ATLAS translations

Translation Agency

Tips for Linguists

Contents

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1. How is your CV these days?

We regularly meet talented and interesting translators and people who want to get into (more) freelance translation and interpreting, and they ask for my advice. After running Atlas since 1991, I have plenty to offer!

My first request is to see a CV. If you want to succeed in this field, this is what people will look at first, and this is how they will judge you. Your CV needs to be:

- Perfect (no spelling errors) and beautifully laid out – easy to read and pick out key points
- Clear and to the point (only two pages max please)
- Professional – look like the translator/interpreter you are – promote yourself.

What I find over and over again, is that translators and interpreters do not present themselves on paper as well as they could. Your CV is such an important document – so you do need to invest time and effort to make sure it shines.

Clare's Top Tips….

The name of your CV document

Good : Clare_Suttie English to French translator 2017.doc
Bad : CS CV vers 4.doc
Even worse: CV.doc

Have a header, which will appear at the top of each page (remember, two pages maximum is best)

Example: Clare Suttie, English to French Translator, BA, MA, Dip Trans, MITI

With these simple steps you are telling the reader who you are and what you do very quickly – before they have even opened or read your CV!

General layout

This should be simple and clear, easy to follow and easy to read. Not a tiny font. Not text-heavy with long sentences and paragraphs. Bullet points will help, but don't go crazy and bullet point your life.
As a freelancer you should be aiming to update your CV on a regular basis, at least annually – so it's best to have it in a format that is easy to update. If you set up a complicated layout, it can become cumbersome to maintain. Use colour sparingly and seek honest opinion if you are experimenting with design.

Photo or not to photo

The jury's out on this one! In some countries it is expected. I can't help thinking that people make assumptions and judgements based on what you look like. If you are sending CVs in the UK, do not include a photo is my advice. If you do use one, make it a professional one. Though I have seen one memorable CV where the translator is holding a goat…

About the writer...

Clare Suttie founded Atlas Translations in 1991 and has a vast level of experience in the translation industry. Clare is also a board member of the ITI and runs CV clinics for people looking to improve or tailor their existing CV to the world of translation.

TOP TIP

Although in the UK it is unusual to have a photo of yourself on a CV, in some countries this is expected. Consider having more than one version of your CV, to send to different countries.

Contact details

These days you can choose whether to include your postal address or not. Personally I'd usually recommend including it, as it can give you a common interest with the reader if they know the area.
You do need to include phone number, email address(es). Make sure your email address is professional. If it's one you set up as a bit of a joke, then set up a new one for work.

Good email address: ClaresuttieFrenchtranslator@gmail.com
Bad email address: sexylady@hotmail.com

Add in Skype, Twitter, Blogs etc. as long as these are in keeping with your professional image. Also include any professional memberships here (they may also be in your header, no harm in mentioning them again briefly for emphasis).

Software

This may not be a large section, but it's worth including, clearly an employer will be expecting you to be able to use email and Word, but add in other programs such as PowerPoint and any CAT tools you may have used. Note that you do need to be a confident user of any CAT tool you mention – some agencies will provide licenses for projects, so even if you don't currently have the software, it is worth mentioning.

Professional experience

OK, you've got this far. What next? Well, many people include their education next. I would tell you not to do this – put your professional experience next. So many people hide away amazing experience on a second or even third page.

Other experience

Many of our translators and interpreters have fascinating backgrounds before they fell into the freelance life. For your second page, I would go on to include this. It's part of who you are, and has contributed to your skills.

Add in any relevant details here. You can decide how many of your previous lives to include. It's probably time to ditch your teenage years as a babysitter, and your school work experience.

Education

OK, now you can add in your educational achievements!

Recent training and CPD

Any successful translator or interpreter will tell you that in these professions, you need to keep yourself up to date – and that means CPD. There is a lot out there at no or low cost, so there's no excuse not to join in. Having this section and updating it shows your clients that you are a real professional. It also ensures you won't get left behind. You don't even have to leave home to keep up with CPD – you can do online seminars and courses.

Hobbies

Another can of worms! I say do add in hobbies – it's interesting, and who knows, if you're an expert knitter, a scuba diver or a MasterChef finalist, there may just be a job that comes in which is ideal for you.

References

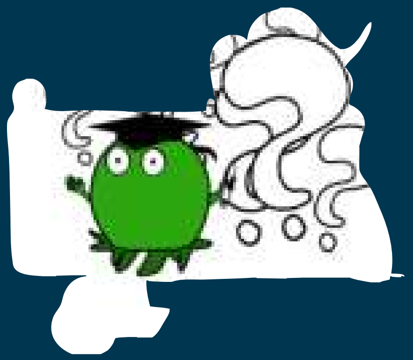
These may be "upon request" or with contact details, but they should be included. And if you add in their details, please remember to make sure that they are happy to give references – it is a courtesy to let people know if you are having a campaign to find new clients so they are aware they may get a call or email. If they are forewarned, they are much more likely to respond quickly to any subsequent requests. It sounds obvious, but we do contact referees and sometimes they are not prepared to provide a reference for an applicant, which is embarrassing for all parties and doesn't reflect well on you and your CV.

GOING FORWARD

Your CV should be updated regularly – give it a spruce up at least every six months.

I advise listing all the projects you do to include subject area, language and word counts/hours. This way you can really see where your specialist areas lie – and if you have gained a new specialism.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP

Don't give up! Starting out can be a frustrating process and getting your foot in the door for that first job can be tricky, but with perseverance you'll get

2. Applying to work with a client – the best approach

As the Director of a translation agency, I see many approaches each day from people who want to work with us. So, a sample of what's in my inbox today and every day:

- Impersonal and inaccurate applications – dear Sir
- Applications CCed to 100s of other agencies
- Spelling errors and lazy typos
- Poor quality CVs and CVs not showing skills
- And those are the ones that make it through my spam filters

Agencies like mine want to work with you. So what is the million dollar secret? Where should you start?

- If you want us to love you, woo us.
- Prepare – CV and personal, tailored covering letter.
- Research clients/agencies – ask around, look online.
- Ask for recommendations.
- Who has a good reputation?
- Who has interesting work and pays on time?
- You are a business person, so do think like one.

First approach

- Pen, paper, ready to make notes
- Pick up the phone
- Smile
- A very quick call to research the possibilities – do they work in your languages and subject areas?

Next?

- Link up on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ - whatever you use
- Use a personal approach and remind them of your conversation
- Start a file for the client so you can note anything discussed, contacts, rates
- Now try another client – two or three a day?

Recap

- Research
- Targeted applications
- Being polite
- Asking questions
- Following up
- Great communication
- Social media interaction
- Visit if local.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

3. What qualifications and experience will you need?

Translators and Interpreters are fully trained, qualified and experienced professionals. Speaking another language does not make someone a professional linguist.

Experience and qualifications are mandatory to beginning a career in the translation industry.

Every translation agency and end client will have their own criteria for applicants. For Atlas you must have one of the following to have your application approved:

- Formal higher education in translation (recognised degree)
- Equivalent qualification in any other subject + a minimum of two years of documented experience in translating
- At least five years of documented professional experience in translating

We are often contacted by A level students, language students, teachers wanting to change careers… all looking for advice on how to get started in translation, or interpreting.

There are so many ways people find and come into this exciting and ever-changing profession that we can't tell you exactly what to do, and there is no "right" way, but I can let you know of some ways people get started.

By accident – doing another job

These people are already working in another career. Word goes round the office that they are bi-lingual and before they know it, they spend more time helping with translation or attending meetings to interpret than doing their actual job. They discover that they really enjoy this, and are good at it.

By accident – doing a language-related degree

These people love languages and so chose a language degree. Then they discovered that they could have a career using their languages in translation or interpreting. They focus on this during their degrees and may consider doing an MA after their degree.

With careful planning

These lucky people know that this is what they want to do from an early age. So they plan their education and possibly an MA to match.

About the writer...

Stefania Orlotti is a qualified and experienced Italian translator, with an MA in Linguistics and Specialised Translation. Stefania is also an experienced project manager, working for translation agencies in Belgium, France and the UK. Originally Stefania joined Atlas on a Work Placement before becoming a project manager in 2015.

TOP TIP

Be personal. You're far more likely to succeed with fewer, more personal applications than with

With careful planning – from another job

These are people in other careers who have always loved languages, kept them active, and decide to take the plunge and make a career change.
So what qualifications do you need? Well, as you can see, this can vary. You could be a bi-lingual website designer who discovers you enjoy languages more than designing websites.

Or you could be a new graduate with a degree in Business and French, and an MA in Translation. Both routes can work. You could also consider the DipTrans, a widely respected qualification offered via the Chartered Institute of Linguists.

This leads us on to experience, and there is no getting away from the fact that no experience = no work offers. This is a topic we'll cover in greater depth in the next chapter, but it's something many people find most frustrating.

As soon as you can, start looking for voluntary opportunities – a charity you love, a local tourist attraction, a local worthy cause – all these people would potentially love to work with you if you are offering your services for free. I do suggest that you only work for free for non-profit-making organisations expressly to gain experience, and ensure that you get a written reference when you deliver work.

Join local groups – such as translation based ones run by the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI). You can also join ITI as a student member and immerse yourself in the industry, learning from people who have been in your position.

Look at free and low-cost webinars to find out how to grow your business. We recommend eCPD Webinars, who offer professional development online for language professionals at all levels.

Ask friends and family if they need translation help – it's amazing how languages are needed in so many businesses.

Craft a CV, proofread to perfection, and seek feedback from someone in the profession.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP

Get involved with groups of linguists, both online and locally in person. Speak with other more experienced translators and interpreters and learn from them.

4. Qualified but no experience?

Once you have the qualifications you need to be a translator, then you realise this is actually just the first step in your career.

"We are impressed by your knowledge background, but we are not able to offer you a position if you don't have any experience in translation". How many times have you heard this? For people starting out in the translation industry it can seem like the picture below. So how can you enrich you CV with practical experience and start getting offers for work?

Although most translation companies mainly work with freelance translators, there are still quite a few that offer internships where you can work as an in-house Translator or assistant project manager. These give you the opportunity to learn all about the industry but unfortunately, it's not always easy to find such positions. At Atlas, we run a work placement scheme which offers applicants the opportunity to learn the inner processes and workings of a translation agency. It's a great way to learn how the business works but as most work [lacements lack the necessary level of experience to work as a freelancer for Atlas there is

TOP TIP

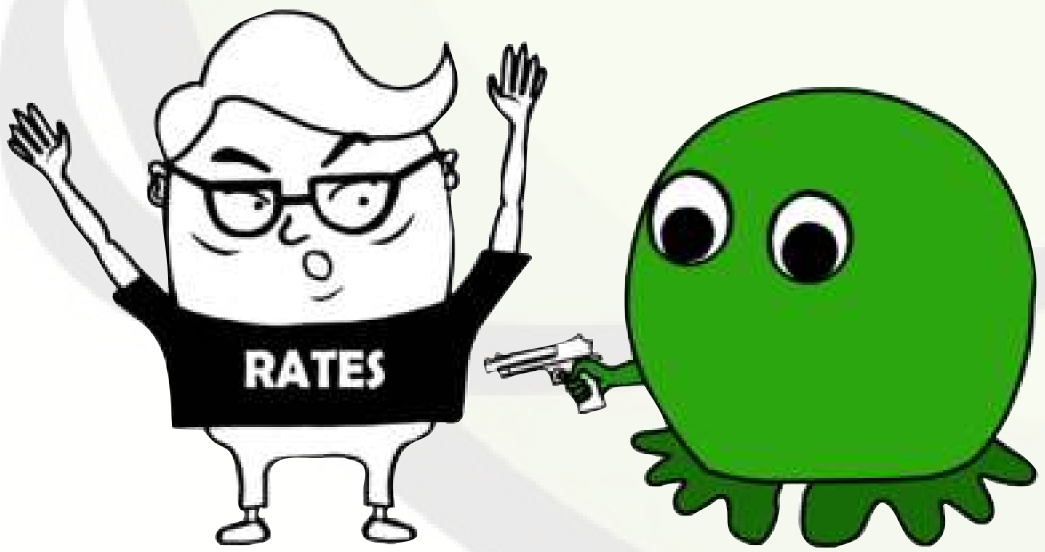
Be open minded. Opportunities to gain experience are everywhere - you just have to little or no actual translation work involved in the placement scheme.

The best way to start building your experience (and gaining references) is to offer your translation services to charities and NGOs. There are many organisations out there such as the British Red Cross, Translators without Borders, refugee assistance programs, and public health clinics often looking for volunteer translators and interpreters. Although the work is usually unpaid, it is a great way to start building your career and gain some experience.
If you're more into the creative translation world, and are passionate about your country and feel like promoting all the attractions on offer, then another option could be to translate information on local tourism.

It is worth contacting bodies such as the Institute of Translators and Interpreters (ITI) and attending translators' conferences and networking meetings to speak to other freelancers, and find what they did to build the necessary level of experience to begin working with agencies.

Day by day, your experience within the industry will grow and your CV will look much better to potential employers. It can be really frustrating to be in a position where you are qualified but lack experience (we've all been there). The most important thing is to not give up, remain passionate and keep an open mind for new experiences in the world of translation and interpreting – you never know what is round the corner.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations



5. An agency has asked me to lower my rate

The question nobody likes to ask, but in our blogs we like to tackle these kinds of questions.

Remember that an agency is a client, just like any other client. And you are a business person. You have to face questions on your rates and react professionally. You may say yes. But you can say no.

Here at Atlas we come across the same situation, where a client may ask us for our "best price" or to lower our rates. How do we react?

Firstly we explain that our price list is – well, our list of prices. It's what we charge. We offer small discounts for volume, multi-lingual projects, and non-profit-making organisations. We will consider requests for a discount, but at most it's likely to be in the region of 5% and will be for translation only, not proofreading or any other services.

Before we make our decision though, we will consider the following:

- Is it a client we really enjoy working for, or very much want to work for?
- Is it work that is well-presented, and not problematic in any way for our translation team?
- Does the client give us reasonable deadlines, or do they expect a very fast turnaround?
- Do we have a long-standing relationship with this client, built up over many years, and supported by a strong team of translators who really enjoy the work too?
- Does the client pay our invoices promptly or do we always have to chase them and send out final reminders?
- Does this client represent a big chunk of our business?

We suggest you ask yourself the same questions.

When you are starting your career and building your business, you may decide to work for lower rates if you are happy that the client has a reasonable reputation, will offer you varied and interesting work, and will pay you promptly.

