be realistic about your budget and about the amount of time you can or want to spend on maintaining your site. If you have a limited budget or you are not very tech-savvy, you are far better off with a simple but professional site that does not need to be updated very often.

6.7 Ten ways to please a translation client

- *Get people's names right!* Especially for translators working in languages that do not use the Roman alphabet (for example Arabic, Chinese, Japanese etc.), it is important to follow standard conventions for the transliteration of names from and into English.
- *Use the correct term for the specialization.* For example, to a computer professional, the expression “data on the server” might be preferable to the expression “data in the server,” or a finance professional might prefer the term “500 euro” to “500 euros” in certain contexts. If you search for those expressions in English, ignoring the translation component, your translation will be more accurate.

- *What format should I deliver the translation in?* You need to know what file format the client wants; in some rare cases the client may also want a faxed or mailed hard copy.
- *Should I reproduce the formatting of the source document?* In most cases, clients will want the translation to look as much as possible like the source document. Sometimes they just want to know what the documents say, so the formatting doesn't matter.
- *Who will answer my questions about this translation?* Many beginning translators are afraid that asking questions will make them seem unequal to the task at hand. On the contrary, it's important that if you don't understand what a term means and can't find the answer in any of your usual resources, you don't just guess and hope that no one will notice. The client should tell you up front who will answer your questions and how to submit them.
- *My rate for this translation would be ...* It is absolutely critical to settle the question of rates and payment terms before you accept any translation work. Make sure that you agree on a per word rate, and whether the rate is charged on the source or target word count; in some cases the rate will be hourly. Then, clarify what the client's payment terms are, and if the payment is not by check or direct deposit, clarify who is paying for costs such as wire transfer or credit card fees (normally the client pays their fees and you pay yours, but if you don't specify, some clients will deduct their bank fees from your payment). Some clients will tell you what they're willing to pay for a specific project, but most will ask what you'll charge. The first time this happens is incredibly anxiety-provoking, as you have only a few seconds to come up with a price that isn't insanely high or low. If you've done your own homework and made a rate sheet in advance, your nerves will be considerably calmer when you get to the point of discussing rates.
- *Please send me a purchase order, contract, or written confirmation of the guidelines for this project.* If the client is not a regular one, it's important to have some written evidence of your business agreement

with them. Without this, it's your word against theirs as to what terms you agreed on.

The easiest way to keep your translation business profitable is to cultivate a core group of regular clients who will fill your inbox with translation projects, allowing you to spend your time working rather than looking for work. Implementing some of the tips below will help you keep a regular stream of work coming your way.

1. **Meet every deadline.** If you can't consistently meet deadlines, you're not well-suited to being a freelance translator. Remember that your clients have deadlines too, and are sometimes waiting for your work as part of a larger project. As one experienced translator comments, "8:00 means 7:50, not 8:10."
2. **Be easy to reach.** Put your contact information in your email signature file, so that a client never has to look up your phone or fax number. Realize that many times, if clients cannot reach you immediately, they will contact another translator. Since over 90% of contacts from clients will be by e-mail, put an auto-responder on your e-mail if you will be out of the office for even a few hours.
3. **Follow directions.** While it can be time-consuming to follow many different clients' particular ways of doing things, you will save the client time and money, and thus get more work from them, by following their instructions to the letter. If the client asks you to put your initials in the file name, do it. If the client asks you to put the word "Invoice" in the subject line of the e-mail containing your invoice, do it.
4. **Don't waste your clients' time.** It's acceptable, and even encouraged to ask questions when you need to clarify something. However, it's also important to show respect for your clients' time, and for the fact that yours is probably not the only project they are handling. Keep your e-mails short and to the point, and make your questions clear and easy to answer.

5. **Provide referrals.** Many translators worry that providing referrals to other translators in the same language combination will lead to less work for themselves, but in fact the opposite seems to be true. Clients like to work with freelancers who solve the clients' problems, and when you're too busy and can't handle their work or are going on vacation, it's a problem for them. Have the names of two or three translators in your language combination who you really trust, and provide these names to your clients when you aren't available for work.
6. **Be easy to work with.** This isn't to say that you should be a pushover or let clients take advantage of you, but for your regular clients, it's worth putting in some extra effort. Thank them for giving you their business; be friendly and polite if a payment is unexpectedly late; fill in for them in a pinch when another translator lets them down.
7. **Ask for constructive criticism.** It's important to see feedback as part of your quality assurance process, not as an attack on your abilities as a translator. If a client asks for changes in your translation, make them politely and immediately; if you decide later that the changes are unnecessary and you don't want to work for the client again, it's another matter. With your regular and trusted clients, periodically ask what you can do to better meet their needs, then implement these changes.
8. **Appreciate your clients.** Your regular clients are the people who make it possible for you to earn a healthy income while living a flexible and self-directed freelance lifestyle. A small gift at the end of the year is always appreciated when a client has given you regular work.
9. **Don't bicker.** If a prospective client offers you a project at a ridiculously low rate, politely decline it, possibly sending them a copy of your standard rate sheet if you have one. Don't insult them for offering such low pay or make negative comments about their

business; just courteously decline to work for them and let them move on to someone else.

10. **Charge what you're worth, and earn it.** There will always be another translator out there who is willing to work for one cent per word less than you are, so don't compete on price alone. Giving your clients a little more effort than necessary proves to them that often, they get the level of service they pay for.

7 Breaking into the direct client market

Some translators are happy to work with translation agencies for their entire careers; as we've discussed in earlier chapters, a good agency can free you up to focus on the translation while they handle essentially all of the non-translation work. Good agencies also find the end clients in the first place, which can save you a lot of time and marketing energy. But at some point, nearly all translators are interested in at least exploring the direct client market; not surprisingly, it's a whole different animal than the agency market, so it's critical to be clear about your goals and strategy before you get going.

7.1 Why consider working with direct clients?

Many translators' initial interest in working with direct clients arises from a desire for more income; and it's true that many direct clients will pay more per word than many agencies will. If you're at the top of the agency rate range and you're working as much as you can or as much as you want to, direct clients may offer a pathway to making more money. But you may also find that working with direct clients leads to greater job satisfaction, because you will generally have direct contact either with the person who wrote the source document or with the person who will be using the target document. So, questions like—"Is the translation for informational purposes only, or are you going to publish/distribute it?"—"Have you translated anything else on this topic, and if so, could I take a look at it?"—"Do you have standard translations into my language for any of your company-specific terms?"—become a lot easier to resolve when you can contact the client directly.

Working with direct clients also allows you to target specializations that most agencies don't handle. If you want to specialize in fisheries, or skiing, or art history, or religious texts, you may have a tough time finding agencies that have a lot of clients in those areas. But in the direct client market, you

only need enough work to keep one person busy (you!), so you may have more success.

Working with direct clients also has a lot of “soft” advantages that may be hard to quantify, but that may be just as valuable to you as the economic benefits. You may feel more like a part of the client’s team than when you work for agencies; you may be able to more easily ask for feedback; you may be able to work with the client over time to create things like style sheets and internal glossaries, which will in turn improve the quality of the client’s translations.

7.2 Potential drawbacks of working with direct clients

Direct clients aren’t the right fit for every translator, for a few reasons. As mentioned above, you have to approach direct clients with a very different mindset than the one with which you approach agencies. First, you have to accept that when you work with direct clients, you cannot “just translate,” because you’re responsible not only for the translation, but for all of the non-translation aspects of the project. You’ll be scoping out the client’s documents and issuing a quote; negotiating with them about rates and deadlines; answering their questions about the translation; dealing with changes to the document after the project has started; answering their questions after you return the translation, and so on.

It can be difficult to work with direct clients if you don’t have a partner to work with. You’ll need someone to edit your work, and to fill in for you when you go on vacation, and possibly to split projects that you cannot finish within the client’s time frame. With agencies, it’s fairly low-risk to turn down work; if you’re going on vacation, you can often simply tell the agency, “I’m not available between these dates,” turn on your auto-responder and then head out. But with direct clients, you don’t want to leave them looking for another translator who they may decide to stick with. So you definitely want to refer your direct clients to a trusted colleague before you leave.

In order to work with direct clients, you must have a clear specialization—otherwise you don’t know who to market to. Generalist translators will

have a hard time finding traction in the direct client market, because there aren't a lot of generalist clients out there!

Finally, the direct client market may be a difficult fit for translators who have a hard time communicating in their source languages; often, you'll find higher-paying direct clients in your source language countries. And you'll probably want to look for direct clients on their turf; at their conferences, in their LinkedIn groups, and so on. So it's important to be able to speak and write well in your source languages.

7.3 The direct client marketing mindset

Remember these cardinal rules of marketing to direct clients:

- Focus on what you can do for the potential client, not on yourself; remember that the client doesn't care about your life story. Beware of pitch letters where every sentence starts with "I..."
- Identify the client's problems and how you're going to solve them. Every element of your marketing materials should answer the question, "How will the client benefit from working with me?"
- Don't overload the potential client with process details; how you'll analyze their files; how your translation environment tool works; how you'll automate their glossaries. In general, clients pay to be insulated from these details—ask yourself how you'd feel if your accountant started droning on about the nuances of accounting software! Answer all of the client's questions thoroughly, but don't flood them with extraneous information.
- Keep your written contacts short and upbeat. E-mail marketing expert Ed Gandia internationalfreelancersacademy.com advises that a warm e-mail (a highly personalized message that establishes a connection between you and the potential client) should be no more than 125 words. Another guideline is that the client should not have to scroll to read your message; and remember that they may be reading it on a tablet or a phone.

7.4 If you don't know where to start

Many freelancers struggle to think of what kinds of direct clients they might work with, or what types of clients might need their services. If you're currently working with agencies, think about the end clients for your agency work. Of course you don't want to contact those exact clients (never, ever circumvent an existing agency client), but think about clients like them. Are the end clients for your agency work law firms? Contract research organizations? International marketing firms? Patent law firms?

Never neglect the local market: a client who you meet in person is much more likely to use your services than one who you've only communicated with by e-mail. If you live in a major city in your source language country, the potential local client base may be huge. If you live in a rural area in your target language country, there may be fewer opportunities. Take advantage of the opportunities that you have—international chambers of commerce, bar associations, world trade associations and professional associations for your specializations are all good bets.

It can also be helpful to consider the kinds of projects that agencies don't want; for example one-off jobs from individuals. These don't justify an agency's overhead, so they're a good fit for a freelancer if you want them.

7.5 Untapped niches

One key in any kind of marketing is to look where other people aren't looking; one reason that you'll see very, very low rates on online translation marketplaces is that they bring thousands of translators together, and any one person's competitive advantage quickly boils down to speed and price. So, it's good to think about untapped niches in the translation industry where you might find direct clients.

It's helpful to focus on the objective advantages that you can offer direct clients: subjectively, your translations may be better than what the direct client would get from an agency, but you don't really know that, because there are some excellent translators working for agencies. But you do know that you are more consistent than an agency; an agency can try to assign the same translator to a given client's projects over time, but they can't guarantee it. If that translator isn't available, or raises their rates, that level of

consistency may be impossible. You also know that you are more confidential than an agency since an agency may have to send a client's file out to multiple translators before they find someone who is available. You also know that if a client has very time-sensitive work, it's more expeditious for them to work directly with a freelancer rather than going through an agency. So, think about the kinds of clients who might need these advantages—if you translate for private investigators or investment companies, confidentiality may be their utmost concern. If you translate for clients who need high-quality corporate communications documents, they may be very concerned about consistency, so that their company's brand image comes across the same way every time. And if you translate for crisis management consultants, fast turnaround may be critical when a company's figurative hair is on fire. Exploring these untapped niches can be a great way to expand your client base without competing with hordes of other translators.

8 Translation technology—a guest chapter by Jost Zetzsche

In today's highly technical printing industry (or whatever is left of it) it's hard to imagine a print shop that doesn't do most of its work by computer. But the truth is that there are still traditional printers who use exclusively non-computerized tools (just try searching for "old-fashioned print shop" on Google or Bing.) To be successful they must find a niche for their craft—and even then, many have to rely on donations to keep their businesses afloat. How does this relate to translators? Many of us are so automated that it's equally hard to imagine a non-computerized translator. But like those traditional printers, I have worked with some highly skilled Russian engineers-turned-translators who refuse to use any tools but pencil and paper to edit the highly specialized material they work on. How did they get away with it? They were uniquely equipped for that job, and it was worth the extra effort to pay someone else to enter it into a computer. Do you have that kind of niche? Great. You'll never need to touch a computer. For the 99.98% of the rest of us, however, we don't have that luxury. And as a result, we must understand not only how to use our computers but how to master them. Of course, the truth is that not every translator has the same requirements when it comes to technology. When I first began writing and talking about technology, I was under the impression that whenever I discovered something technological that made me more productive, every other translator would ooh and ahh over it as well. That's simply not true. There are too many variables in what makes each of us translators. This starts (obviously) with our language combination, but it goes on to include factors like specialization, time pressure (both the pressure that the client might apply as well as the pressure or the leisure you yourself might choose), and availability of infrastructure (Is the tool available in my market? Is my Internet connectivity reliable at all times?).

8.1 The bare necessities

Over the years, though, I've become convinced that there is some basic technology that benefits every translator – with the possible exception of some neo-Luddite Russian engineering geniuses. Let's start with those and then work our way toward more specific tools and solutions.

- **Entering data:** You need to have good strategies in place to enter data. There are more ways to enter data than by “typing.” Speech recognition is being used by more and more translators, and there are even input method editors for mobile devices that allow you to swipe over the keyboard. There are two important considerations for a translator who will primarily rely on typing: use the ten-finger typing method for maximum efficiency (if you haven't learned how, invest in teaching software and force yourself to learn), and use the native keyboard for your language. (Note: it doesn't matter what the physical keyboard says, but the underlying digital keyboard should give you the most direct access possible to all the characters of your language: a QWERTZ keyboard for German, a QZERTY Keyboard for Italian, an AZERTY keyboard for French, etc.) Also be sure to learn how to use as many keyboard shortcuts as you can to minimize your use of the mouse.
- **Office software:** You should be confident with basic office software, including a presentation and spreadsheet program, an email application (if you don't use a browser-based interface), and word processing. Familiarize yourself with advanced search-and-replace features (and know that you have to be careful with them), complex formatting and styles, and templates and format painting. You don't have to use MS Office (alternatives like OpenOffice or LibreOffice are possible), but it's helpful not to have to worry about possible conversion problems when working on MS Office files that your clients send you.
- **Browsing and querying:** An important part of translating is finding information and correct terminology. Your sources will include dictionaries—nowadays mostly in digital format—as well as data located online. It's important to access that data quickly, so it's

imperative to know how to make the most of your searches. Become familiar with the basic syntax of more advanced search queries, and develop a good idea of locations where you can find answers. You can also use a search tool for this (see below).

- **Basic computer maintenance:** You don't have to be a computer geek, but you should know the basic steps for how to keep your computer in good shape and running more or less seamlessly. Yes, you could also hire a tech guy do that—but that's not going to work when you are approaching an urgent deadline and you just don't have time to give your computer away to be fixed. So what does this kind of mid-level expertise entail? The basics include how to find answers (see “browsing and querying” above), how and where to ask peers with more expertise, how to keep your computer clean from unwanted and unnecessary programs and processes, and how to have a good backup plan in place when everything goes haywire (including backed-up copies of important files and the ability to quickly switch to a second computer). Doesn't seem too demanding, does it?

8.2 What kind of computer?

I'm not a hardware specialist; instead, I'm interested in usability. A computer becomes usable when it's easy to enter data (see above), when it's easy to see what I'm entering and what I'm translating (and what I'm looking up), and when the computer is portable and, yes, powerful enough to run my programs.

Let's start with the **display**. Many translators like to work with more than one monitor, the larger the better. And this makes a lot of sense. It's great and helpful to have your translation visible on one screen and all the reference materials on the other (or however you like it). In my own office, I'm content with my laptop screen and an additional large screen that I can configure according to my particular needs at any given time. If you want more than one external monitor on your computer, you will have to make sure that your computer (laptop, desktop, or tablet) supports this. This is usually less a question of necessary connectors (most newer monitors allow for USB

connections) than of video cards, so keep this in mind when you go out to purchase a new computer: find out how easy it is to add a second video card.

The **portable computer**. This is an important consideration for me because I travel a lot and I don't want to have to think about syncing a desktop computer and a portable computer before grabbing my laptop (or tablet) and storming out the door. Especially during long trips, endless airplane rides, and lonely nights in hotels, it's important for me to be able to get work done, and I like to resume right where I left off in my office. Yes, there is still a slight price difference between desktops and laptop computers, but it's really not that significant anymore. And as far as processing power goes, a decent laptop does just fine. The only significant advantage to a desktop computer is that it's easier to tinker with its hardware. So if that's where your heart's desire lies, use a desktop; for the rest of us, a laptop should do the trick.

What about a tablet then? This question will likely be obsolete in the very near future (newer versions of the Microsoft Surface or comparable computers already blur the lines). Tablets that are easily connected to a productive physical keyboard (or speech recognition), can be displayed on a larger screen, and allow you to install the programs you require as a translator are great for translation, even as your only computing device. But if only one of those requirements is not met, I would still use my laptop computer and wait for the next generation of tablets (or for when we don't quite remember what a "laptop" actually was).

The criterion of **power** is usually described in the "system requirements." It's practically a non-issue nowadays because computers have nearly unlimited hard disk space (in contrast to an early computer that forced me to constantly install and uninstall MS Word and Excel because it lacked the storage space for both at the same time), very strong processors, and lots of random access memory (RAM). If you're still intent on looking at the specs, insist on 2 GB RAM if you have a 32-bit operating system and 4 GB of RAM if you are using a 64-bit operating system. The application that requires the most hard drive storage space is speech recognition, which requires up to 4 GB. And that brings us to...

8.3 Speech recognition

I've mentioned it a number of times now, but it's worth its own little section.

Speech recognition can be a game changer. This might become especially relevant if you can't type due to some kind of injury (even caused by too much typing), if your typing slows you down (it's slower than you can formulate your translations in your head), and—just as importantly—if you can manage to translate the way that speech recognition software requires you to.

Dictating with speech recognition software requires you to pre-formulate longer segments and then speak them coherently. You might find this harder than it sounds. I'm one of those who likes to “think with my fingers.” As I wrestle with text—in translation or otherwise—I create as I type rather than before I type (or speak) it. If you're able to overcome that hurdle, speech recognition will work great for you—if there's a program available in your language.

Unfortunately, there really are very few options. The Windows-internal speech recognition supports Chinese, Japanese, German, French, Spanish, and English; the Mac-internal voice recognition (Mac Dictation) supports English, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Korean, and Italian. These programs are robust, but the best possible speech recognition is Dragon NaturallySpeaking by Nuance (for Windows), which supports English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Japanese; Nuance's Mac product Dragon Dictate supports only English, French, German, and Italian.

If your languages are not among those covered, there is still an ever-so-slight glimmer of hope. The company that sells the Dragon products, Nuance, is also the company behind the Swype program that automatically comes with Android devices. Swype includes a speech recognition program based on Dragon that really works quite well. It does not perform as well as its big siblings (smaller vocabulary and no correction models), but some translators have tested it for translation purposes and filed very hopeful reports. The supported languages here are Arabic, Catalan, Chinese (CN, TW, HK), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

Other drawbacks? Only the Android version of Swype comes with the speech recognition module (the iOS Swype version only supports the

keyboard input) and you will have to dictate into a browser-based tool to make it work.

Be that as it may, if your language is supported—especially by the full-fledged programs from Nuance—you would be wise to give it a good try and see whether you can increase your productivity with speech recognition.

Just make sure you find those correctly spelled but very wrong words that speech recognition might introduce. Now, back to the basics...

8.4 Which operating system?

When it comes down to it, it really doesn't matter. For a long time Windows offered the easiest access to all translator-specific tools, but nowadays many similar tools are available for Macs or Linux computers. If not, it's still possible to run a virtualized version of Windows on top of those machines to allow you to run programs that are compatible only with Windows. More importantly, though, many programs today are completely independent of an operating system by being fully browser-based.

If you have no strong feelings about your operating system and aren't interested in developing partisan feelings (or just don't want to worry about questions like compatibility), a Windows computer is a safe bet. If you're not sure about what version of Windows, ask someone who is relatively neutral (often those who feel very, very strongly about one or another kind of software aren't able to provide very objective reasoning).

8.5 What else?

By now you've made decisions on how to enter data, what kind of computer you need, how to view the data, and what skills you need in looking for information pertaining to your translation projects. Oh, and you also have a package with office programs (and know how to use them well).

Anything else you need?

Umm, yes. Aside from translation environment tools (we'll come to those in a second), there are some other software tools that are really helpful for translation.

8.5.1 Searching

Your skill in searching for data can be augmented by using little programs designed just for that.

For searching data in online glossaries, offline dictionaries and other data sources, I use IntelliWebSearch intelliwebsearch.com. This free tool takes a little time to configure for your particular language combination and needs, but I promise: you won't want to give it up once you've used it. All you'll need to do is simply highlight a term or phrase you're looking for and press a keyboard shortcut. The designated source will open and show you its translation recommendation.

If you need to search quickly through any kind of bilingual file format (essentially any kind of format that is being used or generated by a translation environment tool), Xbench xbench.net is a fantastic and lightning-fast tool with a free and a paid version. If the file format you want to search through is supported by the free version (most of them are), there is no reason to purchase the newer version.

If you want to simply search through unstructured text files, a tool like the very descriptively named Search & Replace funduc.com is really helpful.

Thoughts on Translation:

A text file is any kind of file that you could open in a text editor such as Notepad, read (though you might not understand it) and save without corrupting the file. Some programs work with binary files, such as Word or PDF documents. If you were to open one of those in a text editor, you would see all kinds of strange symbols, and if you saved it in Notepad, you would corrupt the file and could no longer open it in its originating application. Typical text files are TXT files, HTML or XML files, or any number of other XML or software-related file types.

The three tools mentioned above can be installed only on a Windows computer, but you might find similar tools for a Mac or Linux machine.

8.5.2 Renaming files

Why exactly is it important for a translator to be able to rename files? Because many clients want you to change file names from “name.doc” to “name tr.docx” or “name ed.docx” or something similar. Though Rname-it brothersoft.com/rname-it-4690.html should really itself be renamed, it’s free and a fantastic tool when it comes to renaming lots of files in a heartbeat. Another helpful feature? You can change the time stamp on a file (no client was ever thrilled about a file that was last saved at 4 am...).

8.5.3 Dealing with PDFs

I could fill the next 30 pages writing about the pain of working with PDFs and suggesting some workarounds, but let me try to be brief.

PDF files play a big role in the lives of many translators. And since they are not nearly as accessible as Word or HTML files, the big role they play often “translates” into big headaches. Here are some highly condensed thoughts on how to deal with them:

- If your client sends you a PDF file to translate, try to find out whether its source is a scanned copy or a software file. The easiest way of doing this is to attempt to copy some words in the PDF file and paste them into another program. If this doesn’t work, it’s most likely an image-based (scanned) PDF. That means you’re stuck with the PDF. If the cut-and-paste test does work, there was most likely some kind of file that the PDF was created from. If that’s the case, send a note to the client asking for the original file. (You might also want to encourage the client by mentioning that there is a surcharge for handling PDF files!)
- If the client can’t or doesn’t want to send you the file in a different format, decide whether it’s a PDF file with a lot of formatting or very little formatting.
 - If it’s file-based and there is very little formatting, you might be able to either save the PDF as a Word document, open the PDF in Word (only version 2013 and above), copy and paste the

content into a Word file, or use one of the converters that most translation environment tools offer.

- If it's image-based or contains a lot of complex formatting, you won't be very successful with any of these methods. In this case you are better off to either recreate the PDF or, better, use a tool like PDF Transformer from ABBYY pdftransformer.abbyy.com. This won't give you perfect results, but it likely will give you the best possible results. This is because it combines mere conversion from PDF to Office formats with an internal optical character recognition (OCR) process so that even images are converted to text.

Thoughts on Translation:

The translation environment tool SmartCAT is made by the same company, ABBYY, and comes with PDF Transformer as an integrated feature. If you deal with a lot of PDFs this might be worth a look. Wordfast Anywhere also uses an integrated OCR-based PDF converter. Most other translation environment tools also offer PDF converters but they typically don't rely on optical character recognition.

- The PDF format is also often used for proofreading purposes. Sometimes it's enough to have a free version of Adobe Reader to add comments and other proofreading marks, but depending on how the file was prepared or what you want to do with the file, it might make a lot of sense to have a paid version of a PDF editor. The Pro version of Adobe Acrobat is certainly a good but very expensive choice. With a little bit of research, you'll find other less expensive tools (search for "List of PDF software" on Wikipedia).

8.5.4 Project Management/Invoicing

Do you really need a tool that keeps track of your invoices and projects? No. Would you be very happy if you had one? Absolutely.

It's important for any business—including the solo freelancer—to keep track of business. It's possible to do this with a combination of programs (email, Excel, Word, and project-tracking tools), but it makes things easier if it all comes in one package. A package like this enables you to enter the specifics for your project just once for a quote and an invoice, keeps track of your paid and unpaid invoices and all your client data, and allows you to generate easy reports.

There are a number of tools out there, some online-based and others that need to be installed on your computer. Translation Office 3000 to3000.com is a popular program, but be sure to do some research into any new tools on the market that might be very interesting as well.

8.5.5 Word counts

A program for word counts is a necessity, as is understanding the intricacies of word counts. There is a big push to move away from word counts as the standard measure for project size and payments for translation—and that's a good thing—but you will likely have to charge at least a good percentage of your projects by the word in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, however, there really is no particular agreement on what a word looks like or, just as important, what a delimiter between words is.

For instance, how many words is:

C:\Program Files (x86)\pc-bib

Microsoft Word (2013), OpenOffice, LibreOffice, and memoQ all say three; Google Docs, Trados Studio (2013) and Déja` Vu X3 say five; FrameMaker/NotePad++ (a widely used and highly recommended text editor) says six; and PowerPoint eight.

Confused yet?

Of course, you could make a case for each (except PowerPoint, as far as I can tell).

As with anything in a relationship with a client, you don't want to make this a stumbling block, though. For better or worse, the de-facto standard for word counts is MS Word, and that's most likely the tool your clients use to count words. Ideally, then, you would use a tool that could count in virtually

all formats you'll ever translate, emulate Word's word count logic, and count many files at once. Two tools that do this really well are AnyCount anycount.com and PractiCount practiline.com.

8.6 Translation environment tools

Translation environment tools are very, very important to the vast majority of translators, so the last truly are not the least in this case.

What are translation environment tools? These tools—as the name suggests—provide (most of) the environment in which the actual translation is or should be performed.

1. They allow you to work in a great number of file formats that you might not otherwise have the experience or the equipment to deal with by extracting text in the form of segments (typically a sentence—but it's up to you to change that). The typical range of supported file formats includes all office file formats, the two or three most important desktop publishing formats, a large number of “tagged” formats such as XML, HTML, and a great number of software development formats. When they process the files, they separate translatable text from non-translatable content (such as coding) and hide it from the translator, unless it is coding that appears in the middle of a segment (typically a sentence). In that case, each tool has a mechanism to highlight and protect that coding as well.
2. These tools also provide translators with automatic and realtime access to a number of resources during the translation process. These include:
 - a) Terminology databases: The translator fills these with data by importing data from other formats or by adding the data as she translates.
 - b) Translation memories: These are repositories of data in segment form from previous translation projects. It is possible to fill the translation memories by converting

previous projects into a translation memory—called “alignment,” a feature that most tools also provide—but often this doesn’t help as much as hoped for. The most helpful way of utilizing translation memories is if you have access to existing translation memories from that client or by building the translation memory up one segment at a time as you translate. The translation memory will also automatically take care of any repetitions within your project.

- c) Machine translation engines: These are external programs that provide the translator with translation suggestions that might or might not be helpful in the translation process. We’ll discuss the use of machine translation later.
 - d) Some tools also provide automatic access to dictionary resources or mono- or bilingual corpora.
3. Translation environment tools give access to many quality features, including spell-checking, consistency checks, terminology and numerical checks, punctuation checks, etc.
 4. Many tools allow for real-time collaboration on various levels with co-translators or editors and provide ways to communicate with other team members.
 5. The tools give you ways to analyze your projects before you start, both while you translate and once you’re done translating.

There are a number of other features as well, but these alone should make it clear that they are not only “translation memory tools” as they are often incorrectly called.

A wide variety of tools are available, and it can seem a little overwhelming to make sense of the many choices. What follows is a (partial) list of presently-available tools categorized by the translation interface (the program you’re actually performing the translation in). Tools that are highlighted will be profiled later. Following that, I will give you some tips for how to make a decision about choosing the right technology for you.

Thoughts on Translation:

This list does not include tools that are not directly made for the freelance translator but for larger companies (either translation companies or end clients). If you work for clients who utilize these “translation management systems,” you might end up working in those interfaces without having to pay for access. Examples of tools like this include Smartling, GlobalSight, and Ontram.

MS Word-based Translation Interface

- JiveFusion jivefusiontech.com
- MetaTaxis metataxis.com
- MultiTrans rrdonnelley.com
- Translation Workspace geoworkz.com
- **Wordfast Classic** wordfast.net

Standalone Translation Interface: Commercial Tools

- Across my-across.net
- AnyMem anymem.com
- CafeTran cafetran.republika.pl
- Déjà` Vu atril.com
- Fluency westernstandard.com
- MadCap Lingo madcapsoftware.com
- **memoQ** memoq.com

- Publisher alchemysoftware.com
- Star Transit star-group.net
- Swordfish maxprograms.com
- Text United textunited.com
- **Trados Studio** translationzone.com
- Wordfast Pro wordfast.com

Standalone Translation Interface: Open Source and Free Tools

- Heartsome github.com/heartsome
- **OmegaT** omegat.org
- Open Language Editor open-language-tools.java.net
- OpenTM2 opentm2.org
- Poedit poedit.net
- Similis similis.org
- Virtaal virtaal.translatehouse.org

Browser-based Interface

- ABBYY SmartCAT smartcat.pro
- Crowdin crowdin.net
- Google Translator Toolkit translate.google.com/toolkit
- Lingotek lingotek.com
- MateCat matecat.com

- **Memsources** memsource.com
- Wordbee wordbee.com
- Wordfast Anywhere freetm.com
- XTM Cloud xtm-intl.com

****Note that some of these tools really should be in several categories. For instance, Similis runs in MS Word, but it's also free.**

In the following pages we will look more closely at some individual tools. This is not an endorsement, though they all are very capable tools. Instead, I chose them because they represent a certain class of tool or have one or several outstanding features. Assistance in assessing which tool might be right for you can be found here.

8.6.1 Wordfast Classic

At this point, Wordfast Classic is really the only successful (and reasonable) tool that can handle all of your (compatible) translation within Microsoft Word.

Thoughts on Translation:

Another thing that sets this tool apart is that its developer, Yves Champollion, is related by name and blood to Jean-François Champollion, the man who translated the Rosetta Stone. (If you haven't seen it live in the British Museum, it should be on your "must see" list during your next visit to London.).

When Wordfast Classic was launched in 2000 it was given away for free, but it eventually turned into a paid product in 2002. It runs on any platform supported by MS Word, including Macintosh (the only version that is not supported is Word 2008 for Mac).

Wordfast Classic has the reputation of being an easy-to-learn tool, but it also offers a wide array of very powerful features, including the ability to share TM data with other translators in real-time, great quality assurance features, and an autocomplete feature that completes your entries as you type them.

The only glaring limitation is its supported file formats. While it's possible to process tagged file formats such as HTML and XML, even Wordfast Classic's manual encourages the use of other tools for this activity. It is possible to translate PowerPoint and Excel files by bringing the translatable content segment by segment into Word, translating it there, and then pasting it back, but this is a rather tedious process. All this said: Wordfast Classic is a fabulous tool if all you do is translate Word files (many translators do!), but not if you serve clients with a broader list of file formats.

8.6.2 memoQ

memoQ is a very process-oriented tool that makes the general workflow user-friendly even for a translation environment tool novice. The first screen that you see when you open the program starts to guide you through the process of creating or opening a project, and so do the ribbons that are displayed throughout your work in memoQ.

The actual translation interface is tabular: the translatable text is presented in a table format with the source on the left and target on the right, and matches from the termbase and translation memory are displayed on the side.

memoQ is the rising star among the newer generation of translation environment tools. This is due to excellent support and great reliability in the development processes as well as the tool's attractiveness to freelance translators and translation companies alike. If you decide to work with translation companies (rather than exclusively with direct clients), it is likely that you will be asked to translate something in memoQ at some point. The client might provide you with a temporary license for the desktop or web-based version or ask whether you can use your own license of memoQ (which is preferable from the client's point of view).

The supported file formats include the whole range of formats, including Transit and Trados Studio project files.

Some of memoQ's features are unique:

- LiveDocs is a concept that was introduced as an attempt to quickly access earlier, TM-external translation without the painful alignment process. Rather than taking one source and one target file, matching them up, and then fixing the alignment manually, you can now take any number of file pairs, align them on the fly, and keep them as matched-up file pairs for reference purposes. Aside from that you can also use bilingual files and monolingual files (for reference purposes). In any given project, matches will show up just like TM matches, with the difference that you can see that they come from a LiveDoc rather than a TM.
- Language Terminal www.languageterminal.com is an online portal that allows memoQ users to set up the cloud-based memoQ cloud, store projects, and share some data, including translation memories and termbases in real-time (additional fees for that might apply).
- Version tracking that allows you to precisely follow the different stages a project goes through. If this seems a little over the top for you, it might be wise to make some decisions on what features you'll want to use and which features are an overkill for you when you learn to use this powerful tool.

8.6.3 Trados Studio

SDL Trados has been the market leader among translation environments since day one (Trados has been available since 1992 for DOS and 1994 for Windows) and maintained this market dominance when it came out with a completely redesigned version ("Trados Studio") in 2009.

The Trados Studio translation interface is very similar to the now de facto standard of a tabular interface with the source text in a left column and the target text in a right column. Trados' terminology application MultiTerm is a standalone tool that—if set up correctly—"communicates" with the ongoing translation process and displays the terminology that you have stored in there. Alternatively, you can also store your terminology data, especially if it's a simple glossary, right within Trados Studio.

If you primarily work for translation companies, there is a great likelihood that you will encounter ownership of one of the versions of Trados (Starter Edition, Freelance, or Professional) as a prerequisite in job descriptions for some clients. Often it will be possible to use other tools that support the Trados translation formats, but it's important to understand that this is not always the case. For instance, if a project is set up with translation memories and termbases on a server (rather than being sent to you), you will not be able to use other tools.

Trados Studio, like memoQ, is a big tool with many different options, so it's important to consider some training before starting to work on live projects. As part of that training you should make decisions on which of the many features are helpful and which are not.

SDL, the company that owns Trados, made an interesting decision to combat the complexity of the core tool. They decided that Trados Studio would become a translation environment platform. This makes it possible for third-party developers to develop apps that introduce new or improved features and are offered on the online app marketplace [OpenExchange translationzone.com/openexchange](http://translationzone.com/openexchange), where the majority of apps are free. If you decide to use and master Trados Studio, you should definitely go there and see how you can improve your work environment.