As far as Atlas Translations goes, we try to be transparent about what we pay our freelancers. We suggest that before applying to work with us, you ask if your rate is a match with us.

And of course as your career progresses, you should consider rate increases. You may have different rates for different clients in different industries and different countries.

The question of rates is so often swept under the carpet, so please do review yours regularly and don't accept rates you are not happy with – instead find other clients who will pay your rates.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

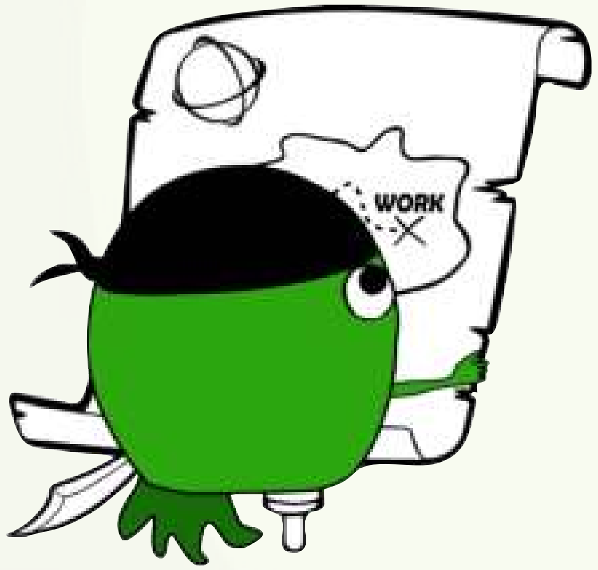
TOP TIP

You can consider lowering your rates for good customers, but the most important thing is that you're happy with what you're being paid for your work, so don't feel bad about refusing to lower your rates if you don't

6. You've been approved by the client – where is the work?

At Atlas, we deal with supplier applications on a daily basis and there are thousands of freelancers who have been approved to work with us. Unfortunately, it is impossible to work with every one of our suppliers every day, and it is not easy to remember all of the people we have worked with previously.

However, good communication between our suppliers and us is one of the key aspects to getting more work with us and building a good working relationship. One thing we tell everyone who asks how to get more work with us (and very few people actually do!), is to keep the line open and get in contact from time to time just to let us know about your availability. This will keep your name in the minds of the project managers, and who knows, a suitable assignment may be just around the corner. We do appreciate the efforts of some suppliers to stay in touch and this is usually reflected in their workloads.



Another useful tip that goes toward getting to know the project managers is to attend one of our supplier lunches. We always look forward to meeting freelancers and what better way to do this than by sharing a lunch together, meet our team and discuss all the aspects of the business. Obviously, we do understand that not everybody would be able to come along, especially if you are based in a different country, but this is certainly the best way to remind us what you do and how much you'd like to start working with us.

Good communication also helps us run our business efficiently. We work with a multitude of talented and professionally qualified translators and interpreters, so please don't be afraid to let us know that you're free and looking forward to new assignments. The more we communicate, the better we work together. In a later blog we'll discuss effective ways to market yourself as a freelancer. The key thing to remember is that the work is out there but you need to go and find it – don't wait for it to come to you.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP

Friendly but professional persistence is the key to getting your foot in the door with a client/translation agency.

7. You've been offered a translation job by the client

You've been offered a new translation job. Great news! Let's start working on it. The first thing to do is to make sure that you're comfortable with the subject matter and deadline. Read the document all the way through and try to think of any potential issues with formatting. Is everything clear in the source document? Is all of the text legible?

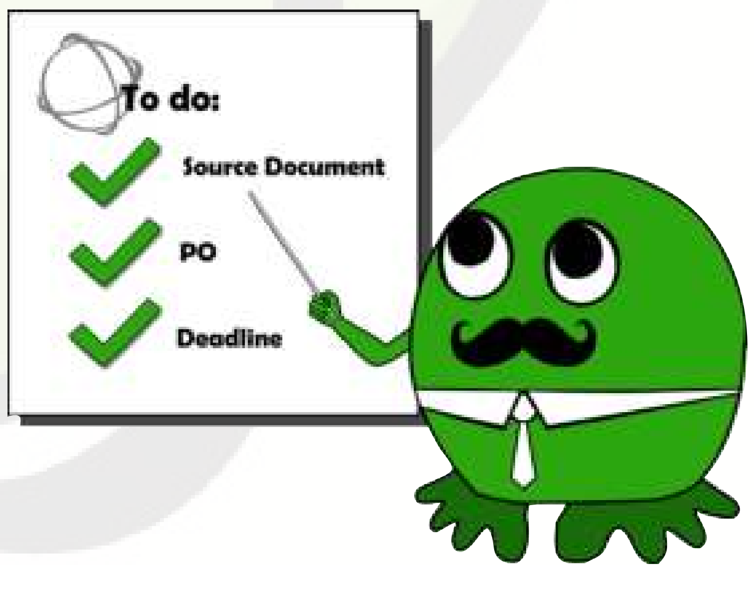
Next, make sure you have all the materials you need to do a good job. Have you translated a similar document for this client before? Are you aware of what the client's requirements are? It is very important to think about this before getting the translation started. Check with the client if there are any particular instructions on style or tone. And don't be worried about asking these questions – doing this will ensure you have a clear idea of what the client wants from the outset.

As you proceed with the translation job, queries may crop up. You may need to clarify these with your client to make sure your translation perfectly reflects the source text. We will talk about dealing with queries in greater depth in a later section, but most times you'll be able to answer your own queries by doing a bit of research. This will save you time and avoid delays in delivering.

Another thing to consider is checking your emails regularly, and/or being reachable by phone when you're translating a document for your client. The fact that you've been offered a job, you've received your purchase order and all the materials to work on doesn't necessarily mean that you don't need to speak to your client until the deadline. In fact, often a client will require changes to be made to the source text you're working on. We obviously understand this is not an ideal situation, but it does happen and it's good to be aware that this could happen.

Working closely with your client is possible even from a distance and it's always the best way to make your business relationship work effectively and efficiently. At Atlas we do appreciate collaboration and help from our suppliers.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP

Read the source text carefully, and if you're not confident you can deliver your best work in the timeframe offered, don't take the job on.

8. Translating in Word format

Word is definitely the most popular format for both clients and translators. It is simple to use and has a few useful tools worth using.

Although formatting with Word is not particularly complex (as it may be for a PDF file, for example), it is important for us to receive a translation that matches with the layout of the source text. It isn't always the case, but often we get translations where the hyperlinks have not been copied in correctly or a different font and size of text have been used. We understand that this does not affect the translation, but we still need to ensure that what we deliver to the client is as close to what we have received from them as possible, just in a different language.

Using the 'Format Painter' button is a great way to copy formatting elements from one section of text to another. Select some text you'd like to copy the formatting attributes from and click on the 'Format Painter' button. It's usually in the top left of the menu bar, below the 'Home' tab. Now select the text you'd like to format and it should then appear as desired.

Another issue that we encounter quite often is spelling mistakes left in the translation. This is something that can easily slip by and the longer the text, the more likely this is to happen. Make sure you have spell check on so that Word can recognise grammar mistakes or typos and mark these. This saves you time when checking your translation before delivery.

Another very useful tool when translating in Word, particularly for proofreading, is the 'Track Changes' facility. While revising a translation it's important for us to see what the proof-reader has changed in the text and receiving a clean version of the proofread document won't help the translator to recognise the changes. Using the 'Track Changes' option (which can be selected from the 'Review' tab) is definitely the best way to make changes clear in the text and allows the translator to go through the document to review each change.

As initially mentioned, the quality of the translation is of course our main concern, but we do care about formatting as well and as an Italian speaker would say… 'Anche l'occhio vuole la sua parte'!

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP

Make sure you're using Word to it's full potential. There are some lesser known tools that could help you save valuable time and effort. Consider investing in training to uncover some of these.

9. Researching & dealing with queries

Whether you're translating, proofreading or transcribing, projects will inevitably throw up a few queries as you seek to gain a firm understanding of a source text. Most clients will appreciate the necessity of providing clarification on any ambiguities, and will strive to answer your questions as fully as possible. After all, it's in their best interest to do so.

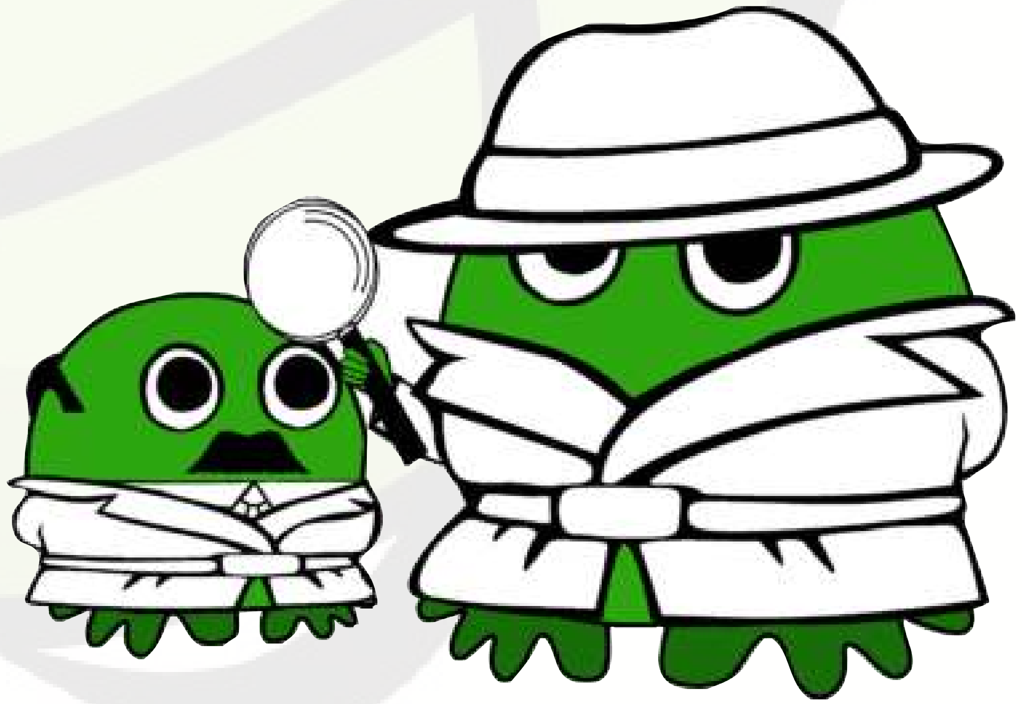
Unfortunately, there are also those out there who fail to recognise the importance of answering queries, and won't offer insightful responses, or even worse, will not respond to your questions at all. For such clients, the best you can do is leave a note in your translation (if in Microsoft Word, the 'Comment' facility works well for this) and hope that someone picks up on the points you've raised. You can only do so much to help a client who doesn't want to help themselves.

For more vigilant clients it is important to present your queries clearly, logically, and preferably all in one go. Creating a separate document of queries is a good way to share these with your client. Listing each query in the order in which it appears in the source document, be sure to state clearly where the issue in question occurs within the document, and remember to write in full sentences. For example:

Queries for 'Insightful blog about Queries.docx'

1. Page 1, 2nd paragraph. "Type name".
   Is this to be understood in the sense of "type in a name" or "The name of the type"?

Presenting queries in this fashion will enable your client to clearly comprehend the issues you're raising, and encourages them to get back to you in the same unambiguous manner.



About the writer...

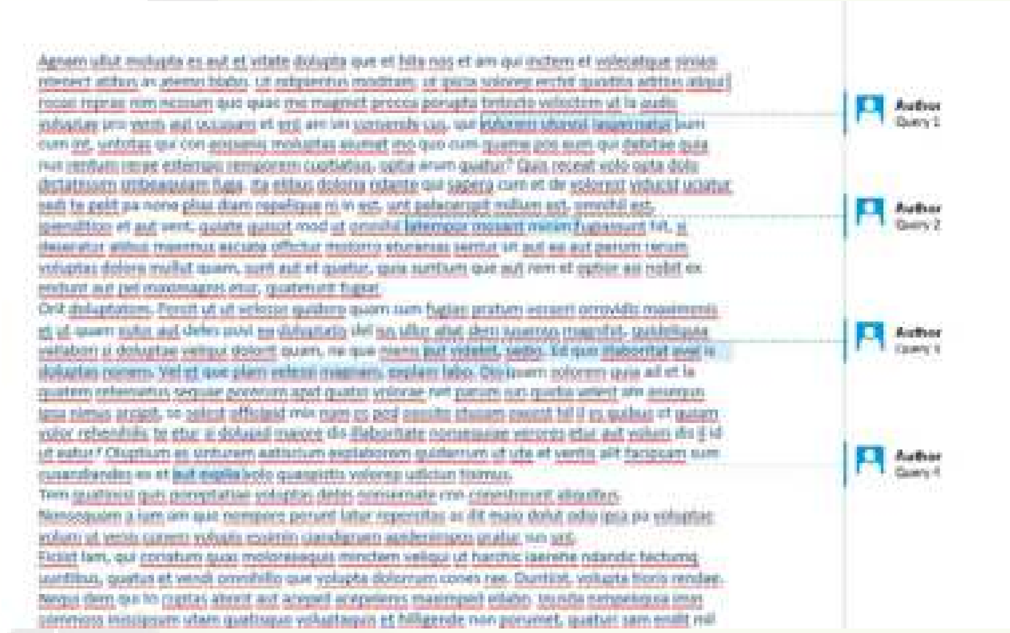
Jim Hearn has worked for Atlas Translations since the beginning of 2012 as first a project manager, and then manager. In that time he has worked on more than 2,000 projects, working with hundreds of talented linguists.

TOP TIP

Remember that the client may have little or no knowledge of your language, so be patient and clear when explaining why something doesn't quite work when translated.

Before raising any queries at all, it is always worth putting some time in to do a bit of research. I can't count the number of times we've been sent a query which has been easily answered by a simple Google search. Of course we're always happy to help with things you're unsure of, but going straight to the client with a question without first doing a bit of legwork yourself can leave a negative impression. From our experience, when raising a query it is always good to suggest what you think may be the solution (when possible) as it demonstrates that you have put some thought into the issue before contacting the client.

Remember that the client will have to spend time investigating any queries you raise, which could have an impact on the deadline of the project. For projects with tight deadlines we often find it preferable to receive a complete translation with a suggested solution in the text, with any queries/issues denoted in the margin or at the end of the document. This way at least we can deliver a translation to the end client, and impetus is on them to get back to us on any queries raised.