8.6.4 OmegaT

Only a small handful of open-source translation environment tools are primarily geared toward the professional freelance translator, and the platform-independent OmegaT is without a doubt the leader among those. OmegaT is downloaded around 8,000 times a month, and though these downloads include existing user updates, these are nevertheless impressive numbers that prove its usage by a respectable number of users.

There is a peculiar dichotomy between OmegaT's technical and easy-to-use parts. When you start the program, the initial screen contains information on how to get started with OmegaT in five minutes. True to its promise, to use the basic features you just start using the program and it works. When it comes to fine-tuning the OmegaT set-up, you might find some items available in menus and with an easy-to-use graphical user interface (GUI), but for other features you'll have to manually set up files and alter code. One example: to

change keyboard shortcuts, you actually have to create some files that will cause the desired change. If you take your time to think through it, you'll get it done; if not, you'll end up being frustrated.

The actual translation is done in a non-tabular, horizontal layout. Any panes with access to terminology, translation memory, machine translation, or comments can be arranged to your liking and even dragged to a second monitor. While more right-click menus would be helpful (in my opinion, the right-click menu should be an easy way out that offers you possibilities when you don't know how to do something properly), the actual menus are well organized and give you the necessary access to available features.

The range of directly supported file formats includes MS Office 2007+, OpenOffice/LibreOffice, HTML, XLIFF, InDesign, Wordfast TXML, and a whole lot of text-based software development formats. Other file formats are supported indirectly through the open-source (and slightly techie) Rainbow application www.opentag.com/okapi/wiki/index.php?title=Rainbow. The file types you might want to use with that route include most XML formats, FrameMaker, bilingual DOC, and Trados TTX files.

A very nice thing about OmegaT is the inclusion of so-called tok-enizers that provide better morphological recognition in termbases and TM recognition. The supported languages include Arabic, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Persian, Russian, Thai, Danish, English, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

8.6.5 Memsources

Memsources is a good representative of a cloud-based tool. Cloudbased tools save your data (translation memory, terminology database, and even the files that you're translating) on a remote server (in Memsources's case, one of the Amazon AWS servers) and you don't actually install anything. The program itself is server-based as well, so everything happens in a web browser (there is a little exception with Memsources—see below). Instead of a perpetual license, users purchase time-based usage (the amount per month or year depends on the number of users you want to cooperate with and the amount of work). This kind of service is also called SaaS (Software as a Service).

The benefits of this model are fairly obvious: no worries about installation, maintenance, and updates of any program, plus (virtually) no worries about data loss. But there are also disadvantages, especially when it comes to the more limited number of features in the translation interface and to a perceived (and sometimes realistic) sense of less control of the project (mostly because the developers have to negotiate ways to make the tools work in various web browsers).

Another issue that all cloud-based translation environment tools face is that users need an Internet connection to work. Most developers have found some kind of workaround for this. In Memsources's case, it's a very lightweight desktop editor that you can install for free and use to translate an interim XLIFF file that can be downloaded from the Memsources server and later uploaded once you're done with the translation. The desktop editor looks virtually identical to the web interface.

Memsources also uses translation tables to display the extracted text from the supported formats (MS Office, InDesign, HTML, XML, TTX, XLIFF, and a variety of text-based software development formats) alongside a view of matches from the translation memory, termbase, and machine translation.

The learning curve for Memsources (and most other cloud-based tools) is not steep because of its smaller number of features (compared with most desktop-based translation environment tools) and its business model. Memsources is often used by translation companies that set up projects and then give their translators free access to the translation interface. A system like that has to be intuitive for the translator.

8.6.6 How to choose the right Translation Environment Tool

Again, the few tools listed above are by no means the only good choices; all of the tools in the complete list have some very enthusiastic users. So, what to do? How to choose?

I thought you were going to ask that!

While it's obviously important to know what's available, I would advise you to analyze your particular environment before you examine the tools themselves.

These should be your first criteria: Who are your clients? (Or if you're just starting out, who do you hope your clients will be?) What tools are they

using? How do they use them?

- If they use a translation environment tool and send you pre-processed bilingual files in Word or as XLIFF files, you can work with the majority of tools, regardless of whether they match your client's tool.
- If they send you the projects in a tool-specific package format (a file that contains all the resources and the translation file you need for the completion of the project), it's possible to use tools other than those the client is using, but you'll need to investigate a little more to know for sure that kind of exchange works.
- However, if your clients are using a process where the translation memory and terminology data (and possibly the translation file itself) are located online, you will have to use the tool that the clients are using.

Next, look at what colleagues you often work with are using. It will serve you well to use the same tool—both for the sake of seamless cooperation as well as some friendly support.

Also, inform yourself about training opportunities. For any translation environment tool, especially if you have never used one before, you should consider investing in some kind of training.

Lastly, examine the tool itself. Start with looking at the file formats you translate. Does the tool you're considering support them all? If it does not support all the formats, would it be OK not to use the tool for some projects? If you are not a Windows user, you will have to make sure that your tool runs on the platform of your choice.

One facet really should not become a major part of the decision-making process: how much the tool costs. Instead, look at the return-on-investment. Any tool that you invest in and can't recoup the purchase price within a few months is a failed investment, no matter the original price. Plus, the initial purchasing cost most likely is the smaller portion of your investment. Training will be the larger.

8.7 Machine Translation

Machine translation (automated translation) came up a number of times in connection with translation environment tools. I imagine that the reactions were something between “You gotta be kidding me—why do we need to talk about machine translation? I thought this was a book for professional translators!” and “Oh, are translation environment tools and machine translation two different things?”

Yes, we need to talk about machine translation and, yes, translation environment tools and MT are different things—even though it’s true that machine translation is used by some translators as one among many translation resources in translation environment tools.

The first thing we probably need to talk about is this: Machine translation is not going to take your job as a translator away. Not now and (most likely) not in our lifetime.

Now that we’ve shooed that elephant out of the room, let’s talk about whether MT will have an effect on our jobs as translators. Here the answer is not quite as clear-cut. How about something like this: For some it won’t, for many it will, and for quite a few it already has had an impact.

Thoughts on Translation:

The above is the “functional” answer. If you’re more marketing-minded, you might also answer the question like this: Machine translation has an impact on every translator because it offers a great opportunity to talk about translation since MT is on everyone’s mind right now. (If you don’t believe me, search for “universal translator” in Google News—there’s virtually no day without an article about the up-and-coming machine translation/interpretation gadget/software/service/app that will be just like the Star Trek widget.)

Those who have already been impacted by machine translation are often working as post-editors for machine translation (PEMT). This means that the translator—or, probably more accurately, post-editor—is correcting machine translation output and possibly, depending on the underlying machine translation engine, trying to alter the algorithms and dictionaries of the machine translation program.

There are some who enjoy this kind of work, but it's probably safe to say that the majority of translators expect to be more proactive than just responding to computer output and prefer not to work in PEMT. Many translation companies who offer PEMT have a hard time finding enough post editors—great news for you if you think that this is a line of work that might interest you.

There are other ways to use machine translation, though, and those translators who don't work in highly creative fields (advertising, tag lines, slogans, etc.) would be well-advised not to completely rule out machine translation as an option for enhancing productivity.

Thoughts on Translation:

Keep in mind that clearly everything that can ever be said about machine translation is language-dependent, from the fact that there are no machine translation engines for many languages to the fact that some language combinations produce better results with MT than others.

If you have access to a lot of high-quality data from a very narrow domain, possibly even one client, you can have a statistical machine translation engine trained (options here include KantanMT, PangeaMT, or Tauiyou).

Or if you have good dictionary data and a decent understanding of linguistic categories (and a lot of patience), you could train a rules-based machine translation engine (options here include SYSTRAN or PROMT).

If done well, these engines might give you decent results, but you would essentially put yourself into the position of a post-editor. Again, this might be good for some, but many won't like it.

I think that machine translation can (and will) be used much more organically, sort of as an additional tool that is added to existing and well-established tools.

Here are some possibilities:

- MT engines can be queried to help translation environment tools make better decisions about content in translation memories. Right now translation environment tools cannot detect subsegments unless they

can apply statistical methods, looking through many translation units with the same subsegments to verify that “bessere Entscheidungen treffen” is the correct German translation for the subsegment “make better decisions” that’s already in the TM. Machine translation engines could tell you that right away, necessitating far less data to rely on your data.

- Machine translation engines can work on fuzzy matches derived from translation memories by attempting to fix them into perfect matches. There is no guarantee that this will always work perfectly, and ideally your tool should first use all its (=your) internal data, but if that’s not there, the MT fix could be a great start.
- MT matches can be used as auto-suggestions. This is especially interesting when you are connected to a number of different engines (or even better: if you are connected to one engine that displays a number of suggestions and not just one). This removes you from the role of editing MT data; instead, you can use little pieces here and there as you see fit to speed up the translation process, and the end result will be something that you controlled.
- Machine translation engines can be queried not just once but on an ongoing basis, so whatever you enter will change the kind of translation the machine translation generates and suggests to you.

All four of these more interactive ways of dealing with machine translation are already being used in some way by some tools. Though it’s typically not yet done in a very mature manner, it just goes to show that machine translation might have a brighter future in the arsenal of some translators than hitherto thought.

Of course, there’s one more issue to watch out for when it comes to machine translation, and that concerns the privacy of your client’s data. If you use the free version of any of the available tools (Google Translate, Bing Translator, etc.), the data you upload will be used by the MT engine’s owner. Although it might not be used in any way that could be retrieved in a detectable manner, it’s not a good message to send to your clients that you work this way. If you do intend to use generic online machine translation, assure yourself that you know what happens to the data (or at least be aware

of what you are told will happen to the data and assume that this is indeed the case). As of this writing (2015), Google Translate claims not to use your data if you use the paid version (which would be the case if you use it within a translation environment tool); Microsoft, on the other hand, will use it unless you commit yourself to translating huge amounts of data. This is always subject to change, so stay abreast of ongoing developments if you're interested in this kind of technology.

9 Your online presence

Increasing your name recognition and building a network of colleagues you trust are key to your success as a freelancer. Fortunately, the Internet offers some excellent options; whether you hate the thought of attending a chamber of commerce in-person networking event or you're simply looking for ways to reach out further than you can in person, online networking and social media are worth some of your marketing time. Online networking can take many forms; if you're a member of a local or national translators association, you are likely to be able to participate in its online discussion list. Translation marketplaces like ProZ and TranslatorsCafe have a wide variety of forums that you can participate in and get to know other translators, and general professional networking portals such as LinkedIn, Plaxo and Xing can allow you to meet not only other translators but people who work in your areas of specialization. Social media is somewhat of its own category in the online networking universe; blogs, podcasts and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be either a major time drain or an excellent source of contacts and information, depending on how you use them. Let's take a look at the major online networking and social media opportunities and how freelance translators can best make use of them.

9.1 Setting up a basic professional website

There are a number of reasons to set up a website for your freelance translation business: as compared to hand-coded websites of the past, it's now fast, easy and inexpensive to set up a basic website. A website works for you 24 hours a day as your potential clients search the web for a translator; a website makes you easy to find; a website allows you to connect with clients all over the world. In addition, you can use your website to post information that you provide to clients over and over, such as your terms of service. If you don't already have a website, there are a few ways to set one up:

- Hire a web designer to create the entire site. The best way to find a web designer is to find some freelancers' websites that you like, then ask them to refer you to their designer. You can also search online for web design companies or freelance web designers in your area.
- Hire a web designer to create the basic framework of the site, then flesh it out yourself. For example you could hire a designer to create just your home page and one internal page, then you could create the rest of the site on your own if you have the technical know-how to do so.
- Create the site yourself by hand. If you know or don't mind learning HTML (the language in which web pages are written), you can either code your site by hand or create it using a program such as Adobe Dreamweaver.
- Create the site yourself using a website building tool. Even if you have only moderate technical skills, you can build your own website without knowing much HTML by using a content management system such as WordPress wordpress.com, Squarespace squarespace.com or Drupal drupal.org. For a good introduction to building a website with WordPress, see wpsitebuilding.com. Many web hosting services offer free website building tools; these can be adequate if you want a very basic site, but they are often tied to that particular hosting service, so you may have to start your site from scratch if you change hosting services.

9.1.1 Cost

Just as it's hard to generalize about the rates that translators charge, it's hard to generalize about the fees you'll pay to set up a website. The cost will depend on whether you're happy with a standard website template or you prefer something that looks very unique. You'll also need to determine whether you need a static, brochure-style website or a website that includes forms, online sales, an e-newsletter, downloadable files, etc. In general, if you cannot budget at least \$500 for your website, you're probably best off creating the site yourself and sticking with the level of technical complexity

that you can handle on your own. If you have a budget of at least \$1,000, you should be able to hire someone to set the basic site up for you and to do some custom design elements. Website design services can seem expensive, but for many translators, a website is their primary (or only) marketing tool; if you have a website that either looks homemade or looks like 10,000 other websites on the Internet, it's unlikely to contribute much to your marketing efforts.

9.1.2 Buying a domain name

In order to set up a website, you need to purchase your own domain name, for example www.yourdomain.com. Avoid using a domain that comes from a free hosting provider and has the provider's information incorporated into it, such as cheaphosting.com/yourname. If you immediately show that you're not willing to pay the minimal cost of purchasing your domain name, your site will look unprofessional. First, you need to pick a few domain names that appeal to you. Your domain name should be relatively short and neither too restrictive or too general. Many translators use their name as their domain name, or choose a domain name that includes their language pair or their specializations. Write down a few domain names that you like, then check to see if your top choice is available. You can search the Whois database of domain names at whois.net, and if your domain name of choice is not taken, you can purchase the domain name from the domain name registrar of your choice. Your ISP (internet service provider) may be able to register the domain name for you, or you can register it yourself through an accredited domain name registrar. For a list, see internic.net/regist.html. Expect to pay about \$10 per year to register your domain name, and make sure to renew it before it expires! If you have a third party such as your ISP register the domain name for you, make sure that you, not the ISP, are listed as the owner.

9.1.3 Setting up website hosting

It's really important to pick a reliable web hosting service. Again, the best method is often to ask other freelancers what hosting service they use and how satisfied they are with it. Remember that once your e-mail is tied to your website and thus to your hosting service, your business is at a standstill if

your hosting service goes down. Make sure that the hosting service actually answers the customer support phone number and that they are available either 24/7 or at least during the hours that you are working and would need to contact them. In general, smaller local hosting services may offer more personalized service than larger and more anonymous companies. If you will be hosting large files on your site, or if you anticipate a large amount of traffic, make sure to get written documentation of the hosting provider's service guarantees.

9.1.4 Using domain name e-mail

As soon as you own a domain name, even if you don't yet have a website up, you can start using domain name e-mail, for example `yourname@yourdomain.com`. Domain name e-mail looks professional and gives you a permanent e-mail address as long as you own the domain name: no more e-mailing all of your clients and colleagues to let them know that you've changed e-mail addresses again! It's worth purchasing a domain name even if you just use it for e-mail purposes; your ISP should be able to give you a price for domain name e-mail service.

9.2 Listserves and e-mail discussion lists

Listserve and e-mail discussion lists are normally restricted to people who belong to a certain group or association; they are often managed using services such as Yahoo Groups `groups.yahoo.com`, Google Groups `groups.google.com`, etc. For example, most local translators' associations and most divisions of the American Translators Association have their own listserves to which members can belong for free. Normally if you belong to a listserve, you can choose the frequency with which you receive new messages from the list; you can usually choose to receive every message when it comes out, or to receive a daily digest of messages, or not to receive any messages by e-mail, in which case you can visit the listserve's web page to read the messages whenever you choose. Whatever your language pair, specialization, technology platform or niche market, there's a good chance that you can find a listserve of like-minded people to join. The fact that most

listerves are for members only is both an asset and a liability. In one sense, it's nice to be able to send your message to a restricted group of people, for example people who work in your language combination or who are freelancers working in your local area. In another sense, messages that you send to a listserve have a limited lifespan of availability and limited distribution; a listerve is a great place to ask specific questions or offer specific pieces of information, but it is less helpful for posting information that you would like to distribute to a wide audience. Depending on the service used to host the listserve, it may be difficult or even impossible for people to consult the list archives, which can result in the same questions being asked many times. However, for translators who live in remote areas or in countries where their source or target languages are not spoken, listerves are a great way to strike up relationships with other translators because you can get to know people fairly directly. At the very least, you should plan to join the listerves associated with the translators associations that you belong to.

9.3 Online forums

Online forums are similar to listerves in that they are mostly used for posting and answering questions, but online forums are usually public and hosted on a website. For example, the large translation portals such as ProZ proz.com and TranslatorsCafe translatorscafe.com have a huge range of forums that anyone can read for free. These are great resources for finding information because the archives stay on line indefinitely. The advantage and disadvantage of forums is that because they are generally not members-only, anyone can post information to them or read the information that is posted there. While this gives you access to a wider audience of readers and contributors, it also means that a) the quality of information posted to a forum is only as good as the person who posted it and b) anything you post to a forum can, in theory, be read by anyone on the Internet (so don't use a public forum to complain about your clients if you want to keep them!).

9.4 Social networking sites

Social networking sites come in a variety of flavors and are a helpful addition to the freelance translator's networking arsenal, but it's important to know how to use these sites correctly and not to let them become endless time drains. Let's look at a few of the more popular social networking sites and their uses:

9.4.1 LinkedIn

LinkedIn linkedin.com is probably the most popular social networking site for professionals. With over 300 million members, LinkedIn's members cover almost every conceivable industry and specialization. LinkedIn functions using the classic "profile and connections" social networking model. After joining LinkedIn, you build a profile with your current and past work information, education, etc. (you can also add various feeds to your page, see below for more information on this) and then invite people to join your network. You can also post a status update where you let your network know what you're working on, and you can change the status update as often as you want.

LinkedIn offers a basic account for free, and various types of premium accounts at various price points: the Job Seeker account (\$29.99 per month), to the Business Plus account (\$59.99 per month), the Sales Navigator account (\$79.99 per month) and the Recruiter Lite account (\$119.95 per month). These give you better exposure on the site, more detailed insights into who's viewed your profile, and more InMail credits so that you can directly e-mail people via LinkedIn.

For most freelancers, LinkedIn's free personal account is probably adequate; unless you want to use LinkedIn to market to a lot of people you don't already know, you can build a good profile and network with the free account. LinkedIn is useful for a few purposes: to create a "virtual Rolodex" of your contacts (this is especially helpful so that you don't have to keep track of e-mail addresses for people who you contact infrequently) and to make it easier for prospective clients to find you. Now, let's look at a few tips for building a strong LinkedIn profile:

- Use the same name that you use professionally. It's important to choose one and only one name that you will use professionally. Make sure that you use this name for your LinkedIn profile.

- Add a professional-looking photograph. LinkedIn gives you the option to upload a photo and it's a good idea to do so, partially because it personalizes your profile and partially because it makes you more recognizable, especially if you have a common name.
- Write a descriptive headline. Your headline will appear every time you appear in a LinkedIn search result, as a suggested connection for someone else, etc. so make sure that it gives a good description of what you do. Unfortunately, LinkedIn's profile builder is not very freelancer-friendly because it requires you to enter something in the *Company* field. So for example if you don't have a company name, you may appear as "Self-employed at Full-time freelance translator," which looks a little clunky in search results. It's advisable to display your language pair as prominently as you can. "Freelance translator" doesn't tell clients much; "English to Russian translator, specializing in clinical trials" is much better.
- State your most important information first. In the Summary field, you'll be asked to enter a succinct description of what services you provide. Don't count on a prospective client reading your entire profile to find out if you're a good fit for them. It's advisable to put your language pairs, specializations and geographic location (if it's important to your work) in your first sentence. For example, "Dallas-based Spanish to English translator and conference interpreter specializing in the medical and pharmaceutical industries," or "English to French translator specializing in legal and financial translations, working with clients throughout the U.S. and Europe."
- Create a custom URL for your profile, such as www.linkedin.com/in/corinnemckay. The profile builder gives you a oneclick way to do this.
- If you have a blog, feed it to your LinkedIn profile. Doing this not only gives your blog more exposure, but it adds fresh content to your profile with no additional effort on your part.
- Ask for recommendations. LinkedIn allows you to solicit recommendations from your connections. Although you can use the

LinkedIn messaging feature to send a mass email to all of your connections, it's advisable to ask specific people to recommend you, possibly suggesting a specific aspect of your work for them to comment on.

- Either update your status regularly or don't update it at all. LinkedIn's status update feature can be an effective way of sharing information with your network (you can also make your status visible to people outside your network by changing your privacy settings), but your profile will have a stale look if you only update your status every few months. I would advise updating your status at least once a week if possible.

Once you've built a decent basic profile on LinkedIn, you should start adding connections. There are a few ways to find people you'd like to connect with; you can allow LinkedIn to search your e-mail address book, you can add connections manually by typing people's names into the Search box, or you can add connections through LinkedIn Groups (more on Groups below). Once you click the *Connect* box, a dialogue box will pop up with the text of a message to be sent to the person you'd like to connect with. I highly recommend personalizing this message by either including a greeting if you know the person well, such as: "I've just joined LinkedIn, looking forward to connecting with you here!", or reminding the person how you know them: "We met at last year's ATA conference, may I add you as a connection?" People have different theories about who you should connect with on LinkedIn; some people connect only with people who they know well in "real life," some connect with people who they meet at conferences and work-related events, while others consider themselves "open networkers" and will connect with almost anyone. Unless you want to connect with anyone who asks, it's helpful to formulate a connection strategy in advance: do you want to connect only with people who you actually know, or also with people who you may run into only once? Do you want to focus your connection efforts on colleagues and existing clients, or on prospective clients? Thinking about these issues up front will help you get the most out of your efforts on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn Groups are definitely worth exploring. Groups are very similar to online forums, but most LinkedIn Groups require you to be approved as a

member in order to read the group archives or post something to the group. You can search for groups you want to join by clicking *Interests>Groups* in the top navigation bar; also take a look at the profiles of people you work with and see what groups they belong to (groups are normally displayed in someone's profile). There are a lot of translation-related LinkedIn Groups, but you can probably get the most return for your efforts by joining groups related to your specializations. For example, if you join a group for patent attorneys, you may be the only translator in the group, so you're automatically the industry expert. Also, you can easily start a discussion within your group and ask a question about translation, for example "What are some pitfalls and best practices of working with a translator in this industry?" This will help you get to know the other people in the group and find out how your services might be helpful to them.

For each LinkedIn Group you join, make sure to abide by that group's policies on marketing announcements and job postings. Most groups have an area where these types of postings are allowed, but make sure to restrict your marketing efforts to that designated area so that you don't annoy group members and/or get banned from the group. Once you've joined LinkedIn, you'll receive (unless you de-select this option in your settings) a periodic "news feed" about what is going on in your network. For example, this news feed tells you who joined a new group, who added new connections, who posted a status update, etc. In order to keep your name fresh in your connections' minds, try to do something that causes you to appear in this news feed every week; updating your status regularly is an easy way to do this. You can also get some metrics about your LinkedIn visibility by looking at the profile views box on your LinkedIn home page which will tell you how many people have looked at your profile recently and how many times you have appeared in search results on LinkedIn.

9.4.2 Facebook

With over a billion (!) users, Facebook is a hugely popular social networking site; for freelance translators and interpreters, Facebook is probably more applicable to your personal life than to your professional life, but it's still worth a look. Facebook uses the same general model as LinkedIn—you have a personal profile, and then you add contacts (friends). In addition, you can

create Facebook pages or groups that are separate from your profile, by clicking the pages or groups in the left sidebar of your profile, and *Create Page/Group*. Then, people can become “likers” of your Facebook page or members of your group, much as they would become friends on your personal page. The upside of Facebook is that it has an enormous user base; it’s a great way to spread the word about what you’re doing, reconnect with people you know, and share information, photos, video, etc. Facebook has a few negatives as well; the site’s privacy policy seems to change frequently and without warning (for example, related to how Facebook can use the content that you post to your page), many people on Facebook really blur the line between what is personal and what is appropriate for business, and unless you spend a significant amount of time customizing your settings, you have very little control over what other people post to your *Timeline* (the public area of your profile). Additionally, you can’t download your Facebook contacts or contact them outside of Facebook, unless you can convince them to sign up for an external e-mail list. With Facebook, it’s especially important to have a plan before you start. If you decide that you are going to restrict your Facebook Friend base to only people who you are personal friends with, have a strategy for what you will do when a business contact wants to add you as a friend. For example, you might respond, “I find LinkedIn more useful for my work contacts,” and then you might add that person as a LinkedIn connection.

9.4.3 Twitter

Twitter is technically known as a micro-blogging service. On Twitter, you post *Tweets*, status updates of 140 characters or less which are sent out to people in your network, who are referred to as *Followers*. One positive aspect of Twitter is that you can have one-way relationships—just because someone is following you doesn’t mean that you are obligated to follow them. Twitter also allows you to use hash tags (#) to tag keywords in your Tweets, for example: “Finishing a rush #translation for tomorrow.” These hash tags are then searchable by clicking on them. Twitter also offers the option of feeding your Tweets into other social media outlets that you use; for example you can feed your Tweets to Facebook so that they appear in your Facebook status as well. Most blog hosting services also offer you the option

of having your Tweets appear in the sidebar of your blog. There's no question that there's a lot of "noise" on Twitter; however, the fact that it's very easy to post Tweets and the fact that many people use their mobile phones to receive Tweets makes Twitter a great way to get information out very quickly.

9.4.4 Blogs

Blogs (a contraction of "web logs") are a type of website, and the distinction between blogs and static websites is not always clear. Blogs have a URL (web address) just like standard websites do, but blogs are generally more interactive and updated more often than standard websites are. For example, most bloggers post new content on their blog anywhere from once a week to several times a day, and most bloggers also allow and even encourage their readers to post comments on the articles that appear on the blog. Whether you read and comment on other people's blogs or write your own blog, the blogosphere (online blog world) is definitely worth exploring. Until recently, most websites were one-way streets of information; the "authority" publishing the information didn't have the means (or often the desire) to spark a discussion among equals. The major change brought about by blogging is that once the blogger writes a post, readers can generally post comments that continue the discussion in the post, disagree with it, agree with it, etc. In addition, because blogs are easy to update, they are often sources of breaking news, or of commentary on breaking news. Blogs are thus an excellent networking tool for freelance translators because they offer you a way to join discussions among colleagues from all over the world. Translators have proved to be very enthusiastic bloggers and the same is true of a lot of other "word people" such as journalists, editors, marketing consultants, etc.

If you visit some translator or interpreter blogs and find a post that interests you or about which you have something to say, click the link that allows you to add a comment to that post (there may or may not already be comments on the post). Most blog hosting services require you to supply your e-mail address when you post a comment, but it is not normally displayed along with the comment. If you have a website, you can choose to enter its address when you post a comment, and your name will then be hyperlinked to

your website when people view your comment. The level of hoops you have to jump through to post a comment depends partially on the blog hosting service and partially on the settings that the individual blogger has chosen; you may be able to post a comment simply by entering your name and e-mail address and clicking *Submit*; you may have to create some sort of account, or you may have to wait for the blogger to moderate (approve) your comment. Commenting on other people's blogs is a great way to dip your toe in the blogosphere. By commenting, you can offer useful information to other people who read the blog without taking on the commitment of writing your own blog. You'll find that a lot of blog posts involve lists of tips: how to write an effective marketing e-mail, best places to find new clients, top five laptop computers for translators, and so on. If you have a tip to add to one of these lists, submit it as a comment; your tip will then be available for other blog readers to look at, and if you have a website, people may find it because of the tip that you posted. The blogosphere is a lot like an online roundtable—in much the same way as your local translators association might have an in-person session where various translators offer advice about marketing, networking, technology or translation techniques, you'll find people discussing all of these topics on their blogs. It's interesting to compare perspectives from translators in different countries and cultures, and it's also interesting to see what people think of the opinions that you post. A great resource for finding translation blogs is the American Translators Association's Blog Trekker page: atanet.org/resources/blog_trekker.php.

9.4.5 Podcasts

Podcasts are an interesting addition to the social media universe. If you enjoy listening to audio shows while you're exercising, driving or cooking, podcasts can be a great way to absorb information and entertainment without having to read (always good when you've spent the entire work day reading!). To find interesting podcasts, you can use iTunes (for Apple devices), Stitcher (for Android devices), or most podcasts also allow you to stream them directly from the show's own website. Eve Bodeux and I host the occasional podcast Speaking of Translation speakingoftranslation.com, and for more regular content, you might be interested in Tess Whitty's

Marketing Tips for Translators marketingtipsfortranslators.com and Paul Urwin's 100 Percent Translations 100percenttranslations.com.

9.4.6 Pinterest and Instagram

As visually-oriented sites, Pinterest and Instagram might not strike you as the best fit for a business like translation. However, they're worth a look because a) you may be the only translator or interpreter using them to market your business, and b) if you interpret, or even if you're a translator attending something like a translation conference, they could give you a new outlet for marketing. For more on how non-visual businesses can use Pinterest and Instagram, see Beth Hayden's article on Pinterest marketing for "boring" businesses: bethhayden.com/boring-businesses-on-pinterest/.

10 Rates, contracts and terms of service

10.1 Setting your translation rates

Possibly the most anxiety-provoking aspect of launching your translation business is deciding how much to charge. Charge too much and you'll be priced out of the market; charge too little and you'll be working overtime just to make ends meet. The easiest way to remove some of the anxiety from this decision is to gather some objective data such as how much money you would like to make, and how much it will cost you to run your business.

Every language combination and specialization has a range of rates; for example, translators of Asian languages into English will almost invariably earn more than translators of European languages into English, although there are individual translators who will always be the exception to this rule. In addition, how much you need to charge depends on your cost of living. An English to Spanish translator living in rural Mexico can afford to work for lower rates than his or her colleague who lives in Manhattan. Some translators get very angry about these global outsourcing possibilities, but the reality is that they are just a function of the variation in global costs of living; in a developing country, someone earning \$15.00 an hour can live quite well, while someone making \$75.00 an hour in Geneva may be barely getting by.

Adding to the pricing confusion is that most people are used to calculating their wages by the hour, while most translation projects are paid by the word. Depending on the language combination involved, individual translators will want to be paid either by the source or the target word. For example, Romance languages such as French and Spanish take about 30% more words than English to communicate the same text. So, translators of French or Spanish into English will usually ask to be paid by the source word, whereas translators working in the opposite direction will earn more money by being paid by the target word. If there is an industry standard, it is often to set

payment based on the source word count, since this lets the client and the translator know how much the project will cost before it has even begun. For character-based languages such as Japanese and Chinese, the word count is most often based on the number of English words regardless of the direction of the translation.

Beginning translators often don't know how to estimate how long a translation will take, so don't know how to set their per-word rates in order to reach their target hourly rate of pay. While an experienced linguist knows approximately how many words per hour he or she translates when working on various types of documents (general, technical, highly technical, handwritten, hard copy, HTML, etc.), there is no way to know this if you haven't done much translation; you simply have to time yourself while you translate to see how fast you work. In general, a translator who is a relatively fast typist (or uses speech recognition software that works well) can translate 400–600 words per hour or 2,000– 3,000 words per day, but this is only a ballpark figure. When working on a highly technical document with few repetitions, or on a handwritten document that is difficult to read, even an experienced translator might produce just a few hundred words per hour.

Non-billable time is another variable in the pricing equation. When you have a full-time job for an employer, you are normally paid to work 40 hours per week, whether or not all of those hours are spent working productively. As a self-employed freelancer, you will be paid only when you are actually translating. Tasks like marketing, billing, collections, e-mailing back and forth with current and prospective clients, providing rate quotes for upcoming projects, and downtime when you have no work, are all off the clock—work time that you have to put in but that you don't get paid for. When all of these tasks are added up, most freelancers will spend at least 25% of their time on non-billable work, and it's not unreasonable to estimate up to 50% non-billable time when you add in work slow periods when you would like to be working, but aren't.

10.1.1 Gathering objective data about rates

Before deciding how much to charge for your translation services, it's important to do some research about what other translators charge and what clients will pay for translation in your language pairs and specializations.

There are various ways to do this: you can look at rate surveys on popular translation portals such as ProZ proz.com and Translators Cafe translatorscafe.com, or order the most recent compensation survey published by the American Translators Association atanet.org, all of which have breakdowns by language pair. Another possibility is to search the Internet for websites of translators who work in your language pair and see if they publish their rates. Depending on whether translators in your language pair are forthcoming with their rates, you might also ask other translators if they will share their rates with you. If you do this, it is very important to avoid antitrust violations by simply asking for factual information—not asking what rates you should charge or what rates the other translators think that clients will pay.

Completing the following two charts will help you determine how to set your rates for translation. In the *Sample* column are example figures to use for comparison. Fill in your own figures in the right-hand column.

Table 10.1: BILLABLE HOURS

	Sample	Your estimate
Hours per week you would like to work	40	
Weeks per year you would like to work (subtract vacation weeks)	48	
Total working hours per year	1,920	
Sick hours per month x 12 months	96	
Legal holiday hours (7 days per year)	56	
New total working hours per year	1,768	
Non-billable time (25–50% of total: marketing, accounting, etc)	700	
Billable hours per year	1,068	

Table 10.2: HOURLY RATES

	Sample	Your estimate
Your salary goal	\$40,000	
Taxes (15–50% of salary)	\$6,000	
Internet, website hosting, phone, fax, cell phone (sample= \$100/mo x 12 mos)	\$1,200	
Memberships and professional development (including association dues,	\$1,500	

conferences, etc.)		
Marketing and advertising (could be much more or less)	\$500	
Office rent (no total given since most translators work from home; if you plan to rent office space, write it here)	\$0	
Office supplies (envelopes, printer paper, pens, etc)	\$500	
Computer hardware and software (depends heavily on what you need to purchase)	\$800	
Auto and travel expenses (could be \$0 if you never travel for work, or several thousand dollars if you attend multiple conferences or travel to visit clients)	\$250	
Total cost of business operation	\$50,750	
Profit goal (to be reinvested in business; sample is 10%)	\$5,000	
Total revenue required	\$55,750	
Required hourly rate (Total revenue divided by billable hours from chart above; sample is \$55,750/1068)	\$52.20	

Once you have this hourly rate worksheet completed, you've completed a major step in pricing your translation services. Your next step is to determine how you're going to arrive at that hourly rate. For example, if you want to earn \$60.00 per hour, you can achieve this by translating 600 words per hour at 10 cents per word, 400 words per hour at 15 cents per word, or 300 words per hour at 20 cents per word. In order to do this, you need to know how fast you work (the only way to figure this out is to time yourself while you do some translations), and what the range of rates for your language pairs and specializations is. For example, you might look at rate surveys on Translators Cafe translatorscafe.com or ProZ.com proz.com, or look at websites of translators in your language pair to see if they publish their rates. Some translators, although not all, are also willing to discuss rates with their colleagues.

10.2 Charging by the word versus charging by the hour

Most translation jobs are billed by the word; but in some cases and for some jobs, translators do bill by the hour. Consider the following factors when you decide whether to price your work per word or per hour.