I'll conclude by sharing a quick story about a situation when a translator impressed us with the way he dealt with a query regarding the translation of an employment history document, issued by a recruitment agency for a prospective new employee of our client. The source text included several abbreviations which were used internally by that recruitment agency only, and thus the meaning was impenetrable to anyone else reading the document. The translator could've contacted us and requested the meaning of these abbreviations. We'd have then had to go back to our client, who would've had to contact their prospective employee, who would probably have had to go back to the issuer of the document. Instead, the translator noticed the telephone number of the recruitment agency who had issued the document, called them directly and was able to translate the abbreviations accurately, therefore avoiding a costly delay on the project.

While we don't advocate contacting end clients directly, showing initiative and going the extra mile makes you stand out as a freelancer, and in turn enhances your professional reputation and will improve the relationship with your client.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

10. Translating in Excel

There are a few things to be aware of when translating Excel spread sheets. The program wasn't really designed for flowing passages of text, which means translating in Excel can be far from ideal. That said, for many clients it is a convenient way of collating translations ready for end use.

First and foremost, you should be aware that the spell check is not automatic for Excel. To perform a spell check, go to the 'Review' tab, then click 'Spelling' from the 'Proofing' group. This will perform a spell check on the text. Older versions of Excel may not have this function, so a way around this would be to copy and paste your translation into Word, which should highlight any spelling discrepancies. Make sure you haven't selected any cells before clicking the spell check or only these cells will be checked.

Another issue we frequently encounter with translating in Excel concerns formatting. The golden rule here is to try your best to replicate the source text as faithfully as possible. This is where the 'Format Painter' tool (found in the top left hand corner) comes in handy. Selecting the formatted source text and clicking the 'Format Painter' tool will load your cursor with its formatting attributes. Now if you click on your translation, it will be formatted to match the source. Often when typing text into a new cell the text will trail across the screen, so that only the first part of the sentence is visible. Clicking the 'Wrap Text' button from the tool bar will format the text to be contained within the parameters of the column, so that all the text in this row is visible. If something is highlighted or coloured differently in the source, make sure these words/ sentences are highlighted or coloured in your translation.

Excel is a popular choice of format for clients writing texts to appear with html coding. You may want to clarify this with your client, but often code will appear in brackets within the source text, and while this text doesn't usually need to be translated, it will probably need to be present in your translation. It's important to make sure this is copied across accurately, and that any formatting is retained. It's also worth considering what text will replace the code in the final version of this (it's not always easy to tell) and how this could affect your translation. If you foresee any potential problems, do raise these with your client – they would rather you raised any potential issues before they become problems.

Last but not least, check you've translated all the tabs you've been asked to. It can be quite easy to overlook, but I can't count the number of times we've received a translation back with missing tabs or when the incorrect tab has been translated, despite sending out clear instructions. As with all translation projects, if instructions are sent, refer to these carefully to make sure you're working on the correct parts. If unsure – check with your client. Also be aware that it can be quite difficult to get word counts for Excel documents, so if you suspect the word count you've been sent a PO for is wrong, do query this, particularly if there are multiple tabs involved.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP

Check if the Excel file you're working on contains hidden rows/columns by making sure the numbers/letters follow sequentially. If they don't, right click to show these hidden parts, and check with the client they don't need to be

11. Do you offer other services your client should know about?

You probably offer all sorts of other services. But do your clients know? Have you even clearly identified them yourself?

Calling our business Atlas Translations, I am always keen to point out that we don't just "do translation!" We've always offered spoken interpreting, proofreading and typesetting, and due to clients' requests over the last 25 years we've added sign language interpreting, Braille, SEO work, telephone research and a whole lot more.

If you think you don't offer any other services, think hard. Do you proofread other's work, certify translations? Are you prepared to have your translations notarised? Are you an SEO expert who could offer help in your native tongue? Are you a details person who loves checking facts, testing web links and so on?

When it comes to telling clients, we could just fire off an email to tell our clients "hey look what else we do" (ie look at our other services). But instead we try to build a relationship with each client, looking carefully at what they do, asking questions about the work we do, and seeing if there is anything else we can help with.

And this works. "You do typesetting?" Clients are delighted to find that we can handle projects, especially multi-lingual projects, from start to finish.

Good communication is key to any relationship – and yet in business, this is sometimes forgotten.

Make sure you include all your services on your business card, on your website, and let all your colleagues and associates know too.

Regularly updating your clients by email is important, but do also pick up the phone occasionally, so that you become more than just that distant person. Hearing your voice and getting to know you, clients will feel more connected to you – and they will remember you for all the services you offer.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Your client may be unaware of the full complement of services you can offer. Be proactive in letting them know.

12. Computer-assisted translation (CAT) Tools

Translation has changed so much in the last 20 years. Technology has dramatically improved and found its place in the translation world, with the creation of new tools aimed to help translators perform fast and quality translations.

CAT (computer-assisted translation) tools have been around for a number of years now, but there are still many translators who do not find CAT tools as useful as others do. Many people don't find them to be helpful, but the benefits become obvious later on and as a translator learns more about working with them, the more productivity they will get out of them. Using a CAT tool can provide an advantage in terms of maintaining terminology and style consistency, quality control and efficiency.

As most CAT tool using translators already know, CAT tools generally work with three basic functions: segmentation, translation memory, and a terminology database. CAT tools usually present the document in a bilingual format and break the text up into segments, which helps the translator to easily read and translate the text. Source and target segments are saved together in a translation memory that can be reused in similar texts, maintaining consistency and quality between documents.

A terminology database is usually included within a CAT tool. This is a multilingual dictionary, which allows translators to choose the correct terms for the text they're translating. Using consistent terminology within a document and throughout a project is extremely important – especially in technical translation.

Although these may sound very similar, and clients often confuse the two, there is a huge difference between machine translation and CAT tool. Both use software to help create translations, but in completely different ways.
Machine translation is a rapid form of translation. The purpose in this case is to receive a usable translation in the shortest turnaround time possible. The quality of the final product is not preserved in this case and the text will most likely present grammar and syntax errors throughout. These documents would need to go through a process called "post-editing", which involves a linguist reviewing the document and finalising the translation.

CAT Tools work in a very different way. They require a linguist to operate them in order to translate the document and the final product is an accurate translation. This method allows the linguist to work faster while still maintaining accuracy throughout the document.

Using a CAT tool can make your life much easier and help you to work more effectively and efficiently. We run training courses on some of the different programs out there. If you'd like to know more, get in touch.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Some clients will expect you to charge a reduced rate for repetitions and 'fuzzy' matches. It's up to you whether or not you do this, but remember that 'fuzzy' matches are often no match at all and may require as much work as the 'new' words.

13. What software programs should a freelance translator be proficient in?

These days, it is almost a given that people working predominantly with computers will be familiar with a core group of software programs (usually from the standard Microsoft Office package). While it's true that the majority of us will have used software programs such as Word and Excel before, are we utilising their full functionality? In this tip we'll look at a few program formats that we receive the majority of our requests in. We won't touch any CAT tools here as these were discussed in a previous tip.

It may seem to be stating the obvious, but every translator will need to be proficient in a form of word-processing software. Probably more than 90% of the work we receive is in Microsoft Word format, so I would highly recommend that whatever program you're using is compatible with this. We've had a few problems in the past when a source document which has been created in a recent version of Word, has been translated using an older version – particularly with formatting. So to spare yourself some angst, try to keep up to date with a recent version of Word. In the Atlas office, we currently use Microsoft Word 2013.

Probably the second most popular format we work in, is Excel. Often translations destined for online use will be presented in this format and it can be quite tricky to work with, as would be expected for a program designed mainly for working with numbers rather than words. For one thing, the spell check facility doesn't automatically highlight any errors in your text, so be sure to run this manually before delivering your translation. There are some useful formulas to be aware of also.

PowerPoint is another program we use a lot. As with Excel, translating in PowerPoint can be challenging. PowerPoint files often feature non-editable diagrams, info graphics and tabs which can create formatting issues when it comes to your translation. We'd advise you to always check with your client whether non-editable text needs to be translated or not, and if it is, make sure it's included in the number of words you're being paid for. It's also worth keeping an eye on the 'notes' section which lies just below each slide. Sometimes there is text here, and it's not always immediately visible or clear whether this is required for translation or not. Again, the best practice is to double check with the client.

In addition to these Microsoft software programs, Adobe's InDesign is the program used by most typesetters. So if you fancy adding a new string to your bow, perhaps this software package is worth exploring. Be warned – it is quite expensive and can take some time to master. Most typesetters are fully qualified in their fields, with years of experience in typesetting. However if you have the opportunity, it could be beneficial to learn a thing or two about InDesign – especially for when you're working on a translation which will be typeset.

A good pdf reader/editor is vital for a translator. Non-editable so called 'dead' pdfs can be time consuming to format. Having a decent pdf editor will assist you with many tricky to tackle documents and avoid those frustrating hours spent on formatting documents in Word. We would advise carefully checking the newly editable document converted from your pdf editor against the original, to ensure that nothing has been lost in the conversion.

Some of our translators have found using Speech Recognition software programs such as Dragon useful. If really depends on how you work best. We offer training in Speech Recognition software so if this is something you'd like to find out more about, get in touch.

As the most common form of contact between suppliers and clients in the translation industry these days, it is vital to be proficient in email and to work with a service you understand and are comfortable with. Again it might sound like we're stating the obvious here, but if you don't have a system which you have easy access to then it could be costing you work. Be sure to check your junk mail as sometimes emails with genuine offers for work can end up here. At Atlas we use Outlook Express but you could just as easily work with a free email provider such as Google Mail. Most email services out there include a form of calendar which can be useful for organising your time.

Maybe it's worth investing some time and/or money in training to become more proficient in these software programs? There are plenty of free online tutorials and training sessions that you can find to develop your skills in the above programs, but if you want to go a step further, there are plenty of professional trainers out there. Even if you consider yourself to be an expert in the software you use, there's always room for developing skills further.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
The software you work with are the tools of your trade so look after your resources and invest in training in areas you think you could improve - this will save you time and money further down the road.

14. You've been offered your first interpreting assignment. What should you do next?

First thing to check is if you're available for the interpreting assignment. A key part of freelancing is organising and managing your time effectively. You don't want to confirm a booking only to find you can't actually make the assignment. Keep an organised diary or calendar and once something is confirmed, block out the dates for this.

What will be required?

Check what type of interpreting will be required. Often end clients have little understanding of the different types of interpreting, so make sure you know what you're getting into. At Atlas, we have a checklist we ask clients to complete so we have all the information we need before sending a quote. Perhaps it is worth having a list of a few standard questions of your own to send clients asking about your services?

Payment

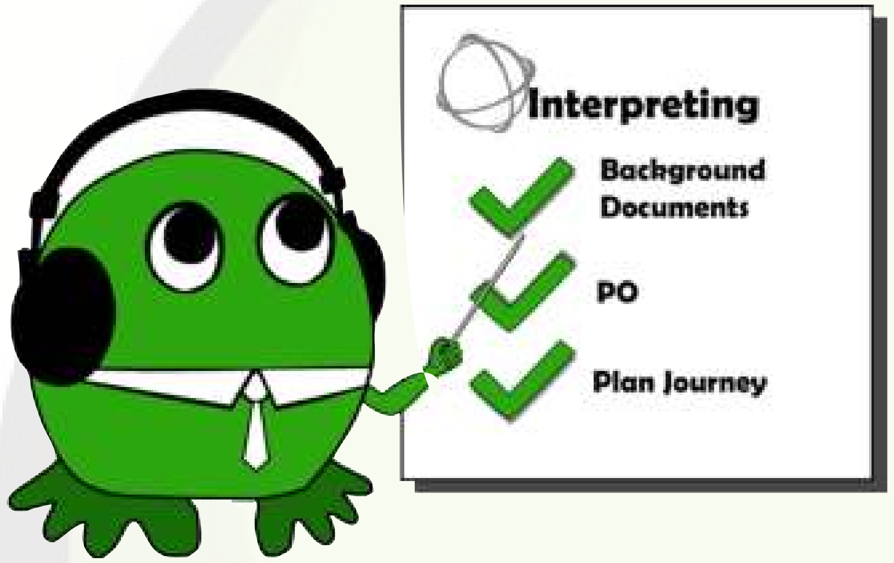
Is the rate right for you? Probably the most important thing to find out. We

TOP TIP
Be clear with your overtime rates. If a client says they need just one hour of interpreting, make sure you have a written confirmation that you'll be paid for extra time spent on the assignment.

only ever offer our clients a daily rate for interpreting, with an hourly rate for any overtime agreed in advance. This way everything is agreed upfront and there are no surprises for the client when they receive the invoice. Check if your travel is covered, and if you have to stay somewhere overnight, if accommodation and subsistence is provided (it should be).

Location

Where is the assignment? Is it feasible for you to get there? If it's a long way to travel, do you have any standing commitments on the day before or after? All things to consider before agreeing to take on an interpreting assignment. As we've already mentioned, be sure to check whether your travel costs will be covered.



Specialist technology

Will the knowledge of any specialist terminology be required, and what is the purpose of the interpreting assignment? Maybe you are the perfect fit for the job, but perhaps you lack the necessary expertise. It's definitely worth clarifying this in advance, and avoid taking on anything in areas you're uncomfortable – you could end up harming the relationship with your client and your professional reputation.

Supporting documentation

Find out if there's any supporting documentation for the interpreting assignment. Anything that will help you understand the situation better. If you work as a translator as well as an interpreter, you could offer your translation services to ensure consistency in the terminology of the written materials and your spoken interpreting.

Cancellation fees

Have a cancellation policy in place and enforce this if necessary. At Atlas we try our best not to charge cancellation fees, but if a client cancels a booking at the last minute then it's only fair that they pay in full. Make sure the client accepts your cancellation policy in advance of the booking and keep evidence of their written agreement of your terms, just in case.

Plan your journey

Lastly, once everything has been confirmed, plan your journey. Check for peak travel times and account for this. It is always better to be early. We ask interpreters to arrive at the assignment venue at least 15 minutes before the assignment is due to start to avoid being late at all. If you're driving, check for road closures, and the nearest available parking facilities to the venue. If you have to pay for parking then these costs should be passed onto the client. We've had assignments where an interpreter was late because she couldn't find anywhere to park and spent half an hour driving around a car park looking for a space. If you get there in plenty of time this shouldn't be an issue, but by planning ahead you can avoid any such situations.

15. Translating PDFs

There are two or three different types of PDF we generally receive, so the first thing to do is to ascertain which type of PDF you're working with. It'll be one of the following (please note the terminology used to describe the different types of PDF is only our in-house lingo!):

1) A 'Dead' PDF. This is usually a scan or photocopy and the text is not editable.
2) A PDF created from Word. Word files which are saved as PDFs can usually be re-opened with Word, which makes editing and translating the content fairly straightforward.
3) A designed PDF. Usually these will have been exported from a design program such as InDesign or Quark Express. These usually contain a lot of design elements with graphics and images often rendering the file too large to open with a program like Word. You may need a PDF conversion software to create an editable document to work with.

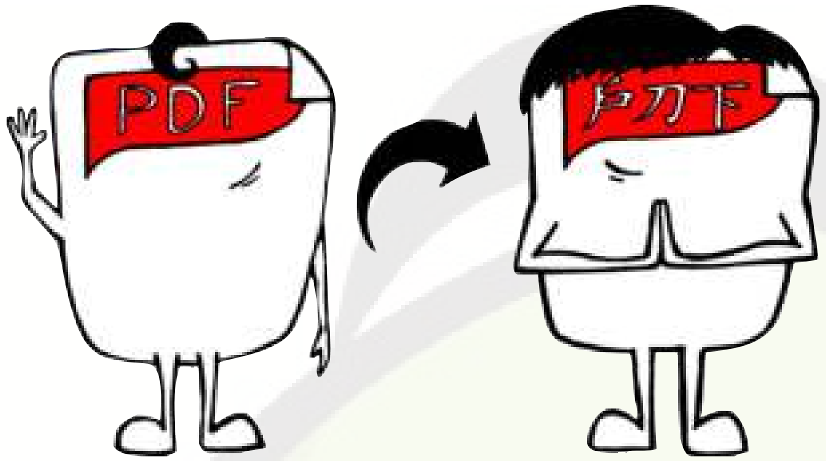
Translating 'Dead' PDFs

'Dead' PDFs are the most time consuming to work on of the three different types of PDF, because there's usually no way to format them other than manually reproducing them in a separate document. Luckily, more often than not, the source materials we receive as 'Dead' PDFs to translate are short documents such as birth certificates and university transcripts, but I know there are some translators who refuse to work on 'Dead' PDFs at all, understandably so in some cases.

Is all the text in the scanned document legible? Check this first and if not, point this out to your customer. If just a couple of lines then they may ask you to proceed anyway and just mark illegible parts with a note in your translation. But it is better to check at the beginning than halfway through the project.

When replicating the source document in your translation, be sure to check and double check all of the names, dates and numbers. These are often aspects you normally wouldn't touch when working in an editable format so it's always worth checking you've copied them across correctly, and make sure numbers are included in the word count – if you have to type them out then you should be paid for doing this. On this note, you should always check the word count the client has given you is correct.
Don't worry too much about the formatting unless the client specifically says

TOP TIP
Check with the client if a pdf translation will be typeset by a professional typesetter after you've translated it. If it is this will save you the worry of formatting the translation.



this is important. A basic level of formatting (maintaining headings, paragraphs etc.) should suffice. If the source ‘dead’ PDF contains tables or diagrams check how the client wants these to be presented in the translation. Maybe a simple bilingual table will serve for a diagram.

When you’ve finished your translation check over your translation thoroughly against the source document to make sure nothing has been missed off in your translation.

Translating PDFs from Word

These are the simplest of the three types of PDF to deal with. More often than not these can be opened with Word (or alternative word processing software) and translated. When you do this, check carefully that everything has opened correctly in Word against the original PDF, as sometimes the formatting can become corrupted and text is hidden. It is worth asking the client if they have an editable version to work from (they should do if it was created in Word). When it comes to finalising your translation, you can even save the document in PDF form, so you can deliver in the same format your client sent the source in. As always though, do check your translation against the source PDF, taking extra special care to make sure everything in the source is in the translation.

Translating a designed PDF

If you don’t have a design tool (like Adobe InDesign) then you can pick up some PDF conversion software to work on these. We don’t use any at Atlas, but I’m sure you’ll be able to find recommendations of software for translators on a forum. Proceed with caution when using PDF conversion software – we’ve seen lots of documents with missing paragraphs, pages and pictures as they were missed from the conversion. These issues were a lot more common with previous versions of PDF conversion software, and generally the programs out there now are pretty good and such problems are less of a concern, but be aware that it can happen.

Check with the client if the translation is going to be typeset. Generally source materials in this form are things like brochures or leaflets, so translations will usually be typeset by a professional. If this is the case, there’s no need to spend loads of time formatting something that someone else will be doing anyway.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

16. Tips for working from home

Freelancers are often found working from home, whether it’s under the stairs, in a spare room, or in a corner of the house. When Atlas Translations started in 1991, it was generally agreed that in the future, we’d all be working from home with no commuting – technology allowing us to work anywhere. In reality, there are certainly more people spending at least some of their working time from home, but as we are reminded whenever we pop on the train to London to visit a client, commuting workers are still the majority.

So home-workers are a minority, and not always taken seriously or treated as professionals. Cue many jibes about working in pyjamas whilst lying in bed, with daytime TV on in the background, long lunches, siestas and short working hours. Throw in a partner and some children and you’ll also be expected to go to the post office, collect the dry cleaning, wash up and pop out for bread and milk. Friends and family will also phone up or even call in for a cuppa…

So, here are my top tips for working from home.

Have a routine. Just as you would if you travelled to work. This could include shower, getting dressed, breakfast, checking email, work.

Make a daily plan of what you want/need to achieve

Manage distractions. These could include phone, personal callers, social media and email – have set times when you check email, Facebook and so on. Disconnect if necessary.

Separate work and home life as much as possible – separate email addresses

TOP TIP
When your home is also your office it can be difficult to separate work and home life. Make a conscious effort to set your own business hours to help this.

and phone numbers. Switch off the computer if you are not working.
Take regular breaks – to have a walk around, hang the washing out, have a cuppa, meditate – whatever works for you. And do eat regularly.

Accept you'll have days where you achieve loads – and days where you seem to get very little done. This happens to everyone, wherever you work.
Have formal working hours. You may need to do overtime but try to keep this to a minimum, just as you would if you worked externally.

Try to have a lunch break – for lunch, exercise, something that gets you away from your desk (and chair) so you'll be refreshed for the afternoon.

Anyone who works from home faces the same challenges – and enjoys many of the same pleasures – so I polled some of the local business community to give them the last word.

Jenny Soppet Smith of DigitalJen – "What I struggle with is admitting that I need to put the heating on – it feels ridiculous heating the whole house for me but then I don't work as well when it's cold. My other top tip is to not have biscuits in the house!"

Becky Lowman, Teacher at Let's Dance – "I miss the special friendships you make with work colleagues and the Christmas party! We never get told we are doing a good job! And you're at home for all the annoying sales calls! BUT you have freedom, choice to go for lunch if needed; go for a walk for hours if you feel stressed. Lots of perks but mainly make sure you keep on task, try not to get distracted. Sometimes I make myself a little timetable like at work so I can plan out how long things will take. Bad thing is most of the time I don't stop for lunch I'll just keep going and then feel like I've not moved in hours!"

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

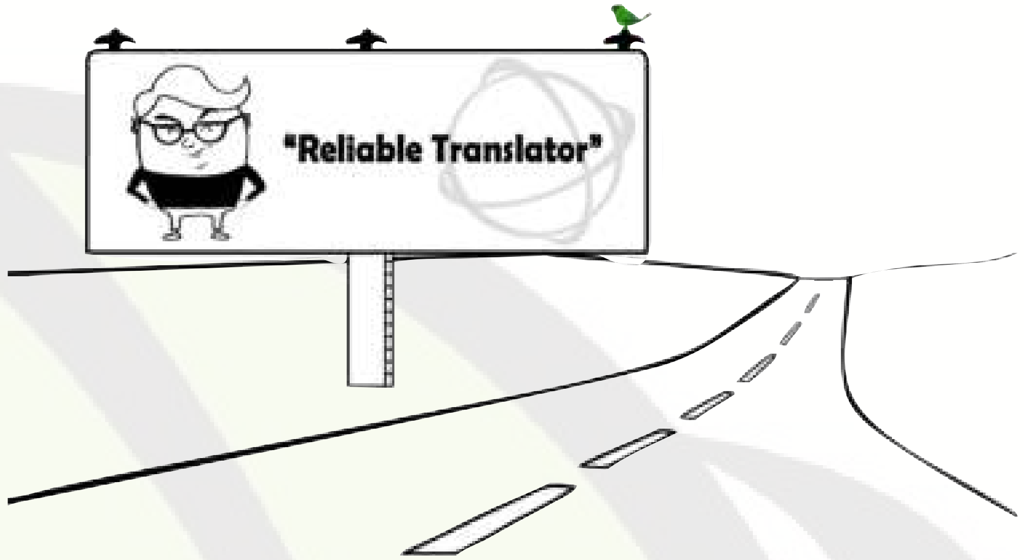
17. Marketing yourself as a freelancer and how to stand out

Whether you've recently been approved to work with an agency or have just won a new client, it's always important to remember that as a freelancer, you are your own business and must market yourself as one. You might be a fantastic English to German aviation specialist translator, but if no one but you is aware of this, it won't lead to much work. On the flipside, as a freelancer you won't want to be spending too much time on your marketing, as this will eat into the time you want to spend working for clients. This article explores a few ways to maximise your marketing potential.

TOP TIP
Always remember - as a freelancer you are your own business, so try to market yourself like one, and put in time to develop new business.

Be Friendly, but Professional

This may seem like stating the obvious, but we get enough applications to suggest it needs to be said. Firstly, I think it's important to be modest. So often we receive emails titled 'The Best Spanish Translator in the Business'. It's such a ridiculous statement that it's difficult to take such an application seriously – and we rarely do. Your work and experience should speak for itself, and if you're friendly and present yourself well, clients will be interested in working with you.



Check chapters two and three for further tips on applying to work with clients.

Your Online Profile as a Freelancer

These days, probably the most vital aspect of your marketing will be your online profile. There are plenty of websites out there such as ProZ and Translators Café, where potential clients can locate suppliers. You don't necessarily have to have your own profile on any of these sites, but it will increase your online visibility and enhance your chances of being offered work. If you decide not to have your own profile, it's still worth checking these websites every so often to see what jobs are being posted, and also to check that nothing bad is being said about you. It may sound like we're being a bit paranoid, but really, anyone can say anything about anyone online, and if someone has posted some negative feedback about your services, however fairly, you need to know about it.

A website or a blog is great but can be expensive and time consuming to manage. Social media is one way of increasing your online profile. Having an active social media account is a great (and free) way of showing that you're committed to whichever field/service you work in, and are involved with that community. Posting interesting articles can draw potential clients to your profile. There are useful tools out there which manage your social media posts for all of your different profiles. A good tip is to remember that it is better to send the same message through all of the different social media profiles you have, than a different message through each. So if you want to have profiles on all of the different forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google+), make sure your posts are consistent across the different forms. If you don't have time or simply don't want to involve yourself with social media, at least take the time to create a LinkedIn account. It doesn't take long, and gives potential clients somewhere to find you online.

Networking

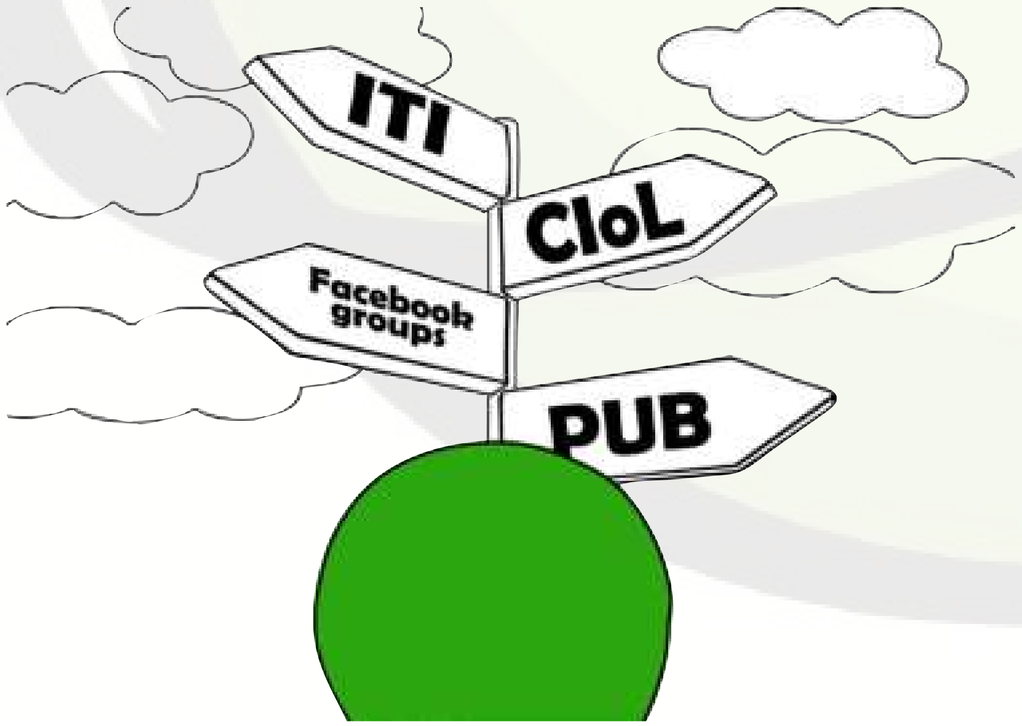
Whether in person or through online forums any form of networking is great. Not only does it provide a form of human interaction that can be welcome to many freelancers who usually work alone, but will provide you with new contacts and leads for your services. Dedicating one to two hours per week to networking, either with colleagues or potential clients will provide a welcome break to your usual working routine, and is a fantastic way of meeting new people. Atlas Translations hold open days twice a year, and from experience, we are far more likely to remember and consequently work with someone we've met in person than someone who's sent an email.

Stay in contact

Possibly the most important tip in this blog is to stay in contact with your clients. One of the most common emails we receive is: "I was approved by your agency three months ago but I haven't received any offers of work yet". Being approved to an agency is great, but doesn't mean you no longer need to market yourself to that agency. Attend open days. Call the agency/client and let them know you're available for work. Send weekly/monthly emails informing project managers of your upcoming availability. Sooner or later you will receive an assignment, and (all being well) the work will begin to come in. But don't assume that because you've been approved with an agency that they will be contacting you for work – it's a perhaps uncomfortable truth that your competitors are other freelancer suppliers, and you need to stand out from the others.