Pricing translation by the word has some advantages. Especially if you charge by the source word, everyone knows up front how much the translation will cost, down to the cent—no surprise overruns to deal with and no estimating how many hours a project will take. Per-word pricing encourages translators to maintain their skills and technology, since efficient translators effectively earn more per hour. In some sense, per-word pricing may also drive translation technology innovations, since translators may be more likely to purchase a tool that allows them to work faster. Also, skilled and efficient translators can probably earn more by charging by the word than clients would be likely to pay by the hour. Say that you're translating 500 words per hour at 15 cents a word—not out of the question for many translators—but I'll venture a guess that those same clients might balk at paying \$75 an hour for translation. Per-word pricing also allows translation buyers to compare apples to apples when it comes to costs, rather than weighing a higher per-hour quote from a translator who claims to work faster versus a lower per-hour quote from someone who works more slowly.

But then again...pricing by the word has an obvious disadvantage from the translator's side, which is that you are agreeing to work for a flat and fixed rate. So, when you get to those three pages of barely legible handwriting, or the document that's been scanned, faxed and photocopied eight times before arriving in your inbox, you have to decide whether you need to negotiate a higher per-word rate. This can be a particular problem when it comes to editing, which is why I personally decline to be paid by the word for editing.

So then maybe pricing by the hour is better? Well...yes...no...maybe! The main advantage of pricing by the hour is that there is no risk of loss on the translator's part; if you charge \$50 per hour and you work ten hours, you make \$500. If you charge 20 cents a word and think you can translate 600 words an hour but the nature of the document is such that you really translate 250 words an hour, you've just taken a big hit. However, my main reasons for continuing to believe in pricing by the word are: a) the client knows up front how much the translation will cost, and b) I think that most experienced and efficient translators can earn more by the word than what most clients will pay by the hour. Just don't forget to agree in advance on whether the billable word count is source or target!

10.3 Rate sheets

Whether or not you publish or discuss your rates, it's important to have a rate sheet somewhere, even if it's just for your own use. Your base rate will cover most jobs, but clients will also ask about other types of services, so you should have the following in mind:

Standard rates. These are the rates that you apply to most translation projects that come across your desk. Generally, this would include projects that are in one of your usual areas of specialization, are in a format that you normally handle, and don't involve working overtime to meet the deadline.

Volume discount. Many translators offer a lower per-word rate for larger projects, since a large project allows you to spend your time working instead of looking for work, and decreases your administrative overhead for things like billing and collections. The flip side of this (and why not all translators offer a volume discount) is that in the worst case scenario, a large project can actually cause you problems if you have to turn down work from other regular clients who contact you while you're tied up with the big project. Large projects are also problematic if the client pays late or doesn't pay.

Rush charge. Nearly every translation project is a rush in some sense, but not infrequently something is a real rush. For example a client might ask you to receive a document at 4PM and return it by 9AM, or to work on a weekend, or to translate a 4,000 word document in 24 hours. Normally these jobs are charged at a higher rate than your base rate, although for a regular client some translators waive their usual rush charges.

Minimum charge. Even if a translation involves only a few words (and these projects come up; for example when a company wants their marketing slogan translated into fourteen languages), you still have to communicate with the client, issue an invoice, deposit the check, follow up if the client doesn't pay, etc. For this reason, most translators have a minimum charge of somewhere between \$20 and \$50 for projects that are under a certain word count, such as \$25 for 200 words or fewer.

Editing rate. Most reputable translation agencies will have every translation proofed by another translator, so you may be interested in offering this

service. Editing rates are normally one-quarter to one-third of your usual translation rate.

Translation memory discounts. Some translation agencies will want to make more money for themselves or their clients by asking for a discount when you use translation memory software on a document that is very repetitive. Whether you do this or not is up to you. Some translators offer no discount at all, others only for 100% matches, still others offer a stepped pricing plan for *fuzzy matches*, for example charging 60% of their regular rate for 75–99% matches, 80% of their regular rate for 50–74% matches, etc. If you choose to offer this type of discount, most translation memory packages have tools to report the match percentages in your document.

10.4 When a client asks for a discount

When a client asks, “Can you lower your rate?,” you can respond in various ways. You could get defensive and belligerent (“For your information, I’m a serious professional whose work is worth real money”). You could offer some snarky feedback on the rate the client is proposing (“No serious professional translator would work for what you’re offering”). I don’t recommend those strategies, but lots of translators go that route. You could justify why you charge what you do (“I have 20 years’ experience and a Master’s in Translation”). You could just say no, and suggest that they find another translator—fair enough.

But the best response is, “I’m unable to offer a discount, because I’m busy all the time at my regular rates.”

First, if you’ve already told the client your rates and they want to pay less, let’s be honest: they’re asking for a discount. Asking is fine; some clients will ask just on principle, to see if they can save some money. Don’t get angry just because they asked. But from the freelancer’s point of view, the best defense is to simply be busy all the time at your regular rates. That way, you don’t need to get angry, or defensive, or engage with the “how low can you go” clients. If it’s within the client’s budget to pay your regular rates, great. If not, no problem (for you at least!) because you’ll just continue working with the clients who will pay your regular rates. When I use this

strategy with clients, I feel that this has the advantage of being true (never an absolute must in a business negotiation, but always a plus!). I'm not getting nasty, or superior, or defensive—I'm just saying that, truthfully, it makes no sense for me to work for less than what all my other clients pay.

Getting to "I'm busy all the time at my regular rates" is a long-term project. But keep that goal in mind: yes, the client's proposed rate may be laughably low; yes, you may have 20 years' experience and certification and a Master's in Translation; yes, you're a serious professional. But there's one real reason not to offer discounts—you don't need to.

10.5 Contracts or work for hire agreements

Many clients will ask their freelance translators to sign contracts or work for hire agreements before beginning work. While these are often quite harmless in nature and not something to be concerned about, it's important to read what you're signing and to make sure that you're not agreeing to a clause that you will later regret. These contract clauses are mostly applicable if you work through translation agencies. For example, you should carefully consider, possibly with the advice of a lawyer, whether you will agree to terms such as:

- Agreeing not to get paid until the end client pays the agency. Of all the terms that translators are asked to accept, this is probably the most difficult. In one sense, it's understandable that an agency doesn't want to take the risk of having to pay tens of thousands of dollars to translators for a project that the agency itself is never paid for. In addition, if a translator returns poor quality work, the agency doesn't want to be responsible in the event that the end client refuses to pay. On the other hand, the agency's role as a middleman between the translator and the end client involves some financial risks, such as non-payment on the part of the end client. If you agree to this type of clause, it is important to realize that you are accepting some risk of non-payment yourself.
- Agreeing to indemnify (hold harmless) the client against lawsuits and/or claims resulting from your translation. If you sign a contract

with this type of clause, make sure that you carry your own professional liability or *errors and omissions* (E&O) insurance in case one of your clients is sued because of an error in your translation. The client should have a quality control system in place so that an error by one translator doesn't have a disastrous effect on the final project, but not every client will have this. This type of contract clause is more of a concern if you work for direct clients, who may be less likely to have your work edited or proofread before distributing it.

- Agreeing not to accept or solicit work from the agency's clients. Most intermediaries between end clients and freelancers, not just translation agencies, require this type of *non-compete* agreement. It's perfectly reasonable to ask that you not go behind the agency's back and ask the end client to hire you to translate for them directly. However, unless you and the agency compare your client lists (something the agency will probably be unwilling to do), you can't really know that you're not working for one of them.
- Agreeing not to subcontract work to another translator. This is another fairly common and reasonable clause; just make sure you read it before signing, and if you commit to doing all the work yourself, don't share it with someone else.
- Agreeing to abide by confidentiality standards. Especially if you work in legal, financial or patent translation, you will probably come into contact with trade secrets, confidential financial information, patent applications, etc. If you sign a contract with this type of clause, again it is important to read and abide by its provisions. For example, financial translators might be required to agree not to engage in insider trading as a result of their knowledge of a company's financial information before it is released to the public.
- Agreeing to submit to a credit check, criminal background check or financial review in order to be bonded. Like the confidentiality agreement described above, there are good reasons why some translators have to be bonded (insured against stealing because of information that they have access to). For example if you work with a bank's clients' financial information, or translate information about a

mutual fund's identity verification procedures, you have access to information that would allow you to steal money from the company or its clients. In order to be bonded, most insurance or bonding companies will investigate your financial records and/or criminal background. Just make sure you are clear on what you're agreeing to when you sign this clause, and that you understand what information about you the company is going to collect or ask for. If you have a past criminal background, make sure you understand what types of charges, arrests or convictions must be reported.

If you find a clause in a contract that you don't want to sign, you have a few options. You could cross out the clause in question, modify it, or refuse to sign the contract completely. Whether or not this is successful depends on the client. Some agencies will agree to a change, others will refuse to work with you if you don't sign their contract. The most important thing is to realize that if you sign a contract, its terms are legally enforceable, even if an agency employee tells you, "I can't imagine we would ever really enforce that..." If the client wouldn't enforce the clause, it shouldn't be in their contract.

10.6 Terms of service

Just as a client or potential client may ask its translators to sign a contract, so you as a translator may ask your own existing or potential clients to agree to your terms of service. Before accepting any translation work, it is important to agree on terms of service with the client; some clients will tell you what their usual terms of service are, but there is often some room for negotiation as well. Depending on who the client is, you might ask them to sign a printed copy of your terms of service, or you might send an e-mail summarizing what your terms of service are. *Your agreement with the client should first summarize the project, per-word rate, whether the word count is based on the source or target count, the project deadline, the file format, and the delivery method.* Even with a client that you work for regularly, you should always summarize the basic elements of the project so that everyone is in agreement before you start work. With a regular client, this would probably take the form of an e-mail letting you know the project's due date and payment rate, along with any special instructions. With a client you have

never worked with before, you may want to consider letting the client know that your terms of service include some of the following conditions:

- *No claims will be considered after X days from the date of invoice.* You need to set a time frame within which the agency can ask you for revisions, tell you that there's a problem with the translation, etc. You don't want an agency coming back several months later to complain about a project that you barely remember working on, but you do need to give the agency time to solicit feedback from their end client. So, a time limit of somewhere between two weeks and one month is probably reasonable.
- *Within the limits of the law, all claims will be limited to the amount of this invoice.* A clause such as this lets the client know that if they're not satisfied with your work, the most they can do is refuse to pay you; they can't, for example, ask you to forgo your own payment *and* reimburse them for the cost of additional editing of your translation. However, especially if you translate for direct clients, there may be situations where the client is legally allowed to sue you for damages if they are sued as a result of errors in your translation. Make sure you are clear on this before accepting work from a client that is not a translation agency.
- *The client's terms of service are not in effect until approved in writing by the translator.* This prevents the client from holding you responsible for abiding by a contract that you haven't signed. For example, the client cannot come back to you after the project and say, "Our translator contract specifies that you don't get paid until the client pays us."
- *If the client is employed by an end client or third party, the translator's business agreement is with the client only. The client must pay the translator as agreed upon, regardless of the end client or third party's payment policies.* In essence, you are letting your client (a translation agency or freelance project manager) know that if the end client doesn't pay them, the client still has to pay you. The end client is not *your* client.

- *The translator retains copyright to the translation until the invoice for the translation has been paid in full.* Very important! When you contract with a client to do a translation for hire, you give up your copyright to the translated work, unless the contract specifies otherwise. However, if the client never pays you or doesn't pay in full, they haven't upheld their end of the work for hire agreement. Basically, this clause gives you the option of pursuing the client or end client for copyright violations if they use your translation without paying you.
- *If the translation project is canceled after a project assignment has been made, the translator will be paid for all work completed up to the time of cancellation.* Sometimes a client will send you the wrong file, cancel a project or scale a project down in size after you have already started working. While you shouldn't expect to be paid for the entire project unless you've completed it, you should be paid for the part of the work that you've already done, since you obviously can't do anything else with the translation. With a reputable client this shouldn't be a problem as long as the reason for the cancellation is clearly the client's mistake.
- *If the client is not satisfied with the translator's work, the translator must be given an opportunity to correct the translation before payment terms or rates are changed.* No matter how skilled you are as a translator, some clients will not be fully satisfied with your work. Including this type of clause will (hopefully!) protect you against clients who say that they're not happy with your work, and will not pay you, or take a discount on the agreed-upon price. Before the client brings up any change in the agreed-upon payment terms, they should let you know specifically what is wrong with the translation, and give you the chance to correct it.

10.7 Questions to ask before accepting a project

Especially when you first start out as a translator, it is very important to ask some key questions before you accept a translation project. If you are contacted by an agency that you have never worked with before, your first

step should be to see if the agency is credit-worthy. You can check a translation client rating service such as Payment Practices paymentpractices.net while you are on the phone with the agency or before you respond to their email, so that you can see what the client's reputation is before you start the job. In addition, you should ask the prospective client for more information about the translation, including:

- What is the subject matter of the translation?
- What is the deadline? Make sure to specify the time zone and clarify potentially vague terms such “end of day” or “close of business.”
- How many words or pages long is the document?
- What format is the document in? (For example, PDF, Word, HTML, hand written, etc.)
- Does the client want you to use translation memory? If so, will you apply a translation memory discount, or charge the same rate for the entire word count?
- What is the base pay rate for this project? Of course, this depends on whether you have already worked for the client, what your standard rates are, whether you prefer to suggest a rate first or have the client suggest one, etc.
- Are there any special instructions (For example, use of a glossary, certain formatting specifications, etc.)

10.8 Researching your potential clients

As we'll discuss later in this chapter, some problems with clients are unavoidable; no matter how well you set things up in advance and how well you know your clients, issues come up and you'll need to resolve them. In the case of payment and contract issues, the best defense is definitely a good offense—it's infinitely easier to lay the groundwork correctly for a project

than to chase after a client for months for your money, or lose a valuable client because of a misunderstanding.

The most important first step in making sure you get paid is to know who your client is. Dealing with someone who gives you only an e-mail address or cell phone number as contact information is a setup for non-payment, since you will have no recourse if the cell phone number or e-mail address in question is discontinued when you need to get paid. At the very least, you should get every client's full name or business name, website address, mailing address (if the address is a P.O. box, ask for a physical address as well), and phone and fax numbers. If you're suspicious about the client's legitimacy, this information should let you do at least a brief search; for example you could Google the client, call directory assistance and see if the phone number you get matches the phone number the client gave you, etc. If the client has a website, you can also find out the information that the client provided when they registered their website domain name. The easiest way to do this is via a website such as Whois.Net whois.net, where you can enter the client's domain name and immediately find out who the technical and billing contacts for the domain are. For this reason (ability to trace a client through a third party), it is also wise to beware of clients who will only provide you with a free e-mail address, for example Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, etc. Although webmail is very useful for some purposes, one of the unfortunate attractions of free e-mail accounts is that you don't have to provide any verifiable information about yourself to get one. Therefore it is very easy for someone to use a free e-mail address and then cancel it and simply disappear, which is impossible if your e-mail account is through a paid Internet service provider who has your contact and billing information. For clients who are established businesses or large translation agencies, you may also have the option of doing a credit check on the client through one of the large credit bureaus such as Experian experian.com.

Another truly excellent way to investigate potential clients is via a translation industry payment practices list. The oldest and largest is Ted Wozniak's Payment Practices paymentpractices.net. A membership to Payment Practices is \$20.00 per year, but will easily pay for itself if you avoid working with even one untrustworthy client. On this list, and others like it such as the ProZ Blue Board proz.com/bb (available only to paying members), and Translation Client Review (now transitioned from its own website to a Yahoo Group), you can post a query about a potential translation

client, and other translators will respond to you and tell you their experiences working with this client. Based on the information given, the client will receive a score; on Payment Practices the score is on a one to five scale with five being the best rating. This is mostly applicable if you work with translation agencies, but sometimes you will get responses about direct clients as well.

It is also acceptable and even advisable to ask a potential client for references from other translators who work for them. You might be uncomfortable or feel impolite doing this the first few times, but it's important to remember that if you work for a client who promises to pay you when the project is done, you are *extending credit* to the client by working without an up-front payment. Since you cannot resell the translation somewhere else if the client doesn't pay you, you are effectively loaning the client your time for the promise of future payment. Don't do this lightly; set the situation up so that you have the best possible chance of getting paid.

10.8.1 Handing potentially problematic clients

Problems can arise when you research a client and find out either that the client has a reputation as a non-payer, or that you can't find much information at all about the client. In this situation, a translator who is very busy and is not actively looking for new clients will probably just refuse the project being offered. However, a beginning translator may want to take more of a risk in order to secure a large or interesting project with a new client.

There is no reason not to let the client know your concerns; after all, you're basing your concerns on objective and widely available information, not on rumor and hearsay. If the client is a known non-payer, it is unwise to work for them unless they will pay in advance. You might tell the client that "due to translation industry payment practices ratings of your agency, any work I do for you will need to be paid in advance." It is unlikely that an insolvent client will agree to this, but it is probably worth a try if you really want the project. However, make sure that the payment is completed using a method that is immediately verifiable, such as a money order or a PayPal transfer.

With a client that doesn't have much of a track record, such as a newly established agency, you need to make more of a subjective judgment call.

You could ask if the client will pay in advance, or for a large project you could ask if the client can pay part of your invoice when you deliver part of the translation, so that you are protected from a complete loss in the event that the client is not solvent.

10.8.2 Recourse against non-paying clients

At some point in his or her career, nearly every translator does business with a client that either cannot pay or will not pay. There are a few last resort tactics that can be used with this type of client. First, make sure that you have sent the client a first, second and final collection notice and that the final notice was sent by certified mail with a return receipt. In addition, you need to be sure that you have iron-clad documentation of your arrangement with the client, for example an e-mail specifying the project due date, rate of payment and payment terms.

Once your final notice has produced no response, it is unlikely that the client is willingly going to pay you. However, there are still a few possible avenues of recourse, including:

- Posting a report of your experience to translation industry payment practices websites such as Payment Practices, Translator Client Review (now a Yahoo group) and the ProZ Blue Board. As long as you stick to the factual elements of the experience, this is a perfectly acceptable thing to do, and it is also perfectly acceptable to let the non-paying client know that you are doing this.
- Hiring a collection agency. Members of the American Translators Association can use the services of Dunn & Bradstreet for collections, and there are various other collection agencies that will, for a percentage of what they collect, pursue the non-paying client for you. Some collection agencies have a minimum charge, and this option is probably best reserved for large invoices.
- Contacting the end client. If the non-paying client is a translation agency or other intermediate party and you know or can find out who the end client for your translation was, raising the possibility of contacting the end client for payment can be an effective tool. This

tactic must be used sparingly and with caution, as most contracts between freelancers and agencies specify that the freelancer must not contact the end client. Many translators feel that this clause is superseded by the agency's obligation to pay the translator, but it is important not to contact the end client until you are absolutely sure that the intermediate client will not pay.

- Taking the client to court. If the client lives in your area, a small claims court case may be a good option; check with your local court system to find out the procedure.
- Chalking it up to experience. There are very few freelance translators who go their entire careers without ever encountering a non-paying client. If you research your clients before working with them, agree in writing on the project deadline, rate and payment terms, you may still have to pursue a client for payment every so often. Just as even the best stores have to deal with shoplifters and fine restaurants have the occasional customer leave without paying, you need to factor an occasional non-payment situation into your overall business planning.

10.9 Payment terms and methods

Before beginning a translation job, it is important to establish when and how you are going to get paid, especially because payment terms and methods vary widely between clients and countries.

In the United States, the most common payment terms are Net 30, meaning that the client will pay the full amount of your invoice within 30 days of when you submit the invoice. Most United States-based clients pay by check in dollars, although some will also pay by electronic bank transfer (often referred to as ACH) or by PayPal (see below for more information on this).

Outside of the United States, payment terms may be longer; for example Net 60 or even Net 60 from the end of the month, meaning that the invoice is paid 60 days from the end of the month in which you submit it. Before working for a client whose payment terms are long, it is important to consider how long you can wait to receive your money; especially for a large

invoice, you need to plan carefully in order to be able to wait two to three months to be paid.

10.10 International payments

When you work with a client located outside your home country, you need to clarify not only the payment terms, but how the client will pay you. There is no one perfect method for international payments, and each method involves various fees to either the translator, the client or both. Following are some possible methods by which international clients may pay you.

10.10.1 Wire transfer

Probably the most common method for payments that United States-based translators receive from international clients is wire transfer. A wire transfer is initiated by the international client from an account in the client's currency and the money arrives into the translator's American bank account where it is automatically converted into dollars. On the positive side, wire transfers don't require any special setup beyond giving your client your bank account identification information; the United States does not widely use the IBAN bank account coding system, so normally you give the client your account number, the bank's routing number and the bank's SWIFT code, which you can obtain by calling your bank. Wire transfers are also very secure and fast.

The major disadvantages of wire transfers are banking fees and exchange rate losses. Banks normally charge for both outgoing and incoming wire transfers, and the charges may be as low as \$5.00 or \$10.00 to as much as \$50.00 per transfer depending on the bank. In addition, your bank's exchange rate may be significantly lower than the standard mid-market exchange rate for that day, which will cause you to lose money, and unless you use a large commercial bank, it may be difficult to find out what exchange rate will be applied.

10.10.2 Foreign currency checks

Some banks absolutely refuse to allow clients to deposit checks in a foreign currency, while others are quite flexible about it. If your bank allows you to deposit foreign currency checks, make sure that you ask about the associated fees and about the time it will take for the funds to be available for withdrawal. If the bank sends the check back to the originating country for collection, it may take a significant amount of time for the check to clear.

10.10.3 Overseas bank accounts

An overseas bank account can help you avoid bank transfer fees and exchange losses. For example, if you have a lot of clients in Germany, it could be attractive to have a German bank account that would allow you and your clients to avoid wire transfer fees and could enable you to keep your money in euros and spend it when you travel to Europe. However, this option also has a few negative points to consider. Many countries are reluctant to let non-residents open bank accounts, and some foreign banks may charge high fees either to maintain the account or to have a debit/credit card associated with it. Translators who have overseas bank accounts also need to consider the tax and accounting implications of having income in multiple currencies and multiple countries.

10.10.4 PayPal

PayPal [paypal.com](https://www.paypal.com) is an online payment service that can be a good option for certain types of payments. A personal or basic business account with PayPal is free, but PayPal charges a fee for some payment transactions. The sender can fund the transfer either from the sender's own PayPal balance, from the sender's checking account or using a credit card. For many transactions, PayPal does not charge a fee at all for a checking account transfer, but may charge high fees for credit card transactions, especially international ones. One positive aspect of PayPal is that the recipient of the payment can refuse a payment and all of the charges are reversed, so if you receive a payment but the fees are very high, you can simply refuse the payment and ask the client to use another method to pay you. Because PayPal's fees are normally assessed as a percentage of the amount transferred, it is often a good option for small payments or payments where you would like the client to pay immediately.

10.10.5 TransferWise

TransferWise transferwise.com is a relatively new, but promising player on the international payments scene. Founded by some of the initial employees of Skype, TransferWise's services are similar to international wire transfer services offered by banks, but (as of late 2015), their fees are often much lower. For example, for US dollar transfers, TransferWise currently charges a flat fee of US \$3 for transfers up to \$300, and a 1% fee on transfers up to \$5,000. In addition, TransferWise's payments are, at least in some cases, processed as ACH transactions rather than international wire transfers, in which case the recipient pays no fee. Definitely a service to keep an eye on!

10.11 Setting the stage for payment

Maximize your chances of getting paid on time by billing your client in a timely manner and using a well-organized invoicing system. On the next page is an example of what a translation invoice looks like; if your freelance business is incorporated, you will have an *Employer Identification Number* (EIN); if you are a sole proprietor, you would include your Social Security Number (SSN) here, which the client needs in order to send you a 1099 form if you earn more than \$600 from them in a year.

Sample Invoice

Invoice
Name of Translator d/b/a
Your Business Name here
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone number
Email address
EIN: XX-XXXXXX/SSN: XXX-XX-XXXX
Please make checks payable to: *Your Name or Your Business*
Name

Invoice Number: *Include an invoice number that has some logic to it; for example the year and then a reference number (200501, etc) or your initials and then a number (JGF01, etc).*

Billed to: *Name of Client*

Client Contact: *Name of the Person who assigned the project to you*

Date: *Date you are issuing the invoice*

Payment due: *Make sure you and the client agree on the payment terms*

Agency Project Number: *Many clients will give you their own job number to include here.*

Description of Project: *Include a short description of the project, such as “Translate market research surveys from English to Spanish”*

Word Count: *Include the number of words, and make sure you and the client agree on whether you are charging by the source or target word count*

Rate: *Include the per-word or per-hour rate here*

Total Amount: *Include the total amount the client owes you.*

The easiest way to send your invoices, unless the client has another system, is to send them with the translation when you submit it. This way, if the client received your translation, you know that they received your invoice too. Some clients may want you to invoice them at the end of the month, or to submit your invoice to a special e-mail address just for invoices. If this is the case, just make sure that the client confirms that they received your invoice. Some agencies outside the U.S. may have other invoice requirements, for example that your invoice has to be signed by hand and sent by postal mail. Normally, the client is not expected to pay your banking fees (such as a fee that your bank charges when you receive a wire transfer), so don't add these to the invoice unless you have cleared it in advance with the client. Likewise, the client should not charge you for their bank fees (such as the fee that they have to pay to wire money) unless they have cleared it with you in advance.

10.12 When things don't go as planned

If you haven't received the client's payment within the specified time frame, wait an appropriate amount of time and then politely remind the client that the payment is due. An “appropriate” amount of time is up to you; if the payment terms are Net 30, most translators would wait one to two weeks before contacting the client. Nine times out of ten, the problem will be resolved immediately; the client will respond right away and tell you that the check is

on its way. That one time out of ten, things will not go so smoothly, and you'll have to do some conflict resolution.

There are two types of non-paying clients; clients who can't pay and clients who won't pay. For a client who won't (or doesn't want to) pay, the typical non-payment situation arises at some point after you submit a translation. The client lets you know that your work was not of the quality they expected, and because of this the client incurred unexpected costs. For example the client may tell you that they had to have the project re-translated entirely, or that your work required more editing than they had budgeted for, etc. Ideally the client should give you the chance to correct your errors and be paid the full amount you agreed on, but the project's deadline may not allow for this. The client may ask you to discount your rate of payment in order to make up for the extra cost of editing or re-translating your work.

If or when this happens, it is truly horrible and painful to have your translation skills criticized. However, it's important to remember that the client is already anxious and angry; denying that any problem could have existed will probably only make the situation worse. Before you try to defend yourself, make sure that you followed the client's instructions to the letter. If the client provided a list of terms, make sure that you used them. If the client asked you to format the translation as closely as possible to the original document, make sure that you did this. If the client asked for the document in a certain font, make sure that you used it. If you are completely convinced that you completed the translation to the client's specifications, ask to see a copy of the edited or re-translated translation so that you can see your real or perceived errors. Then, decide if you think that the client's claim is valid or not. In some cases, this may require going to a third party, such as another translator selected by you or the client, to make a decision as to whether the translation is high quality or not. Although it is sometimes painful to do this, it's important to acknowledge that there is some possibility that the client may be right and that you did a poor quality job; insisting otherwise will probably not lead to a satisfactory outcome for you.

How much you press the quality issue with the client depends partially on how big the project is. If your fee for the project is only \$50.00, it probably isn't worth arguing with the client over whether you did a satisfactory job; with the time it would take to go over the revised translation, submit a list of points that you disagree with, etc., you're probably better off simply letting go of the \$50.00. If the project is \$5,000 and the client is refusing to pay, it's

a different story. As of this writing, there is no industry standard dispute arbitration process for translation; for example the American Translators Association does not intervene in disputes between translators and their clients, so it's up to you as an individual to work things out.

The second type of non-paying client, the client who can't pay, presents more of a problem. This type of client may start out with excuses that seem reasonable: accountant is on vacation, payment will be made by X date, large client is late on paying your client, invoice was lost/never received/sent to the wrong person/accidentally deleted, etc., but soon these explanations will prove to be untrue. The client may come out and admit that they are having cash flow problems, or may string you along indefinitely, or go out of business and/or file for bankruptcy. The first step with this type of non-paying client is to send a series of three to four increasingly serious reminder letters, known formally as *dunning letters*. You can start out by politely reminding the client of the terms you agreed on and asking them to pay, then escalate the situation to include copies of the letter to higher-ups at the agency or company, then finally threatening to involve a third party. This third-party involvement may be in the form of taking the client to small claims court, hiring a third-party collection agency, or contacting the end client for the translation and letting them know that you were never paid for your work, and that because of this, they may be violating United States copyright law by using your translation. If you send this type of letter, it is very important to consult a sample dunning letter in order to make sure that you are not breaking the law by saying something untrue or misleading. Following are some examples of first, second and final notice dunning letters.

Sample First Notice

Dear Name of Person who assigned you the project:

According to my records, I have not received a check for Invoice # _____ for _____ which was due for payment on _____. Please let me know the status of this payment at your earliest convenience, and thank you again for your business.

Sample Second Notice

Dear Name of Person who assigned you the project (CC to this person's Accounts Payable Department or Supervisor):

I recently contacted you regarding an overdue payment for Invoice # _____ for _____ which was due for payment on _____. As of today I have not received this payment, and I do need to hear from you regarding its status, as the payment is now considerably past due. Please reply to me as soon as possible and let me know the date on which you will be mailing this payment, if it has not already been sent.

Sample Final Notice

Dear Name of Person who assigned you the project (CC to this person's Accounts Payable Department or Supervisor):

Despite my two previous notices to you on _____ and _____, I have not yet received your overdue payment for Invoice # _____ in the amount of _____. Please understand that you have had sufficient time and notice regarding the status of this payment. Failure on your part to pay this seriously overdue invoice by _____ may result in my posting information about this transaction to translation industry payment practices lists, referring this account to a third party collection agency, and/or contacting the end client of the translation in question to inform them of the non-payment situation. I trust this will not be necessary, and look forward to receiving your payment as soon as possible.

If you need to involve a third-party collection agency and you are an ATA member, you can investigate the services of ATA's affiliate program with Dunn & Bradstreet Receivables Management. They handle both U.S. and international unpaid accounts, and normally take 25–50% of what they collect. Other third-party collection agencies exist, but make sure that the agency is legitimate before you hire them; for example call the Better Business Bureau where the agency is headquartered and find out if there have been any complaints against the agency.

If you get to the point of sending dunning letters to a client, there is unfortunately some possibility that you will never get paid in full. Many translators feel that if more than four months have elapsed since the original payment deadline, the client is probably not going to pay without some serious outside incentive to do so. Dunning letters can motivate a client who is either trying to delay payment, or trying to see who complains most loudly about not getting paid. However, if the client absolutely doesn't have the

money to pay you or goes bankrupt, there may not be much you can do if your dunning letters don't get a response; further proof that you're much better off investigating the client up front than fighting for months to get your payment after the fact.

10.12.1 Arbitration and dispute resolution

Another avenue to pursue with a non-paying client is arbitration, a non-court proceeding involving an independent and neutral arbitrator. Arbitrators are often attorneys, and you may choose to have your own attorney represent you during arbitration. One important element of arbitration is that unlike filing in small claims court, you normally cannot file for arbitration without the cooperation of your non-paying client, since they are usually required to fill out the arbitration submission agreement along with you. For more information, see the website of the American Arbitration Association adr.org.

10.13 Cash flow issues

Happily most translators go for long periods of time without ever dealing with a non-paying client. The larger and more common problem is clients who don't pay on time. Some clients only issue checks on certain days of the week or month, so if you contact them on June 10 to let you know that the payment due June 1 didn't arrive, they may not be able to issue a check until June 15. With the time needed to mail the check, you might receive this payment three weeks late.

It's up to you as a freelancer to decide how to deal with cash flow issues. When you have a full-time job, it's a pretty safe bet that your paycheck that's due on the 25th will be in your account in time to pay your mortgage on the 1st, but a freelancer would be unwise to take this kind of gamble. This is an important issue to consider before you start working as a freelancer. If you are planning on translation being your primary source of income, make sure that you have enough of a cash cushion that you're not left scrambling when a check doesn't arrive as planned.

11 Research tools and methods

Along with target-language writing skills, research is one of a translator's core competencies. No good translator works without using dictionaries, websites, listserves and other reference materials to ensure that the finished translation is as accurate as possible. Some translators prefer paper dictionaries and own a wide variety of specialized terminology resources; others have created a mobile office that makes use of online and CD-based dictionaries and still others prefer to research terms in context in previously published documents. The method you choose is up to you; the important thing about terminology research is to do it!

11.1 Sources for printed dictionaries

For several decades, InTrans books was the source for all books translation-related. InTrans went out of business in 2014 when the owner retired, so Schoenhof's schoenhofs.com in Cambridge, MA is now the main source in the US for printed foreign-language dictionaries.

11.2 Web-based research tools

Web-based terminology resources are an increasingly important part of a translator's arsenal of research tools. Web-based dictionaries and glossaries have the advantage of being easily updatable and easily searchable, but it is important to cast a critical eye on a web-based resource's reliability. There are a lot of unreliable web-based resources, but some web-based resources have become the standard resources to consult because they are maintained by very reliable sources such as a government language office. One example of this type of website is the French<>English Grand Dictionnaire

Terminologique granddictionnaire.com, maintained by the Quebec government office responsible for matters related to the French language.

Online terminology resources that include user-generated content, such as the terminology sections of popular translation web portals, require you to use your judgment when looking at the terminology suggestions. Some entries may be excellent because they are contributed by experienced translators, while others may be contributed by people with limited knowledge of what they're writing about. Whenever possible, try to verify these types of terms by finding another resource that agrees or disagrees with what you've already found.

11.3 Installed electronic dictionaries

Every translator should have at least one of these: if you're working without Internet access, or if you just want a reliable resource at your fingertips, purchase the downloadable electronic version of a good general-purpose dictionary for your language pairs.

11.4 What to research

One of the hardest things about working as a translator is knowing what you don't know; part of this is knowing when to research a term or concept. Following are some items that require research, and some suggestions on how to go about this.

- Any word that you don't recognize. This is an obvious one; when you come upon a word you don't know, don't guess at it. Many terms may appear in your basic dictionary and you'll be done with your research very quickly.
- Acronyms and abbreviations. Some acronyms and abbreviations are obvious in certain contexts, such as "NASA" in an aeronautics industry contract or "UN" in a diplomatic document. Others will be less obvious, and can be complicated by the fact that some international organizations use one name in all languages and some use a translated

version of their names. Company-specific acronyms and abbreviations are another challenge, and will often require contacting the translation's end client for expansions of these terms.

- Titles. Many official titles can be translated more than one way, such as the terms “President,” “Chairman” and “Chief Executive Officer” for the head of a company. It is important to find out if the company has used standard titles for its employees in the past, and if so what they are. Some companies have bilingual websites that are very helpful in this regard, and sometimes you will have to create your terms from scratch.
- Names of organizations. As mentioned above, some international organizations go by one name in every language, while others have a standard translation of their name that is used in other languages. It is important to find out if the organization's name is normally translated or not, and if so, what the standard translation is.