If you haven't heard from someone for a while who you used to work with regularly, don't be embarrassed to call them to refresh the contact. Staff changes can lead to the loss of a working relationship, but by remaining in regular contact with the agency/client you can minimise the effect of this.
After quality of work, the next most important attribute we look for in a supplier a freelancer is how quickly they usually get back to us, so remain contactable during your working hours. If a client sends you an email and does not receive a prompt reply, they'll contact someone else and you'll have lost the opportunity. If you know you won't have email access for any period of time, stick an automated out of office reply on. More often than not we work to tight deadlines and are more likely to contact someone we know we're going to hear back from quickly than someone we're not.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP
Networking can be scary, but going outside your comfort zone can be really rewarding and neccesary to develop new skills.

18. What professional organisations should I join?

We are frequently asked which professional organisations or bodies translators should join.

There is no one answer to this question. In fact there are many answers, and it depends on many factors, including the country you are from, the country you are living in, and the languages you offer. Some professional organisations suit some people better than others.

In the last century, translators and interpreters were quite a mystery to the general public. It was a profession not always seen as a profession at all – a hobby, a cottage industry – and few people knew anything about the world of languages beyond French 'O' level and the odd skiing holiday.

Consequently, it was a career path people didn't particularly plan; they were more likely to have fallen into it and then never wanted to leave.

So why join anything, surely you can just set up, and get on with your work? Well, yes, you could do that, and you may do well. However, joining a professional organisation supporting translators and interpreters offers so much. As well as the standard discounts, regular news and magazines and a lovely certificate to hang on your wall, you become part of a community, a support group. You have a chance to make new friends and work partners on-line and occasionally in person.

You pick up useful tips on everything from the best clients to work with to whether you should try a standing desk. Instead of working alone as a freelancer, you have a team of people in the background to offer practical and supportive advice on difficult work situations, and to offer suggestions for those translated terms you just aren't happy with. You can join local and regional networks of people working in your specialism and/or your language combinations. Business tips from people within your industry on tax returns, work/life balance, marketing and keeping up to date with technology.

You'll hear about CPD opportunities to keep you up to date, some discounted, some even free. There may be conferences, even Christmas parties to attend.
There are so many benefits that being part of such an organisation bring; we do suggest you give this some thought. Another consideration is how you look to a potential client – showing that you are a professional and investing in your future is a definite plus to anyone looking to employ a translator or interpreter.

Here in the UK we recommend the ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting) and the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIoL). You can also find many Facebook groups for translators and interpreters.

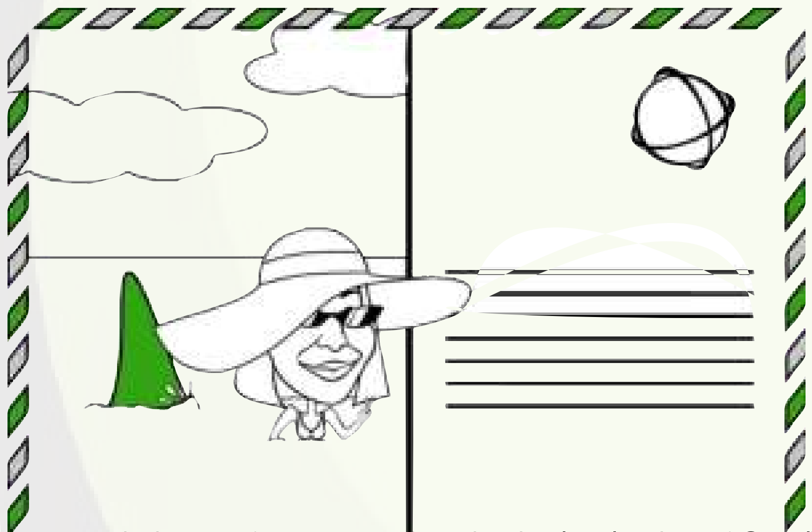
By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
The translation and interpreting industry is a vibrant and active community. Make the effort to be a part of this.

19. Going to be away? Don't forget to tell your clients, and send us a postcard!

Is it time for you to have a break? Your desk is covered with papers and you've been working solidly for months so isn't it time you booked yourself a nice and relaxing holiday somewhere in the sunshine? That sounds exciting! But please don't forget to tell us you're going away, we don't want to be left out!

We might need to contact you with a query on a previous project while you're away, and if we don't know you're unavailable, it could cause problems with the end client, so it's good to make your clients aware of your holidays or any significant period of time away from your desk. After all, you want to relax not have to worry about losing any clients while you're doing it.
Many of our suppliers have sent us a postcard and even photographs of the places they've been to on holiday, which we have greatly appreciated. We love the idea of being able to work with people and build a friendly relationship to the point that they feel to share their happy moments with us. Isn't this great?



Have you attended one of our open days in the lovely city of St Albans? If yes, you may still have the Atlas Buddy. Take it with you when you're leaving and tweet your pictures around the world… (include us @atlastranslate) Buddy loves to travel.

Summer holidays are here. Going to travel back to your home country? Or maybe visiting an exotic place? Wow! Wish we were going away with you! Don't forget about us, our office is quite small but we have enough room to hang your postcards.

Not going to leave your desk for the Summer? Sorry to hear that but get in touch to let us know you'll be available for work. Summer is often one of our busiest periods and a lot of translators and clients go away at this time, which means there are often more opportunities for people who have not worked with us before.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Sharing your availability with translation agencies is a good way of keeping in touch with them and you never know, you might be getting in touch just as they're looking for someone with your skillset and expertise.

20. Professional indemnity insurance – should you have it?

Should you have professional indemnity insurance (PII) as a translator?

Straight answer – yes!

But seriously, to expand further, you are offering a professional service to businesses. PII covers you if you are negligent or make a mistake which causes a client's business to suffer financial loss. You're no doubt a brilliant translator, but what if you have a bad day, or a very important number is mixed up in your translation? Nobody's perfect, and factor in tight deadlines, clients phoning up demanding their work…

If you think it couldn't happen to you, have a read here:
www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-lansky/lonely-planet-founder-rec_b_670848.html (Lonely Planet Founder Recalls Worst Publishing Mistakes).

It's not just translators who should take out professional indemnity – consider accountants, IT consultants, business consultants, journalists, architects, financial advisors, engineers and many more.

Translators can be put off PII by the cost. How much?!! So my advice is you should shop around each year as the premiums can vary wildly. This does mean filling in forms, but you may save hundreds of pounds.

There are a number of companies who do offer this specialist insurance. In no particular order:

The Oval Group
Vantage Insurance
S-Tech
Towergate
Arthur J Gallagher

ITI have a partner offering a discount if you are a member. We understand also that CIoL also have a partner offering discounts to their members.

Note that we are not recommending any of these companies in particular, but the last time we looked, they did offer PII.

TOP TIP
It's always better to be safe than sorry with this kind of thing. Take your time to get a few different quotes and do this every year - insurance companies won't reward you for your loyalty.

21. Tips for proofreading a translation

While thinking about proofreading, I was immediately reminded of reading Eats, Shoots and Leaves a few years ago and this quote sums up my feelings perfectly;

“Part of one’s despair, of course, is that the world cares nothing for the little shocks endured by the sensitive stickler. While we look in horror at a badly punctuated sign, the world carries on around us, blind to our plight. We are like the little boy in The Sixth Sense who can see dead people, except that we can see dead punctuation.” ― Lynne Truss, Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation

Spelling mistakes and slip-ups happen to everyone; you only have to Google ‘hilarious typos’ and you can be kept amused for hours. If you want further language-related entertainment you should follow @HilariousTypos on Twitter, a feed dedicated to publicising amusing errors and spelling calamities. So, how can you avoid having your work added to one of the many ‘Top 30 best typos’ lists?

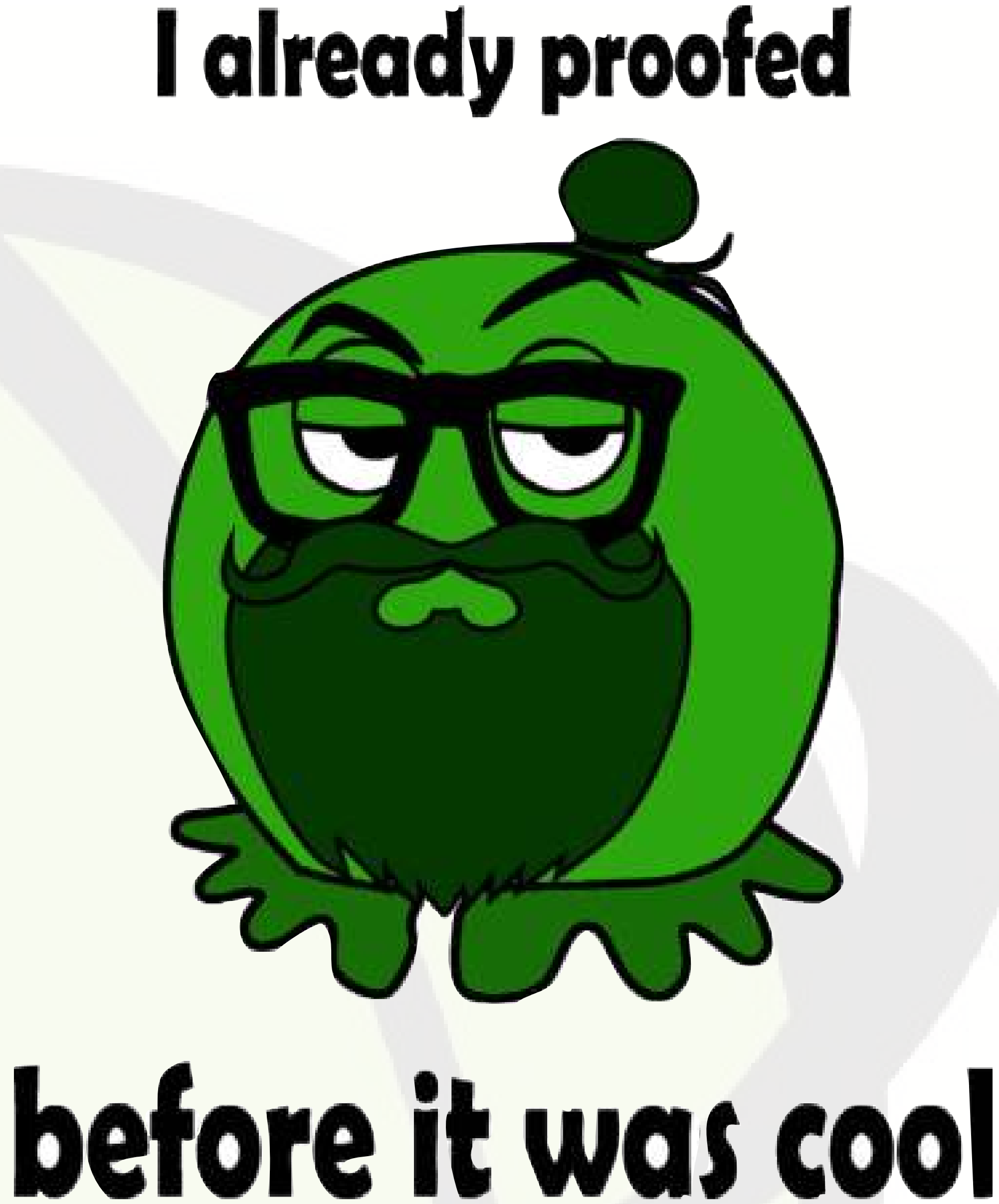
Proofreading. It sounds simple enough but thoroughly and effectively checking your own work (and the work of others) for mistakes can be a real challenge. It is all too easy when reviewing work to read what was intended to be written, rather than reading what is actually written on the page.

Firstly, if you have the time, then it is always a good idea to step away from the completed work for an hour or two before going back to review it. You are likely to skim over any mistakes in autopilot if you are proofreading content that you are very familiar with.

A tip that a university lecturer gave to me was to read the text backwards, from the end to the beginning, so that you focus on each word individually and pickup spelling mistakes or omitted letters. By allowing enough time to proofread properly, you can focus on looking for one type of mistake at a time. For example, start with spelling, then move on to punctuation, before checking layout. This is where a checklist can come in handy. You can’t go wrong with a good list and proofreading is no exception. Think about including things like spelling, punctuation, double or missing word spacing, capitalisation, formatting, website addresses, numbers etc.

What if you are proofreading another translator’s work? As well as what we’ve already talked about there are a few other things to keep in mind. Regardless of whether the document is destined for publication or not, the proofreader should always aim to deliver a document which is print-ready.

Checking that the language and style of the translation is consistent throughout the document and also matches up with the source text is vitally important. Some alterations may be necessary, but try not to make too many changes, especially if they are stylistic choices. Proofreading should be a collaborative task where suggestions are made – preferably using something like track changes – and then the original translator can evaluate whether he or she agrees with the suggested alterations. If available, complete a feedback form to give the translator and the project manager as much information as possible; it will help the translator in the future and ultimately the client will



receive a higher quality document.

If this has whet your appetite and you’d like to be able to offer an extra service to your clients or simply improve the quality of your work, then our Effective Proofreading course could be just what you’re looking for. Get in touch to find out more.

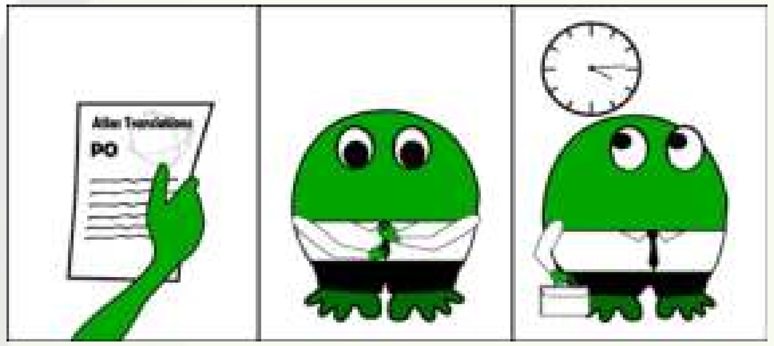
By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
This is not just an opportunity to pick apart someone’s work. So be considerate of your fellow translator and constructive in your feedback at all times.