12 Taxes, insurance and retirement plans

When you're putting together your first translation resume and wondering who your first clients will be, it's hard to imagine the day when you'll be turning down work, or kept consistently busy by a slate of regular clients. In today's translation climate many translators have never been busier, so it's important to look a year or two down the road and see where you'd like to be and how to set your business up to get there.

One of the most important steps you can take at the start of your business is to log all of the business contacts you make in an organized format. Over the course of your first year in business, if you market yourself aggressively, you will probably have contact with 300 or more potential clients. Rather than counting on your memory to remind you who these people are, or deleting their "thanks, but no thanks" e-mails, you can save and organize their contact information in order to make use of it later. There are various ways to do this; on paper, using an index card file; or electronically, using a spreadsheet or more sophisticated contact management software. The key element is to keep track of the name of the person you e-mailed or spoke with, all of his or her contact details, and a reminder about what you communicated about. This way, if a potential client tells you, "We only work with translators who have more than three years' experience," you can contact them again when you meet their requirement. If a potential client tells you that they're not taking applications in your language pair right now, contact them again in six months to a year to let them know you're still interested. You can also use this list of contacts to build a mailing list for your own newsletter or other promotional tools.

Setting up a semi-automated invoicing system is another way to prepare your business for growth. Once you're working steadily, billing takes a great deal of time if you do it manually, since a busy translator could generate 100 or more individual invoices during a year. Here you have several options, such as using accounting software that includes an invoicing tool or setting up

an invoicing system using a spreadsheet program such as Excel. Whatever option you choose will take some time to set up initially, but will save time when you don't need to enter a client's contact and billing information manually on every invoice.

If you're looking for even more office automation, you can use a company such as MyBizOffice mybizoffice.com or others that will bill your clients for you, deduct taxes from what you make, and funnel money into a 401K plan. Most of these services, also called *umbrella companies* or *employers of record*, charge about 5% of your gross income. If you are incorporated, you can also hire an accountant to process your payroll for you and calculate the amount you owe in taxes.

Even if you're not interested in running a translation agency, another step toward scaling up is to find other translators in your language combinations and specializations with whom you can share work. Especially if you would like to work for direct clients, it can be a big asset to offer a team of two or three translators if the client needs fast turnaround on a large project. Your local ATA chapter and the annual ATA conference are an excellent resource for meeting people like this.

12.1 Incorporating and planning for taxes

Some translators operate their businesses as sole proprietors for many years, while others incorporate immediately. It's a good idea to talk to an accountant about whether incorporating would be a good idea for you. While the best option here is to contact a qualified accountant or small business consultant, following is an overview of some of the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating:

Separation of finances. Incorporating forces you to keep your business and personal finances separate, since your clients pay the corporation and then the corporation pays you wages, even if you're the only employee. In this way you are always sure how much the business is earning and how much you're spending on the business. However, as a sole proprietor you can achieve the same effect by having a business bank account and a personal one and carefully tracking how money flows between the two.

Limitation of liability. Since a corporation is its own legal entity, incorporating gives you some protection against personal liability. In most cases, your personal assets cannot be seized to pay the corporation's debts or legal judgments. If you are planning to work for direct clients or subcontract work to other translators, this alone can be a good motivation for incorporating.

Tax relief. Some corporate structures, such as *S-corporations*, can save you money on taxes, since an S-corporation's profit is not subject to self-employment tax. Incorporating may also allow you to take more tax deductions than you do as a sole proprietor.

Capital. If you need to raise capital, for instance by taking out a business loan, it is often easier to do so if you are incorporated. However, so few translators take out business loans that this is not a major concern.

Expense. Depending on where you live, setting up a corporation may be extremely inexpensive or very expensive. For example, in some states it costs as little as 99 cents to file your Articles of Incorporation on-line, while in other states the fee may be much higher. Likewise, some states will require corporations to pay a filing fee for their required annual report, while others will not. Incorporating can also result in higher accounting expenses, since some corporation types must file payroll taxes every quarter.

Paperwork. Incorporating definitely requires extra paperwork. At the very least, you have to file *Articles of Incorporation* in your state, probably file a *Trade Name Registration* in your state and receive a *Federal Employer Identification Number* that you provide to clients instead of your personal Social Security number. If you hate doing accounting and don't want to hire someone to do it for you, this is definitely a consideration!

If you would like to incorporate, there are various corporate structures to choose from, such as an *S-corporation*, *C-corporation*, or *Limited Liability Corporation* (LLC). Do some research on your own or talk to an accountant to determine which one is right for you.

Whether you incorporate or not, tax planning is a crucial element of being self-employed, and one that catches many people by surprise. When you have a full-time job, you accept the fact that some of your salary goes to taxes, but you usually don't have to write out a check to the federal or state government for that amount. As a freelancer, you will be responsible for tracking and paying your taxes, normally done four times a year. If you are incorporated, you will probably have to pay payroll taxes, and if you are a sole proprietor you will probably have to file estimated taxes every quarter to avoid owing a large amount plus penalties at the end of the year.

The most important element of paying your own taxes is to meticulously keep track of your income and expenses. Whether you do this on your computer or on paper, it is imperative to write down the date and amount of every payment you receive and every purchase you make for your business, and to save all receipts. The amount of tax you will pay depends of course on how much you earn and your overall tax situation, but it is important to factor the additional tax you pay as a self-employed person into your projections. The self-employment tax, currently 15.3% of your net earnings from self-employment, consists of 12.4% of your income for Social Security, up to a maximum of \$10,788.00, and 2.9% of your income for Medicare. The reason these taxes can come as a shock is that when you have a full-time job, your employer pays half of these taxes and you pay half; but when you're self-employed, you pay the entire amount. Also keep in mind that you pay the self-employment tax *in addition* to regular income tax, not instead of it.

On the up side, as a self-employed person you have many more opportunities than your salaried friends to reduce your tax burden through deductible business expenses. Here again, it's important to talk to an accountant or tax preparer to find out what is deductible in your particular situation. However, most self-employed translators can deduct home office expenses, computer hardware and software, Internet and phone costs, travel expenses, professional association memberships, continuing education, office supplies, business-related travel, professional journal subscriptions, books, dictionaries, and even meals out that are work-related. Following is an overview of the basic corporate entity types to consider; but note that these are regulated in the U.S. by individual states rather than at the federal level, so be sure to research the laws of the state you live in.

C-corporation. Many large businesses are C-corps, but small businesses can choose this structure as well. One of the major advantages of a C-corp is that it allows you to deduct 100% of your health insurance premiums as a business expense. C-corp profits below \$50,000 are also taxed at a lower rate than a comparable amount of taxable income.

S-corporation. This is possibly the most popular structure for a one-person corporation. The main advantage of an S-corp is that as long as you pay yourself a “reasonable wage” (as defined by the IRS), you can pass some of the corporation’s income on to your individual tax return, which can avoid you having to pay self-employment tax on it. For example, if you have net income of \$60,000 and pay yourself wages of \$30,000 (which are subject to self-employment tax), you can then pass the additional \$30,000 on to your individual tax return as profit, where it is subject only to regular income tax, not self-employment tax. One disadvantage of an S-corp is that all shareholders must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents; nonresident aliens cannot be S-corp shareholders.

Limited Liability Corporation. The “Single Member LLC” is probably the second most popular corporate structure for freelance translators. Like an S-corp, an LLC is a flow-through entity, allowing you to pass profits and losses on to your personal tax return. In addition, LLC owners may be nonresident aliens. In some states, LLCs have a limited duration, for example 30 years or less, so if you are incorporating early in your career, be sure to investigate this in your state.

Sole Proprietor. A self-employed person whose business is not incorporated is referred to as a sole proprietor. Being a sole proprietor has its advantages, including very little administrative overhead. In many states you do not even need a business license to operate as a sole proprietor, and all of your income is simply reported on Schedule C of your individual tax return. However, as a sole proprietor, you have no liability protection in the event of a lawsuit or financial claim—meaning that, at least in theory, your personal assets can be seized—and all of your income is subject to self-employment tax.

13 Beyond the basics of freelancing

13.1 Raising your rates

At some point in your translation career, you'll realize that your translation experience or specializations can command higher rates than what you're currently charging. Also, you might be interested in either earning more money or in working less, so you might need to charge more at some point.

Unfortunately, the answer to the question, "How do I get my existing clients to pay me more money?" is almost always, "You can't." Most often, the best way to raise your rates is to look for new, higher paying clients. For example, if you've worked for a translation agency for two years, making 12 cents a word, your client might be willing to go along with a rate increase to 14 cents a word, but it's highly unlikely they'll agree to pay 25 cents a word. In some easily outsourced language pairs such as English into Spanish, there may even be pressure on translators to decrease their rates over time. On the other hand, if you land a direct client who is used to paying 30 cents a word for translation through an agency, your offer of 25 cents a word may strike them as the best deal they've gotten all year. You simply have to eliminate your lowest paying clients and look for higher paying ones to replace them.

One of the best strategies for raising your rates is to look for clients who themselves earn a healthy income, or orient yourself toward higher-earning specializations. Not surprisingly, business sectors that are big earners in the U.S., such as law, financial services and pharmaceuticals, are correspondingly well-paying for translators who work in those areas. So, part of the key to raising your rates is to find clients who can pay what you'd like to earn, and show these clients that your services will help their business run faster, more effectively, or more profitably.

13.2 Six figures: increasingly doable?

Lately I've noticed a very positive trend in our industry—that of the freelance translator earning over US \$100,000 per year. Anecdotally, I've talked to more and more translators in the past few years who are at the six-figure mark or the part-time equivalent, and a few who are well over that mark. Here, I'm talking about a) people who make the bulk of their income directly from translation, not from markups on subcontracting, and b) gross income, not net. From my unscientific research, here are a few observations on what it takes to earn more than \$100K per year as a freelancer.

First, I think that six-figure translators are actually a very diverse bunch. Some charge extremely high rates, some make very efficient use of technology like CAT tools and speech recognition, some work very long hours. So, I think it's important to realize that there are a number of paths to \$100K—it's not all people working in a certain language or living in a certain place.

Next, I think that in order to reach six figures, there are a couple of non-negotiables: being very, very good at what you do, having a targeted specialization or working in a niche language, charging higher than average rates, and being a businessperson/translator rather than a translator/businessperson. For example, the average full-time freelancer might translate 400,000–600,000 words per year. If you charge 10 cents a word, you have to translate almost double that amount to reach six figures. But at 20 cents a word, 100K starts to look much more doable. So, although not everyone making six figures is charging very high rates (which I would define as 35–40 cents a word and up—and yes, there are people out there who are commanding those rates!), I would say that if you are not averaging at least 15 cents a word, you would have to work very long hours or very, very efficiently to reach six figures. But as an example, if you charge 15 cents per word and translate 500 words per hour, that's \$75 an hour; if you have clients who send you a steady flow of work at that rate, you can realistically bill 30 hours a week, so that's \$2,250 a week. Even if you take a healthy six weeks of vacation, you're still over \$100K. So this isn't to say that it's an easy bar to reach, but it's doable if you're at the higher end of the agency market, or in the direct client market.

Six-figure translators are rarely, if ever, generalists. I think that the exception to this rule is people who work in languages where the pool of translators is small enough that people don't tend to specialize. Partially, I think that this results from the fact that specialization is the key to attracting

direct clients, and very few agencies in the U.S. are willingly going to pay 20+ cents per word for common languages; if you break the \$100K mark, you are probably working with at least some direct clients.

Surprisingly, the six-figure translators I've met are not the over-caFFEinated stress machines that one might imagine. Rather, they seem to love their work and be happy that they have coincidentally found a way to make what one of them described as “a ton of money” doing it. Six-figure translators also talk about money a lot. While I'm sure that no one is going to attend a translation event and broadcast the fact that they charge five cents a word, I do think that willingness to talk about rates is a good tool for setting/raising your rates; when you meet someone who is as busy as they want to be at double what you're charging, it is a good incentive to push your own rates up.

13.3 Reviewing your own performance

One of the challenges of working as a freelancer is that of working in a fairly isolated environment and getting very little feedback on your work. This can make it difficult to know what you are doing well and where you need to improve; even if you ask your clients for feedback, they may not have time or be willing to give you the kinds of details you're looking for. Here are a few suggestions for giving yourself a performance review:

- Your clients may or may not be willing to give you helpful feedback, but it's certainly worth asking. Especially when you work for a new client, ask if there is anything you can do to better meet their needs and whether they have any comments on your work. If you have the time and inclination, you could even set up a client survey using a service such as Survey Monkey surveymonkey.com so that your clients can respond anonymously.
- Establish some objective performance metrics for yourself. For example, track the percentage of your work that comes from repeat clients, the percentage of your work that comes from agencies versus direct clients, and the percentage of your project quotes that materialize into projects.

- Set specific performance goals for each quarter or year. For example, you might want to find at least one new direct client, pursue translator certification, or attend a certain number of days of professional development trainings.
- When colleagues edit your work, always ask to see the edited translations. Use these corrections to improve your future translations.
- When you identify areas in which you need to improve, make a specific plan to reach your new goal. Rather than setting an amorphous target like “Earn more money this year,” break down your goal into at least three sub-goals or specific steps, such as “Raise rates 10% with existing clients; increase direct client work by at least 25%; market more consistently to avoid lulls.”

Giving yourself an annual or twice-yearly performance review is an excellent way to keep yourself focused on your professional goals. Better yet, ask a colleague to do a performance review trade with you—write up your evaluation criteria and go over them together!

13.4 Giving yourself a promotion

Another major difference between freelancing and working as an employee is that you are entirely in control of what work you take on. Without a boss to assign projects to you, you can accept or decline any work that you want. So, remember to occasionally review the kinds of work you are doing and your level of satisfaction with that work.

After a few years of freelancing, you may want to “promote yourself” into doing different kinds of work. You might want to start doing more direct client work, or more editing instead of translation, or more work in a different specialization. Promoting yourself can help you stay excited about your job and can motivate you to learn new skills. Don’t allow yourself to stagnate as a freelancer—just as you would be likely to change jobs or be promoted within a company every few years, give yourself a chance to grow professionally by evaluating the scope of your freelance work on a regular basis.

14 Basic translation techniques

Translation technique varies quite a bit depending on your language pairs and specializations. In addition, it's hard to cover translation technique in just one chapter of a book. There are many excellent books and courses that can help you become a better translator; let's take a look at some of the fundamentals of producing good translations.

14.1 Reproducing formatting

Unless the client specifies otherwise, you should reproduce the formatting of the original document as closely as possible. This is especially true of official documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates. Try to use the same font, type style (i.e. bold, italics, etc.), spacing and page layout as the original document. Clients have different style conventions when it comes to reproducing official seals, stamps and graphics. Some clients prefer that you copy these graphic elements onto the translation using a screen shot or image manipulation program. Others (including some attorneys and judges) feel that copying graphic elements can make your translation look like a forged original document. In that case, you should generally replace the graphic element with a notation in square brackets, such as:

[Stamp: City of Montreal, Vital Records Registry] Whichever method you choose, always translate the text in any graphic elements.

14.2 Inserting translator's notes

Translator's notes can be very useful to someone reading a translation. For example, the source document might include cultural references that don't make sense to someone from another culture who would be reading the translation. A direct translation of an expression such as "it's a home run"

might mean nothing to someone who has never seen a baseball game. Or the source document may include concepts that have no direct equivalent in the target language. For example, the U.S. legal concepts of misdemeanor and felony do not exist in many other legal systems.

You can insert translator's notes in square brackets, for example: [Translator's note: The Élysée Palace is the official residence and office of the President of France]

Or, you can insert them as footnotes or endnotes. Here again, you'll find that client preferences vary. Some clients will want you to just translate the document "as is," without inserting any of your own comments. Others will see translator's notes as a great value added and will value your insider insights! It's best to ask your clients how they feel about translator's notes and follow each client's preference.

14.3 Noting errors in the source document

At some point in your freelance work, you will be given a source document that has an error in it. Sometimes there are inconsistencies within the document itself: a company's name is spelled one way in one sentence and a different way in another sentence. There may be factual inaccuracies in the document, such as "During the 2010 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City..." Or there may errors that seem like proofreading mistakes: "The plaintiff files a lawsuit against the plaintiff."

The standard way of indicating source document errors in translations into English is the [sic] notation. *Sic* (pronounced like the English word "sick") is a Latin word meaning "as such" or "thus," and is used in English documents to point out obvious errors. For example, your translation would read "The plaintiff files a lawsuit against the plaintiff [sic]." When translating into English, you can also use [sic] to point out errors in any text that is already in English in the source document. For example, if the source document is in German but includes a quote in English that reads, "We will use these informations to make our decision," you could retype the quotation with a [sic] notation after the word "informations."

14.4 Reproducing register

“Register” means the level of formality or informality of the source document. When you’re translating, you should always use the same register as the source document uses, unless your client tells you otherwise. For example, “That is acceptable” and “It’s OK” are two ways of communicating approval using different registers. If you’re given a source document written in street slang, don’t translate it as if it were written by a lawyer. Register is especially important when you’re translating documents that are intended for a certain audience. A medical questionnaire for children needs to have a very different register than an article in a medical journal, so make sure to write for your client’s target reader.

14.5 Preparing a glossary and managing terminology

Bilingual or multilingual glossaries can be really helpful in your translation work, especially if you translate highly technical documents or documents that use a lot of client-specific terminology. Sometimes clients prepare glossaries because they use terms that no one outside their organization would understand, like “CEX: Company-wide Evaluation Exercise.” Clients may also prepare glossaries because they want certain expressions translated in a certain way all the time.

Much of the time, translation clients haven’t really thought about glossaries or terminology before they contact a translator. You can help yourself and the client by keeping your own glossaries for all of the documents you work on; some translators like to keep their glossaries by project or by client and some keep one huge glossary for everything that they work on.