22. Working onsite – things to consider

Working onsite for a client brings with it a different set of challenges for translators. First and foremost, agree with your client what you will be paid up front. This may seem like we're stating the obvious here, but it's important to have everything agreed upfront and in writing ahead of the assignment. Ask for a purchase order as proof of the work instruction.

At Atlas, we always agree a daily rate with suppliers for work carried out on clients' premises – even if the assignment is only expected to last one or two hours. The reason for this being that the supplier will probably have to block out a whole day from their schedule to ensure their availability for the assignment, so they should be paid for this whole day. Also if the assignment (though expected only to run for one or two hours) should overrun, the supplier won't need to rush off to be somewhere else.



We consider the standard working day to consist of 8 hours (usually between 9 and 5 with a break for lunch). If the assignment goes on for longer than this, you should be charging overtime at an hourly rate. Again, this should be agreed up front with your client.

Check what software and equipment the client will provide. For in-house translation assignments some of our translators prefer to bring their own laptops when possible. Think about what you'll need to work effectively. Things like foreign language keyboards and CAT tools will probably not be provided by the client.

Remember that while working onsite you're not only representing your client but yourself as a freelancer. Check with your client ahead of assignment if there is a dress-code. While most offices have done away with strict collar and tie dress-codes, it's still important to present yourself in a professional manner.

Plan your journey. Being late reflects badly on you and your client and looks unprofessional. If coming by car check with the client if parking is provided. We've had instances in the past where interpreters have arrived for an assignment in plenty of time, but had to spend half an hour finding somewhere to park, causing the interpreter to end up being late for their assignment. This doesn't make clients happy. You also need to agree with your client how travel costs will be covered. Check the client's policy for mileage (if travelling by car). All of this needs to be confirmed in advance of the assignment.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Remember not only are you representing yourself, but your client, and maybe even your client's client, so dress and act professionally.

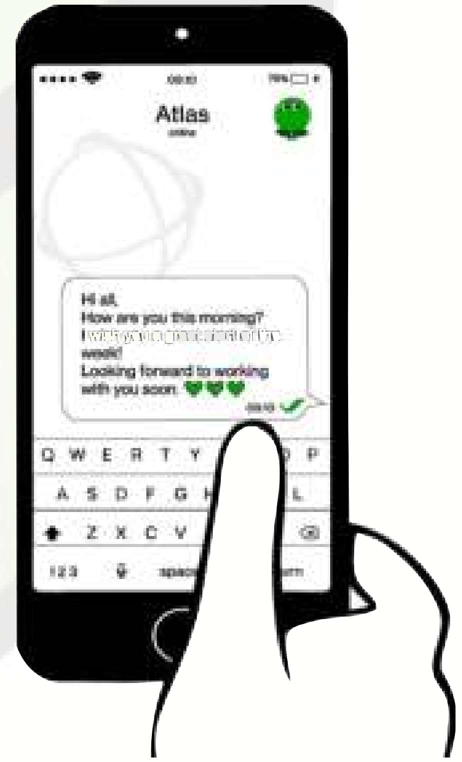
23. Maintaining a good relationship with agencies

So you've been approved to work with an agency, and have maybe had a couple offers of work, but what can you do to ensure these offers keep coming in? Below we've outlined some tips of effective ways of maintaining a good relationship with a translation agency.

Now, here's a bit of a disclaimer – as a personable, friendly agency, the tips outlined are things that WE appreciate from suppliers, however, unfortunately there are agencies out there who won't feel the same way. But don't worry It can't hurt to try and get in touch with staff members at agencies you're signed up with, and it will quickly become obvious if you're wasting your time. But why even try? We've outlined in previous chapters the value of standing out and marketing yourself, and this is a very important part of that. Besides, if you've gone to the trouble of filling out a lengthy application form then you may as well do your best to try and get some work out of it.

The first step to take is to engage with the agency. Get in contact to introduce yourself – remember picking up a phone (though scarier) and actually speaking to someone is far more effective than sending an email which can easily be overlooked. Even better (if you're in the area) is visiting the agency in person. You may want to arrange a good time with the agency to do this. We love having our suppliers come and visit us for a cup of tea/coffee and a chat, so next time you're in St Albans…

Social media is another way of getting in touch with an agency. Add them on to whatever you use and like/share/comment on posts.



Keep an eye on networking events and conferences agencies are attending. These present good opportunities to introduce yourself in a professional environment. Atlas Translations hold Open Days for suppliers twice a year. Come along, meet the project managers. You're so much more likely to receive assignments if people can put a face to the name. We have suppliers who come to every open day and are so familiar by now we see them as part of the team rather than freelancers.

Keep in touch with your agency and send them frequent (perhaps weekly) updates on your availability. Just by chance, the person you've just emailed may have received an urgent assignment in your language pairing. Suppliers often think that this would be annoying for the project manager but trust us, it's not. And it's a great way of getting your name known by the members of staff. If you do email saying you're available, please do remain contactable, and perhaps stick an automatic out of office message on if you're not. We have suppliers who email us telling us they're available, only for us to

TOP TIP
Developing personal relationships with the people you work with is a great way of getting yourself 'in' with a translation agency. If you have a chance to meet with your client/agency face to face, take it.

email them ten minutes later and not receive a reply – not the best way of maintaining a good relationship.

Above all, be friendly. These are people you're dealing with, and (in most cases) not some soulless, faceless corporation. We understand it can be frustrating to sign up with an agency and then not receive any assignments, but what will make this worse is getting upset/angry and complaining directly to the people you want to work with. Instead, give the agency a call for a friendly chat, reminding them you're available for work and what it is you do. Being polite and friendly will go a long way to forming a long lasting successful working relationship with a translation agency.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

24. Translating in PowerPoint

Translating in PowerPoint format isn't all that different from working in Word format, but there are a few things to be aware of.

It can be more time consuming, particularly when slides are in a 'non-editable' format. Sometimes, (but it's not always the case, so check with your client) featured tables and graphs are not required to be translated and can be copied and pasted into the final translation.

However, if the full PowerPoint presentation is required by the customer, the source text can be overwritten by either inserting a table with the translation or reproducing the table/graph in a separate slide or a separate document.

Although easily overlooked, there is a note section just underneath the slides where there may be some additional text to be translated. If there is text here, it's always better to check with your customer whether these sections need to be translated.

Formatting is another aspect you need to take into account when translating in PowerPoint. The 'Format Painter' tool (found in the top left hand corner) will help you to make sure the whole text is formatted consistently with the source document. Also, be aware that the spell check is not automatic for Power Point, but you can perform this by selecting your translation and clicking on 'Spelling' from the 'Proofing' group in the 'Review' tab.

While proofreading a document in Power Point format the suggestions/corrections cannot be shown as clearly as in a Word file, using the 'Track Changes' tool. The proofreader can either choose to insert a text box and add in his/her comments or mark the changes in red or whatever visible colour directly on the slides. It has happened many times that we've received proofread translations in a PowerPoint file, where the text had simply been changed without making this clear on the text. This can be very time consuming for the original translator to go through the text and compare it to the original translation.

Do you have any other tips for translating in PowerPoint? We'd love to hear them.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
When you first receive the PowerPoint file from your client, check all of the slides carefully for any non-editable or embedded text. These words probably won't have been in the word count you've been quoted.

25. Formatting translations

When working on a translation project, we may sometimes find it difficult to deal with the formatting of our documents, especially when dealing with complex layouts. It is however part of the translator's work to acknowledge any alterations the files may suffer and try to minimise the risk of formatting chaos.

Let's take a look at a few things we should take into account as regards formatting translations:

Use of CAT Tools in formatting translations

Computer-assisted tools such as Trados, MemoQ or Wordfast, often provide great support with formatting, as they can be configured not to alter the formatting of our target documents. Sounds about right, doesn't it? However, there are some things to take into account. Whereas most translators nowadays use CAT tools, not all of them do and they still face the same problem. Additionally, it is important to remember that, when we translate a document, the characters in the target language can increase or decrease, thus altering the formatting of our documents.

What to do if the client is not specific about formatting?

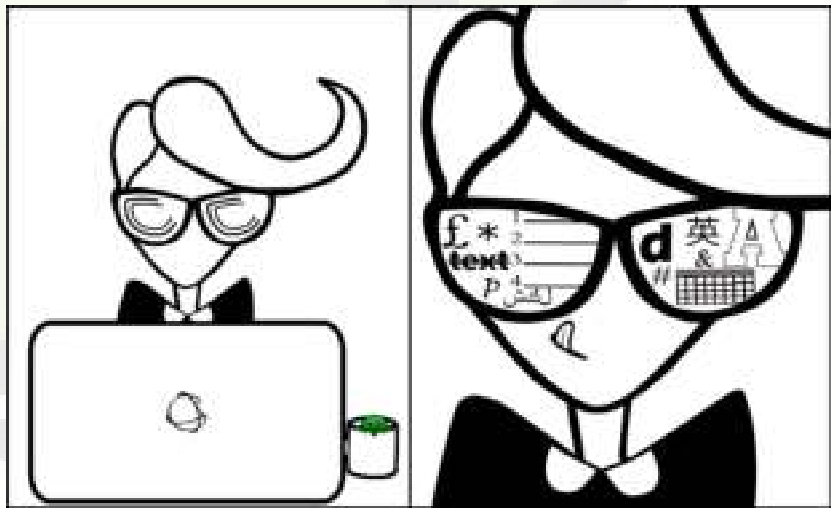
In this case, we would advise translators to maintain the original format if possible. In case the format needs to be modified, it is advisable to make the target document as clear as possible for the project manager and the client (use explanatory notes, pictures for reference, bullet points if necessary, etc.).

Working with dead PDFs

We are aware it can be a real pain in the neck having to struggle with dead PDFs – scans of documents whose characters cannot be recognised by translation tools - particularly when their format is complex. In these situations, remember that it would always be advisable to check with the client whether it is acceptable to deliver the documents in a different format.

Whatever option you choose, remember that you are not only responsible for the translation of your source documents but also for ensuring you deliver them in the right format.

Ruben Moreno, Freelance illustrator



TOP TIP

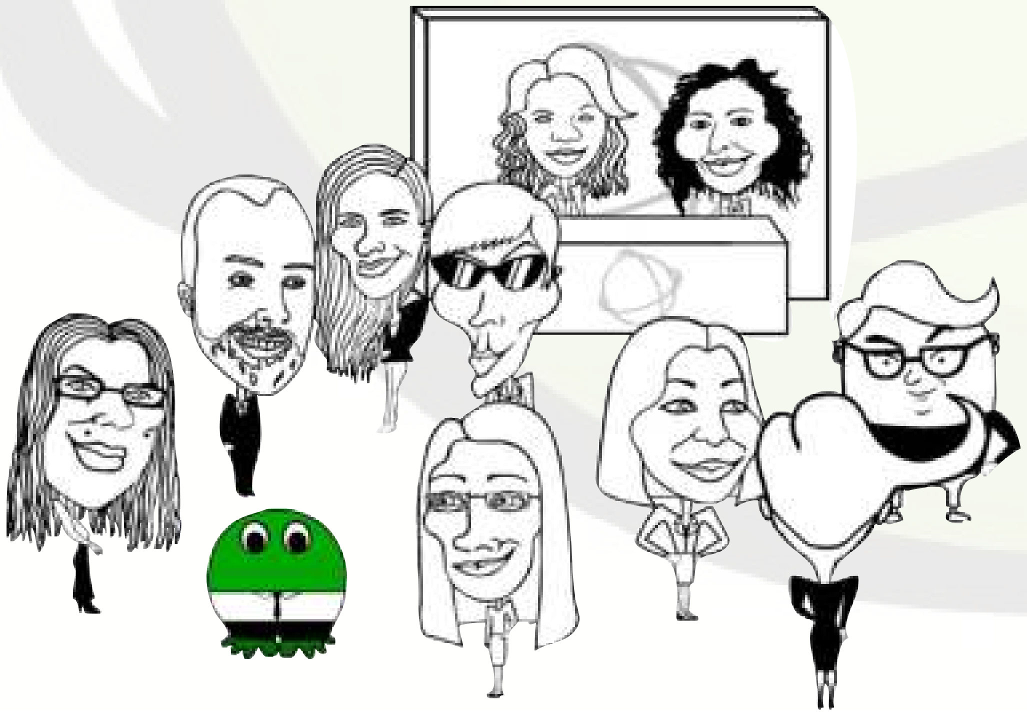
The rule of thumb that we go by, is to make your translation look as much like the original as possible. If you foresee problems, inform your client as soon as possible.

26. Active Networking

Earlier we touched upon marketing yourself as a freelance linguist and maintaining a good relationship with agencies. In both of those chapters we mentioned networking as something to do to increase your profile. Here, we go into a bit more depth about active networking and provide some tips.
One way to get into networking is to join in online discussions. These can be found on various websites, forums and on social media outlets such as LinkedIn and provide a good way of getting to know fellow linguists and increasing your awareness of industry trends. Members of online groups and discussions often transcend the virtual confines of the internet and arrange meet ups in person, providing more opportunities to expand social and professional horizons.

Then there are local networking groups. These come in various forms and sizes which is great because getting up at five in the morning for a breakfast networking session is not everyone's cup of tea. We at Atlas prefer the evening or mid-morning networking meetings. Local networking groups are easily found through a quick internet search. You can also check with your local Chamber of Commerce to see if they run anything. A personal favourite of ours is 'Speed Networking'. This can be done in various different ways but, when done one on one (each participant has one minute to speak about themselves before moving on) it usually gives you a good opportunity to relate what you do to someone else's businesses. As well as varying in form, networking groups vary in price so beware what sort of commitment you're getting into. Everyone is different and what works for one person won't work for another. Our advice here would be to go with whatever feels most natural for you. There is no right way, and (despite what some groups will tell you) one method is not necessarily more conducive to success than another. You'll more likely find that you're more successful where you feel more comfortable. So if pitching your services to a room full of people is your thing, great! But if you prefer to chat to people one on one over a cup of tea in a more natural environment, that's fine too.

Conferences and seminars run by bodies such as ITI present other good opportunities to network with colleagues and potential clients. Universities and colleges (especially those with language courses) often put on events, so keep an eye out for these in your local area. At Atlas, we hold two open days a year for suppliers to attend, meet our members of staff and get to know us a bit better. Suppliers who attend usually receive an increased number of assignments from us.



Business exhibitions provide a chance to chat face to face with potential clients. Atlas has exhibited at a number of events on both a local level, and also at larger shows (usually in London at venues like the Excel Arena and Olympia). Often we meet translators who have taken an afternoon out of their busy schedules to come down for a bit of networking and many have ended up working for us.