You can keep your glossaries in a simple table format using a word processing or spreadsheet program, or you can manage your terminology using your translation memory tool of choice or a specialized terminology management program. See the Translation Technology chapter of this book for more on terminology management tools.

14.6 Preparing a style guide

Especially if you work for direct clients, style guides can help make your translations more consistent and can help you catch errors in the source documents that you're sent to translate. A style guide is a set of rules for spelling, formatting and punctuation; some companies may have in-house style guides that they will want you to use. For example, a style guide might indicate that a person's title should be used the first time that person's name is mentioned, but not in subsequent mentions, i.e. "President Obama" and then "Mr. Obama." A style guide might also include information about formatting, for example what fonts and type styles should be used in the heading of every press release. A style guide can also help you catch inaccuracies in the source documents, for example if you maintain a list of the names of your client's employees and titles.

When your clients really care about their translations, a style guide can also help you solicit the client's input on grammar and usage issues that don't have a cut-and-dried answer. For example, how does the client feel about the singular use of "their"—as in, "Everyone should bring their own lunch," as opposed to "Everyone should bring his or her own lunch." Are there certain words or phrases that the client loves or hates?

The most popular style manual in the United States is probably the *Chicago Manual of Style*; a book like this or a similar style manual for your target language is good to have on your desk. When you want to resolve a question like whether to use a comma or a semicolon, whether to put a punctuation mark inside or outside a quotation mark, etc. a style manual is indispensable.

Resources

U.S. Government agencies employing translators and interpreters

Central Intelligence Agency

The CIA cia.gov offers a number of opportunities such as Foreign Language Instructor, Language Specialist, Foreign Media Analyst and National Clandestine Service Language Officer. Requirements and salaries vary, but most positions are full-time and the largest number of opportunities is in the Washington, DC area. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and willing to complete a medical and psychological exam, polygraph interview and background investigation.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI fbi.gov offers salaried Language Analyst positions as well as full-time or part-time Contract Linguist positions. Positions are located at the FBI's Washington, DC headquarters or at regional Field Offices. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and willing to complete a polygraph interview and background check. Language Analyst applicants must be willing to travel on temporary assignments for 30 days at a time.

State Department Office of Language Services

The State Department state.gov employs staff translators and interpreters and maintains a roster of freelance translators and interpreters. Application is by competitive examination; interpreter candidates must be willing to travel internationally for at least three weeks at a time.

National Security Agency

The NSA nsa.gov is especially interested in hiring Language Analysts for Asian and Middle Eastern languages, but employs translators and interpreters in a variety of languages. The NSA also administers the Language Enhancement Program, which retrain French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish linguists to work in Asian and Middle Eastern languages.

Associations for translators and interpreters

American Translators Association

The ATA atanet.org is the largest association of translators and interpreters in the U.S. The ATA offers its own translator certification exam to members, publishes the monthly *ATA Chronicle*, and organizes a wide range of professional development activities including an annual conference. The ATA website also lists numerous local ATA chapters.

National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators

NAJIT najit.org is a professional association for court interpreters and legal translators. NAJIT publishes a quarterly journal, *Proteus*, and organizes an annual conference. Its website includes helpful information about the court interpreting profession.

InterpretAmerica

InterpretAmerica interpretamerica.com is not a professional association, but a forum for the interpreting profession. They organize a yearly Summit, offer continuing education, and support other initiatives of interest to interpreters.

Interpreters Guild of America (formerly the Translators and Interpreters Guild)

TTIG interpretersguild.org is the only nationwide labor union for translators and interpreters. It offers a translator and interpreter referral service as well as other membership benefits in cooperation with the Newspaper Guild-Communications Workers of America.

American Literary Translators Association

The American Literary Translators Association literarytranslators.org is a professional association for translators of literature in all languages. It publishes a newsletter and *Translation Review*; its website also includes a list of university-level literary translation programs.

International Association of Conference Interpreters

Membership in the AIIC aiic.net is open only to experienced conference interpreters who are sponsored by current AIIC members. However, the website includes helpful information for those who would like to pursue conference interpreting opportunities.

Selected training programs and home study courses for translators and interpreters

In general, translator and interpreter training programs are not language courses, and applicants are expected to have a high degree of fluency in English and at least one other language before applying. Most colleges and universities and even some community colleges and adult continuing education programs offer foreign language skill development courses. For a list of translation degree and certificate programs that are approved by the American Translators Association to fulfill its education and experience requirement for translator certification candidates, visit the *Certification* section of atanet.org. For more information on translator and interpreter training programs, see the publication *Park's Guide to Translating and Interpreting Programs in North America*, published by the American Translators Association.

Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (formerly Monterey Institute for International Studies)

Located in Monterey, California, Monterey Institute miis.edu is one of the world's top translation and interpreting schools. It is also one of the few

programs in the US that offers a full Master's degree in Conference Interpreting. As of 2015, MIIS offers translation and interpreting degrees in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

Kent State University Institute for Applied Linguistics

The Institute for Applied Linguistics appling.kent.edu in Kent, Ohio offers undergraduate and graduate translation degrees; a B.S. in Translation and an M.A. in Translation. Current language combinations offered by the program include English paired with French, German, Japanese, Russian, Arabic or Spanish.

University of Maryland Office of Extended Studies, Graduate Studies in Interpreting and Translation

In College Park, Maryland, the GSIT program oes.umd.edu/professional-programs/interpreting-translation offers the Master of Professional Studies degrees and Graduate Certificates. They currently offer two tracks for each degree: Consecutive Interpreting or Public Service Interpreting, and Translation or Translation and Localization Project Management.

University of Hawaii at Manoa Center for Interpretation-Translation Studies

The CITS cits.hawaii.edu does not offer a degree program, but conducts a summer certificate program for translators and interpreters who work in English paired with Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, or Korean. During the school year, the CITS offers a General Skills Training program for translators and interpreters.

Logos free online translation theory and practice courses

Logos logos.it, which is also a language services provider, offers two free self-paced translation courses on its website. One course covers general translation theory and practice, and one course covers literary translation. Although the courses do not provide any practice exercises or feedback, they are excellent starting points for beginning translators.

Bellevue Community College

Located in Bellevue, Washington, BCC bcc.ctc.edu offers the only translation and interpretation certificate programs in the Pacific Northwest. Language combinations depend on student demand, and students can take courses toward either a certificate program, or for continuing education.

Brigham Young University

Located in Provo, Utah, BYU byu.edu offers a B.A. degree in Spanish Translation.

Rutgers University Department of Spanish and Portuguese

In New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University span-port.rutgers.edu offers a Certificate of Proficiency in Spanish-English and English-Spanish translation, which may be taken on its own or in combination with an M.A degree in Spanish.

Southern California School of Interpretation

With campuses throughout California and Nevada, Southern California School of Interpretation interpreting.com specializes in short (4–11 week) courses to prepare students to take State and Federal interpreter certification exams.

ACEBO interpreter training products

ACEBO acebo.com offers the popular home study course *The Interpreter's Edge*, which helps court interpreters prepare for certification exams. The tape set is currently available in a generic (non-language-specific) version, or for English paired with Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese, Polish, Russian, Japanese, Portuguese or Arabic.

Florida International University

Located in Miami, Florida, Florida International University w3.fiu.edu/translation offers a certificate in Spanish/English translation

studies and a certificate in Spanish/English legal translation and court interpreting.

Binghamton University Translation Research and Instruction Program

Located in Binghamton, New York, this campus of the State University of New York trip.binghamton.edu offers a certificate in translation, an M.A. in comparative literature with a concentration in literary translation, and a Ph.D. in translation studies.

American University

American University american.edu, located in Washington, DC, offers certificate programs in French, Russian and Spanish translation.

New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies

With both on-site (New York, New York) and online courses, NYU scps.nyu.edu offers courses in Arabic, French, German, Spanish or Portuguese translation, paired with English. Note that as of this writing (late 2015), NYU appears not to be admitting additional certificate students, and plans to offer its translation courses on a non-credit basis.

The National Center for Interpretation at the University of Arizona

Located in Tucson, Arizona, NCI nci.arizona.edu offers training for Spanish court and medical interpreters, and through its Agnese Haury Institute for Court Interpretation, offers a three-week intensive Spanish/English court interpreter training program every summer.

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

UWM uwm.edu offers both an M.A. and a graduate certificate in French, and Spanish translation.

The University of Geneva School of Translation and Interpreting

Known worldwide for training high-level translators and conference interpreters, the ETI unige.ch/eti (School of Translation and Interpreting), located in Geneva, Switzerland, offers programs in German, English, Arabic, Spanish, French, Italian and Russian translation at the undergraduate, graduate and certificate levels.

Middlebury College Language School

In business for nearly 100 years, the Middlebury College Language School middlebury.edu/academics/lc, located in Middlebury, Vermont, is not specifically geared toward translation, but offers intensive summer classes in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Students must commit to speaking only their target language for the duration of the program, and the Language School also offers graduate programs overseas.

Glossary

American Translators Association	<i>Known by its initials, ATA, the large organization for translators and interpreters in the United States.</i>
alignment	<i>The process of pairing source and target documents to create a database of bilingual sentence pairs.</i>
back-translation	<i>A translation of a translation, translating a target text back into the source language.</i>
bilingual	<i>In the translation industry, a term often used to describe a person who is a native speaker of two languages.</i>
CAT tool	<i>Computer-assisted translation tool; a software system that helps a human translator work faster and more consistently by recycling previously translated material. Also referred to as translation memory tool or translation environment tool.</i>
Certified Translator	<i>Normally, a translator who has passed the American Translators Association certification exam, although this designation is sometimes used for various other credentials, such as having completed a translation certification program.</i>
cleaned file	<i>A file containing only the target language text with the source text and translation memory program codes removed.</i>

dominant language	<i>The language in which a person is most comfortable speaking or writing. This may be a person's native language, or, in the case of a person educated primarily in a country where his/her native language is not spoken, may be different from the native language.</i>
EOM	<i>End of month, often used in combination with payment terms such as 30 days EOM, meaning that the translator will be paid within 30 days from the end of the month in which an invoice is issued.</i>
FIGS	<i>French, Italian, German and Spanish; the most commonly translated languages in the United States.</i>
heritage speaker	<i>In the U.S., a person who learned a non-English language by being exposed to it at home.</i>
interpreter	<i>A person who has a high degree of knowledge of two or more languages and changes spoken words from one language to another.</i>
invoice	<i>A statement from a translator to the translation client or translation agency, listing the services the translator performed and the amount that is owed for the services.</i>
language pair	<i>The two languages in which a translator works.</i>
literary translator	<i>A translator who works with novels, stories, poems or plays.</i>
localization	<i>The process of adapting a product, piece of software, or text document for use in another target market. This may involve translation.</i>

converting units of measurement, adapting graphics, and other processes.

machine
translation

Translation done by a computer.

Net 30

The most common payment terms in the U.S. meaning that the translator will be paid within 30 days of an invoice being issued.

non-compete
agreement

An agreement stating that a translator will not seek business from a translation agency's clients for a certain period of time.

non-disclosure
agreement

Often referred to as an NDA, an agreement stating that a translator will keep certain pieces of information confidential.

native language

A person's first language, which may also be a person's dominant language, or, in the case of a person educated in a country where their native language is not spoken, may be different from a dominant language.

passive bilingual

A person who has excellent comprehension of a language, but speaks or writes the language poorly. Many heritage speakers are passive bilingual.

per-word rate

The amount of money that a translator is paid for each word translated.

project manager

A person who coordinates the administrative aspects of a translation or localization project.

register

The level of formality or informality in a piece of writing or speech. A translated document should be written in the same register as the source document.

source language	<i>The language from which a translation is done.</i>
source text	<i>The text from which a translation is done.</i>
specialization	<i>A subject area in which a translator has inde knowledge; for example a former account might specialize in financial translation.</i>
target language	<i>The language into which a translation is done.</i>
technical translator	<i>A translator who works with scientific, compu or engineering materials. Sometimes used mean a non-literary translator, regardless of translator's specializations.</i>
terms of service	<i>The conditions under which a translator translation agency will provide services.</i>
translation agency	<i>A company serving as an intermediary between translation client and a translator, often addi services such as project manageme proofreading, and desktop publishing.</i>
translation memory tool	<i>Often used interchangeably w computerassisted translation tool, a TM t creates a database of previously translated t that can be used again.</i>
translation unit	<i>The “chunks” into which a translation memc program or CAT tool breaks a source docume. normally a translation unit is one sentence.</i>
translator	<i>A person who has a high degree of knowledge two or more languages, and changes writi documents from one language to another.</i>
TMX	<i>Translation Memory eXchange, an open standa for the exchange of translation memories.</i>

uncleaned file

A file containing the source and target translation units, along with the tags inserted by the translation memory program.

word count

The total number of words in a document, which may be based on either the source or target text and may be calculated using a variety of methods.

Index

accounting, 87

agencies

 localization, 37

 translation, 41, 102, 234

AIIC, 15, 54, 225

alignment, 17, 231

ALTA, 53, 225

American Literary Translators Association, 53, 225

American Translators Association, 14, 52, 56, 77, 198, 224,

arbitration, 199

associations

 joining, 80

ATA, 52

ATA certification exam, 14

ATA certification exams, 54

Bachelor's degree, 13

back-translation, 231

billable hours, 174

blog, 115

brochures, 117

business news, 109

C-corporation, 209

calendar, 95

cash flow, 199

Central Intelligence Agency, 36, 223

certification, 14, 24, 52, 54, 56, 58, 59

certified translation, 47

certified translator, 231

- CHI, 15
- cleaned file, 231
- clients, 43, 76
 - finding, 76
 - local, 79
 - potential, 186
 - retaining, 81
- CMI, 15
- cold-contacting, 82, 101
- collection agency, 189
- collections, 197
- contact information, 70
- contacts
 - tracking, 104
- contracts, 171
- CoreCHI, 15
- court interpreting, 15
- cover letter, 75
- CT credential, 14
- cultural references, 218

- desk
 - treadmill, 93
- direct clients, 15, 18, 41, 43, 83, 102, 105, 106
- dispute resolution, 199
- document review, 39
- domain name, 159
- domain name e-mail, 70, 160
- dunning letters, 197, 199
 - sample, 197, 198

- e-mail, 97
- e-mail signature, 115
- editing, 17, 37

- Facebook, 157

Federal Bureau of Investigation, 36, 223
Federation Internationale des Traducteurs, 53
FIGS, 27
findability, 114

glossary development, 17
Google Voice, 91
government jobs for translators, 223
home office, 18, 33, 35, 89, 90, 97,

hours
 billable, 174

incorporating, 19, 206
insurance
 errors and omissions, 180
International Association of Conference Interpreters, 54, 225
interpreter, 232
interpreter certification, 15
interpreting, 23, 48
invoice, 194, 206, 232
 sample, 194
invoices, 87, 94

language pair, 232
liability
 limiting, 207
Limited Liability Corporation, 208, 210
LinkedIn, 107, 113, 115, 157
literary translator, 36, 232
localization, 36, 40, 232
 software, 40

machine translation, 24, 39, 232
marketing, 81, 86, 101, 105, 106
marketing materials, 116

Marketing Tips for Translators, 110

medical interpreting, 15

minimum charge, 50, 178

monitors

 computer, 93

NAJIT, 53, 224

name, 69

 choosing, 69

National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, 53, 224

National Security Agency, 36, 224

networking, 79, 83, 107

non-compete agreement, 181, 233

non-disclosure agreement, 233

non-payment, 188, 195, 196

official documents, 43

organization

 business, 93

parents

 working, 98

part-time, 84

part-time work, 62

Payment Practices, 25, 102, 185, 187, 189

payment terms, 42, 190

payroll taxes, 20

Plaxo, 157

postcards, 117

pricing, 17

productivity

 maximizing, 96

professional associations, 52

project manager, 233

proofreading, 17, 38

ProZ, 25, 157

ProZ Blue Board, 187

rate sheet, 177

rates, 18, 49, 171, 211

raising, 211

reference materials, 92

referrals, 82

resume, 63, 66, 67, 72, 103, 104, 116

Asian, 68

European, 68

United States, 68

rush charge, 50, 178

S-corporation, 208, 209

self-employment tax, 19, 208, 210

Skype, 91

software

translation memory (TM, CAT), 142

software localization, 40

Sole Proprietor, 210

sole proprietor, 19

source language, 27–29, 32, 69, 233

start-up phase, 61

State Department Office of Language Services, 223

summary of qualifications, 71

Survey Monkey, 214

tag line, 69

target language, 27, 40, 67, 234

taxes, 25, 206

technical translator, 234

terms of service, 171, 182, 234

testimonials, 82

to-do list, 95

trade publications, 110

training programs, 225

transcription, 17, 38
translation agencies, 15, 41, 102, 103
translation environment tool, 19
translation memory discount, 178
translation memory software, 142
translator's notes, 218
Translators and Interpreters Guild, 225

umbrella companies, 206
uncleaned file, 234

voiceover, 17, 38
volume discount, 50, 177

web designer, 158
website, 115, 117, 157
wire transfer, 69
WordPress, 119
work for hire, 180

Xing, 157

About the author

Corinne McKay is an American Translators Association-certified French to English translator specializing in international development, corporate communications and book translation. Based on her own experiences launching and running a successful freelance business, she wrote the first edition of *How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator* in 2006, with the second edition in 2011. It has since become a go-to reference for the industry, with over 10,000 copies in print. Corinne's professional website is translatewrite.com; she blogs at thoughtsontranslation.com and tweets at [@corinnemckay](https://twitter.com/corinnemckay).

Colophon

This book was typeset with LYX in the Palatino font. Cover design: Scott Harmon. Chief morale officer: Daniel J. Urist.