So we've identified a number of ways you can get involved with networking, both online and in person. But what are some things to consider before going to your first networking meeting? You'll need some professional business cards. You can get this done inexpensively by printers or websites. But do include your professional entity (if you have one) and all of your contact details. You may want to consider including your social media handles if you want to connect with clients and colleagues via this medium.

The exchange of business cards is still a standard of networking and you'll probably come home from a networking event laden with business cards from people you cannot remember, despite having been in conversation with them just minutes earlier. This is ok – the intensive nature of some networking has this effect. Take a pen and write notes on the business cards people give you – this is not a sign of disrespect. Quite the opposite. In fact, it shows you are listening and care about what someone is saying to you. When you get back home or to your office, perhaps go through the cards and create a spread sheet or document listing the details of people you'd like to remain in contact with.

Try to add people on LinkedIn or social media (if you use these) then dispose of the cards – you'll only lose them anyway, so don't leave them cluttering up your desk. It is said that if you do not contact someone within ten days of meeting them at a networking event, they will have forgotten the meeting and the opportunity will have been lost, so bear this in mind when meeting someone you think you could do business with.

Be sure to present yourself professionally. Even when the nature of the networking event is fairly relaxed, making a bit of effort will at least make sure you don't stand out for the wrong reasons.

Finally the million dollar question – how to network your services effectively and increase your sales? Well I'm afraid there is no straight answer for this. But the more you do it, the better and more natural you'll become. No matter how confident you are, speaking to complete strangers about what you do can seem unnatural and uncomfortable. But the more you put yourself outside of your comfort zone the better you'll get, and you'll soon be able to speak confidently and fluently about what you do, and how it can help the people listening. The selling part comes almost automatically. Language services can be difficult to market, but try to relate what you do to what the person you're speaking to does. This can be done with any profession. Try not to go for the hard sell though – just be friendly and listen to what other people are saying. You can then relate your services to their business and demonstrate how you can add value to what they do.

Above all, try to enjoy it and have fun! So much of the daily schedule of a freelance linguist (especially translators) involves sitting in front of a computer screen in isolation. This is a chance to leave the office and meet some new people and perhaps make important contacts for your freelance business. We've met a vast

TOP TIP
For a freelancer who predominantly works from home it's important to get yourself out and about every now and then. Networking presents the perfect opportunity to do so and you never know who you'll meet!

array of different people in our time networking, from magicians to skydivers to former British Lions rugby players – you never know what opportunities may present themselves at a networking event.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

27. Ongoing Continuous Professional Development

Whether you've been a professional translator or interpreter for many years, or you're just beginning your career in the translation industry, it's important to continue enhancing your skills and develop your linguistic arsenal further. On-going continuous professional development is one way of ensuring you'll never be left behind in an industry which is constantly changing. If you've worked for us before or you're browsing our website to apply for a freelance position, please let us know about your on-going CPD and make sure you keep your profile up to date so that we're aware of your new skills and competences you've learnt. Having a qualification in translation and years of experience doesn't mean you don't need to continue developing new skills and learning more about the industry and all of the services that you may be able to offer. There are so many different areas to gain experience in, and adding a new string to your bow will present new opportunities, whether it be a new area of expertise or a new service you can offer your clients.

Spending some time on CPD also demonstrates to clients how much you care about the quality of your work. We do take this into account, when reviewing applications and considering translators for projects, as quality is our first concern. Keeping records of your CPD up to date is a guarantee of quality for your clients and makes you stand out from the crowd.

At Atlas we offer training courses for professional linguists, from beginners courses in CAT Tools training (Trados, MemoQ, Wordfast) to Voiceover Workshops (For Beginners and Advanced Level). Why not take the chance to gain more experience and upgrade your knowledge about the translation world?

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
CPD is vital in preventing your skills from becoming rusty. You're never too old to learn and the old saying that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' couldn't be more wrong. Don't rest on your laurels!

28. You've been offered a transcription assignment, what should you do next?

The first step on your transcription assignment will be to check over the audio file you've been sent, to make sure the material is in your mother tongue and within your area of expertise. You'll also need to make sure the quality of the sound is high enough that you can clearly make out what's being said. Try to identify any areas of concern (perhaps due to ambient background noise obscuring what's being said, or temporary bad sound quality).

Once you're confident the audio file is something you're comfortable working with, and know you can meet the deadline set out by the client, check that the number of hours being allocated to transcribe the audio is enough. We usually allocate one hour of work for every ten minutes of audio to be transcribed. Sometimes, if the audio is more dialogue intensive or the subject matter is technical you'll need to spend a bit longer on the transcription. Make sure the client is willing to pay you for this extra time before you agree to go ahead with the job.

Transcriptions are required for a multitude of different reasons and it is important to understand what the end use of the transcription will be as this will help you provide your client with what they need. For example, does the client want you to include any of the imperfections which creep into spoken language, such as hesitations (er, erm) or repeated words? Or would they rather a cleaner text with these parts left out? When the end usage of a transcription is for subtitling, there will often be a limit to the number of characters you can use in each line of your transcription, so this is something you'll need to be aware of from the beginning. Check with your client to make sure you're on the same page.

Finally, how does the transcription need to be formatted, and how often does the client want to implement time codes (if at all)? We prefer to use a simple Word table template for transcriptions with columns for time codes, the name of the speaker and the transcription itself. If we need to then translate the transcription, we can add in a new column for this. For subtitles, sometimes clients prefer using Excel. Either way, if they've not provided you with a template for the transcription, it's best to ask your client if they have a preferential format. Time coding is sometimes needed and sometimes not. We include time coding as a standard part of the transcription service though some choose to charge extra for this. Again, this comes back to the end usage of the transcription, but checking how often timings need to be indicated will avoid having to revisit this later on.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
It's important to clarify what the end use of the transcription will be. Is for for subtitles? A court transcript? Knowing this will help you make decisions about what is neccesary to transcribe.

29. How to be a really popular interpreter with your clients

Atlas offers a broad range of different interpreting services, and has a good deal of experience with different types of interpreting assignments, but regardless of which type(s) of interpreting you offer, here are some tips to make sure you remain a popular interpreter with your clients and become their 'go-to' person in your language and service combination.

Be up front and honest with your rates, and make your client aware of any other costs involved with an assignment. Don't be afraid to mention things like travel expenses and subsistence costs – clients should cover these if necessary and if they're not willing to do so, then it's probably worth reconsidering your working relationship with the client. Is your rate a daily or an hourly rate? And does it include travel time? At Atlas, we always prefer to go with a daily rate, no matter how long or short an assignment is. We also do not pay for travel time (though we do cover travel costs). Even if an assignment is only expected to last a couple of hours we like to agree a rate for the interpreter's time for the whole day, so that if the assignment overruns, the time is covered. Also, the interpreter will not have any other appointments to get to that day, so will not have to leave early in the event that the assignment goes on for longer than expected. Usually the first stage of any interpreting assignment involves budgeting, and by being clear about your costs, you make the job of your client that much simpler. Of course, do disclose overtime rates and cancellation costs in the event that things change.

Being quick to respond to emails and phone calls will also go a long way towards increasing your popularity with clients. As with many assignments, interpreting jobs can be urgent in nature, and giving your client a prompt response will help move the project along smoothly – and they'll be thankful for it even if they don't mention it.

Once costs are agreed and the assignment is confirmed, doing some groundwork and preparation will help you to do the best possible job. Asking your client for any background or supporting materials demonstrates a willingness to go the extra mile and an attention to detail. All of this feeds back into the quality you will deliver on-site, and will raise your standing with your client or agency. Arriving in plenty of time is absolutely vital. Turning up late will probably damage your relationship with your client, so be sure to plan your journey well in advance and try to arrive half an hour early if possible.

Once the assignment is complete, check in with your client to let them know how the assignment went and to see if they had any feedback to offer from their side. If there's anything that happened during the assignment the client should know about, tell them. Do you think there may be future requirement for interpreting, translation or any other services? Let your client know this (and your availability for any potential future assignments) as it shows a willingness to promote the services of your client, and will make it clear you are happy to work on similar assignments.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

30. Marketing translations

Some of the most popular subject areas we receive texts for translation in are legal, medical and marketing. While it is common knowledge that legal and medical texts, which are known for their technicality, and often written in a language unto themselves require translators who specialise in these fields to work on them, the same can actually be said for marketing translations and advertising texts. Lacking the technical terminology which is immediately obvious upon inspection of legal or medical texts, marketing materials may initially seem straightforward to translate, and at a glance present little or no surface difficulties with such technical terminology. However, these marketing texts are carefully and deliberately structured in a certain way, and do require the attention of translators who specialise in this area. It is important not to underestimate these materials when working on them.

Our first piece of advice is to read the source text extra carefully. Try to think about the purpose of the text – WHAT is the author trying to achieve, and HOW are they doing it? Getting this right is vital to producing a translation which achieves the same effect as the source document. When translating, the 'HOW' may be subject to change according to what works in your language, but the 'WHAT' should always remain the same. If you're unsure about anything, ask your client for clarification. It is better to do this as early on in the project as possible to avoid any potential delays.

Ask your client for a style guide. Even if it is not in the language you'll be translating in, a style guide will provide an insight of how your end client likes their written communications to come across to the reader, and will give you an idea of how the translation should read. The first time you work with a client on any marketing translations or advertising materials, ask to see any previous translations, even if the client wasn't happy with them – this will at least give

TOP TIP
Marketing texts can often be written in a language unto themselves. If you're not an experting in marketing, consider carefully whether you are right for the job.

you an idea of what to avoid. Spend some time browsing the internet to get a feel for the end client's brand and how they try to market their product(s). Marketing texts are often heavily stylised and a lot of thought will have been put into the style, so it is important to try and match this in the translation if possible. Do consider if the style would be appropriate in your language though. What is deemed friendly and informal in one language could be seen as rude and offensive in another. Be sure to explain this to your client, and flag any issues with the style with your client.

Taglines and slogans are of paramount importance in marketing and branding. If you have to translate these, consider what will work in the target language. More often than not it won't be a straightforward translation, and here is where transcreation comes in. For those unfamiliar with the term, transcreation is the process of adapting a message from one language to another, while maintaining the meaning and purpose of the original. For example, if the source contains a phrase or tagline which makes perfect sense in English such as 'It's all Greek to me!', but does not make any sense in the target language, you'll need to come up with something new that is different but carries the same meaning. Explain to your client that you can't provide a literal translation that will make sense, and back-translate the translation into English so they understand the literal meaning. You could even provide a couple of options so the client can go with their preference.

Lastly, try to think about the audience that the materials you are translating is aimed at. What is the demographic? How old will the reader be? This should help you with the tone of your translation. Ask your client if this is not clear. As a native speaker of the target language, you will probably know the target audience better than your end client, so be sure to raise anything you consider to be problematic!

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

31. IT Problems

When you work with computers on a day to day basis, sooner or later you are bound to experience some IT problems, and you can guarantee it will be around 15 minutes before your super urgent translation is due to be sent to your client. At Atlas, we've faced our fair share of IT problems over the years, so here are a few tips on dealing with them.

As inevitable as they can seem, there is a lot you can and should do to prevent IT problems from becoming an issue. As a translator, it is more or less compulsory to own a computer with access to the internet in order to work. As these assets are fundamental to your livelihood and reputation, protect and invest in them. Make sure your operating system is kept up to date and compatible with what your main clients work with. From ensuring that you regularly download updates to making sure you're working with the most current version of your operating system, to upgrading the very hardware you work with. An IT engineer told me recently that a computer or laptop only really has a life of three years. While this is perhaps a bit extreme, you should probably look at upgrading every five years. It's well worth keeping an external hard drive, so that if something does go wrong with your computer, all is not lost.

Similarly, it's worth keeping the programs you use up to date. Working with older versions of something like Microsoft Word, can cause formatting and compatibility issues when your client is trying to open the translation you've sent in a more recent version of Word. Your client will not thank you for this and it could affect the likelihood of them sending you more work. Having antivirus software or a firewall is also essential in protecting your systems, and if you regularly experience internet outages, perhaps you should look at changing your provider, or upgrading your internet speed.

As well as performing regular maintenance on the tools of your trade, put a backup plan in place. How could you deliver a translation if, say, there was a power outage where you usually work and you were unable to access the internet or the machine you usually work on? Try to find two or three locations where you would be able to access the internet and work well. Perhaps the local library, a café with free wireless internet, or a friend's house. That way, if you've been saving your file onto an external hard drive or memory stick, you can simply plug into a new device and continue working. While this may cause a delay to your delivery deadline, you're not completely cut off.

If IT problems are going to have an effect on the delivery deadline, let your client know as soon as possible. Everyone will have been in a similar situation at some point or another, so they should be understanding. It will help a lot if you can explain that you've got measures in place (backup plan) to minimise the effect of the disruption. Good communication is key. If the translation is going to be even ten minutes late, let your client know in as much time as possible so they can manage the expectations of their end client. As with most things in a deadline driven industry, time is of the essence, so giving your client a 'head's up' is vital.

If you're really stuck, keep your client informed with as much information as possible. We've had deadlines pass with no word from the translator, until 30 minutes or so after the deadline, when a supplier has just said something along the lines of 'Sorry I'm having IT problems so am running a bit late'. This doesn't help the client at all. What has happened? When will the translation be ready? What are you doing to ensure delivery will be made as soon as possible? Letting your client know this information will ease their worries and assure them that you are doing everything in your power to work around the IT problems you're faced with.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

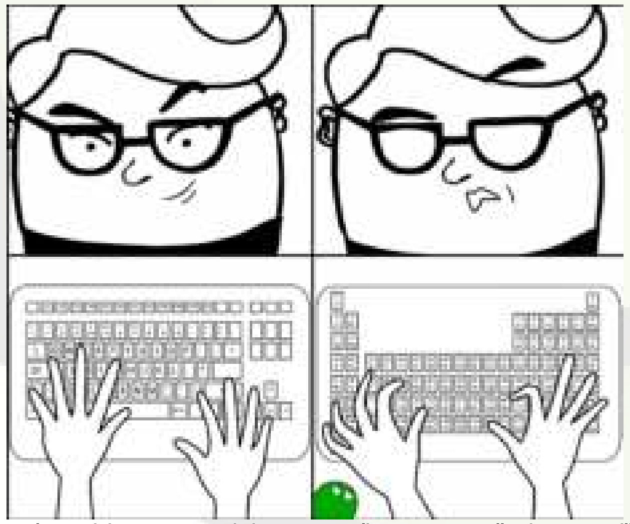
TOP TIP
Make sure you install available updates to programs and operating systems, and have good anti-virus software.

32. When things get too technical...

You've been offered a job from a client and of course the first thing you want to do before accepting the project, is to check the documents and make sure that the source materials are in a subject area you're familiar with, and that you're able to deliver a quality job. Unfortunately, every now and then a supplier will take on a project which is too technical for their level of expertise. Perhaps because they are desperate to start working with a particular client, or they haven't checked the source texts carefully. Sometimes, it can just be an honest mistake. Source texts that appear to be well within your level of expertise at a first glance can suddenly become very technical halfway through.

Whatever the reason, if you find yourself in this situation, our best advice is to always be honest with your client, and let them know as soon as possible that you won't be able to complete the translation because the terminology has become too technical for you to handle. Although this might not seem like a very professional course of action, it will actually prove that your priority is to produce a quality translation, and admitting you're in over your head as soon as possible will leave the client more time to reassign the job to a different translator, and make sure that the end client's requirements are met.

I can recall a couple of instances when we've been let down by suppliers because they realised too late that the job they had accepted was not the kind of text they thought it was upon first inspection. This is something that a translator should be able to assess quite quickly, and the more experience you have, the better you'll be at this. That being said, checking a source text extra carefully can eliminate the chance of this happening, as can keeping your clients up do date with your areas of expertise, to ensure that you're not contacted for an unsuitable project in the first case. The best policy is to never agree to take on anything until you've seen the source materials.



Being professional and honest with your clients at all times will help you build the best working relationship with them, while demonstrating your dedication to quality. Everyone makes mistakes. The most important thing is how we react after we've made them, so don't be afraid to admit that you're out of your depth as the alternative is much worse.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
If you're going to let your client down, do as much as you can to help them find someone else for the job - do you have any colleagues who might be available?

33. My translation is going to be late. What's the best way to deal with this?

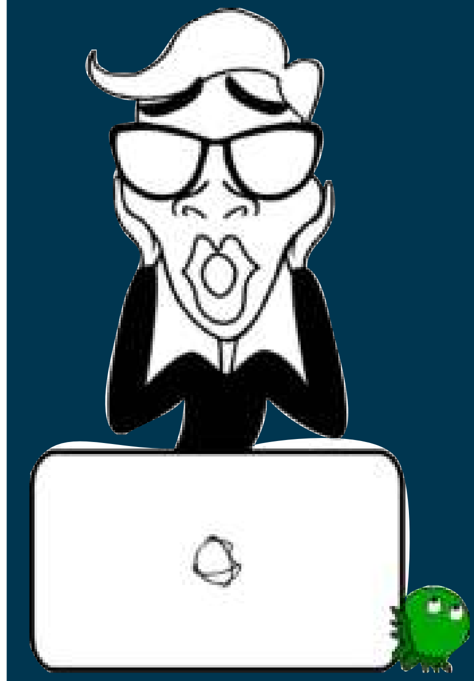
Previously we've discussed what to do in the event you're experiencing IT difficulties, and mentioned the importance of contacting your client as soon as you can to give as much notice as possible if anything is going to have an effect on your ability to deliver your translation by the agreed deadline. If you're going to be late delivering your work, for whatever reason, the best policy is honesty. Your client may not always be understanding and may be under a lot of pressure with the project, but what certainly won't help is making something up or even worse, saying nothing at all.

From the viewpoint of a project manager working for an agency, I always try to be sympathetic with a translator who will almost always have a good reason for being late with a project. Getting angry about it doesn't help anyone, and even if the reason for lateness is just that the translator mismanaged their time, I appreciate the fact that they've been honest and owned up to it. Preferably a translator will let us know as early as possible so that we can manage the expectations of our client better.

I have experienced situations when translators have not delivered their translations to the agreed deadline, and when chased about it, they do not reply to emails or answer the phone. Only upon being told that the project will have to be reassigned do they inform us that the translation will be ready in half an hour, only for half an hour to pass with no further communication. From experience, this is the worst possible way to handle being late, and will probably have a lasting negative impact on your working relationship with that client. Turning up late for an interpreting assignment must never happen, but if you know you are going to be late, again, you must inform your client.

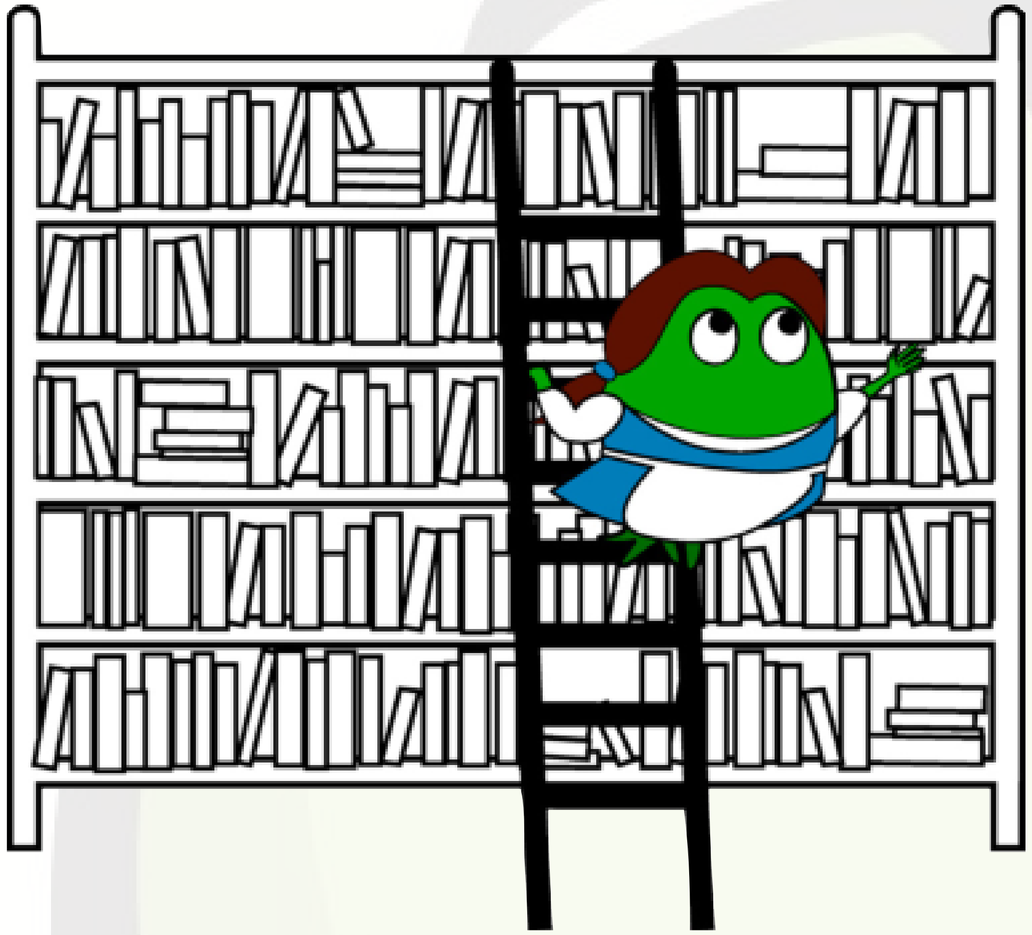
I cannot emphasise how important it is to deliver assignments on time. We no longer work with some translators because projects were consistently delivered late, despite the work being of a high quality. If you doubt your ability to make a delivery deadline, raise this with the client. Either request an extension or turn the project down. Be sure to look over source documents carefully before agreeing to deadlines to ensure you can meet them. Keep an organised calendar of upcoming events as not to forget anything that will influence your work flow. And most importantly, know your limits. Your reputation as a freelancer is essential – don't damage this by agreeing to something you can't fulfill.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP
Be honest with your client and keep them informed. The worst thing you can do if the translation is going to be late is to ignore emails and phone calls.

34. How to make the most of reference material



Whether the source materials you've been given to work on are of a technical nature or whether they're fairly straightforward, if your client has provided you with some reference material you'll need to make sure you use this efficiently.

The very nature of translation is subjective, so if a client has had something translated before in a style they liked, it's beneficial to all parties that they provide this for reference when working on new materials. It'll help you with terminology, style and tone, and make sure you deliver an end product you know your client is happy with.

If you've undertaken a translation focused around a technical subject, you must take into account that this client is entrusting you with something that could be crucial to their business or personal life. Sometimes we receive manuals for factory machinery or legal certificates, and if the client hasn't provided any reference materials, it's very important to find your own source of reference to use for the project.

For example, in the case of a technical manual you may not always know everything about the topic nor be aware of some of the specific terminology or elements used in a particular industry. In such cases you can refer to specialised websites. First of all you may want to check out the website of the company that the translation is for and make sure the terminology used is consistent with the client's preferences (if there are any existing translations). Another option would be to look at similar companies' websites, or at approved technical glossaries available on the web, which would prevent you using incorrect terminology.

TOP TIP
If you have been sent reference material then the client has provided this for a reason. Make sure you refer to it. It may make the translation process slightly longer, but you'll be delivering something you know the client will be happy with.

Translating materials in a topic you're unfamiliar is not something we'd ever recommend, but the occasion may arise when you're in this situation. If you aren't working in a field you're especially experienced in, it is essential, before starting working on the project, to take the time to immerse yourself in the subject. Search for glossaries, read articles, watch videos, and consult other colleagues who may be able to provide additional information.

Also, ask the client to provide any reference material they have available; especially in the case of technical manuals, illustrative diagrams and specialised glossaries; this can be very helpful.

In many instances there can be several possible translations for the same term, and all of these can be correct, depending on the different context. The differences can vary depending on how formal the word is, the style the client requires or the industry in which that specific term is used. If/when you come across such a term, it is always best to raise a query for the attention of the client or check with a specialised term base to avoid any mistranslations.

Following these steps should help you to provide a translation your client will be happy with, and one that has been perfectly adapted to the necessary target language.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

35. Communicating with clients

We are all about communicating here at Atlas Translations; it is one of our best assets. When we are in the office we are here for clients and suppliers by phone, email, fax (there are a few people still using faxes), Twitter… and in person too.

With good communication everyone is happier – queries are quickly resolved and potential problems can be avoided, relationships become stronger and there is a greater understanding of what each party needs, and the pressures and constraints upon them.

When we work with translators and interpreters, we like to get to know them beyond a "here is your purchase order" level. We want you to become a member of our team who just happens to be working somewhere else.

Most clients are the same. They may not know exactly what they need, or what you actually do. They may be up against time constraints and technical issues. Possibly they have never worked with languages before. So firstly we recommend asking your clients some questions – communicating clearly with them. Who is the audience, what are they doing with the translation, is someone else checking it, have they had materials translated before? Interpreters will be asking similar questions, is there reference material, will they be working with other interpreters, along with the usual where/how long and when?

This may raise some questions the client can't answer – not a bad thing as they can find out the answer at the start of the project rather than at the last minute when you thought you'd finished. It shows you as professional, interested and thoughtful. One point is that nobody likes to be lectured – yes, they do need it by 9am tomorrow, this person has probably just had the task dumped on their desk and it may not be their fault – so don't launch into a tirade about how this

TOP TIP
In the age of email, we sometimes miss a personal touch in communication. Develop and strengthen your client relationships, and they'll be more likely to remember you when a suitable assignment comes along.

is impossible… If you can't help, explain why and offer solutions – can they extend the deadline? Wish them luck and maintain a professional front.

It does sound obvious, but always be polite, whatever you may be thinking about a client. If for any reason you don't want or can't do the work, refuse gracefully. This includes when replying in writing, as short and possibly curt emails can be misunderstood as rudeness.

Don't be afraid to raise queries and ask questions along the way. A client will usually welcome these. Perhaps save them up and wait until you have been through the entire document – your answer may become clear. Politely point out any spelling errors and/or factually incorrect text you may spot.

Once the job is complete, your communication skills are not over. Firstly you may need to contact the client regarding payment of your invoice, and secondly you may want to ask if they have more work for you later down the line. And you should communicate in both cases. Don't just wonder why you never heard from them again – maybe your contact has left… keep communication open.

Let's not forget those clients you want to work with, but haven't yet. Keep in touch with them – we receive lovely postcards and Christmas cards, for instance, from translators who would like to work with us. See also chapter 37 on keeping in touch with clients.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

36. Tips for editing/amending

You've just delivered a translation to a client and you're about to make yourself a cup of tea before you start working on a new project. Sounds like a good start. Don't forget that your client may need your help again – editing is part of the job too.

There are many reasons why you may be asked to revise your translation, the most unfortunate case is when the client has spotted some mistakes in the text and they're asking you to correct them. This is certainly the situation you want to avoid as much as possible.

Another reason why you should amend your translation is because this has been revised internally by the client and they may have a preference for a particular style, which you weren't aware of at the time.

First of all, it is important to distinguish between Editing and Proofreading. Although both terms seem to have the same meaning, there is quite a big difference between them.

Proofreading is a process whereby the text is being checked against the original document to ensure that grammar, syntax or spelling errors are corrected. This process concentrates on the form and the correctness of the text rather than the terminology and the use of a dictionary is required only to check spelling and conjugation.

Editing is a different process where terminology is the main focus and it involves research and the use of specialised dictionaries. Most translators and editors work with CAT tools and these can be very useful for editing assignments, as they make it easier to replace wrong terms often used throughout the text. However, 'Find & Replace' tools will also come handy in the case of short or less complex texts.

When working in Word, the 'track changes' tool is usually used, and sometimes comments can be added through the commenting tool, to make it clearer to the original translator, especially if working in different formats, such as Pdf or Excel files. In either case, the editor only recommends changes and does not implement them.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP

Editing can be fairly painstaking, but just take your time and be sure to read over the final version when you've finished.

37. Keeping in touch

In the world of translation and interpreting, establishing a good relationship with your customers is key for a prosperous and constructive working relationship. Initially you'll have to invest some time and effort into keeping in touch, but you'll almost definitely enjoy a return for your endeavour.

Investment

Client relationships are like flowers – if you want to see them grow you'll need to nurture them. You want to make sure that they're happy and always well served with their translation needs or they're likely to take their business elsewhere. A strong level of communication is therefore essential. This can be achieved through different channels, and social media is one of the easier and more engaging ways to keep in touch with your clients.

Social Media
Give your clients a friendly recommendation on Twitter, so they know you're thinking of them. Also, 'Like' their Facebook Page – most clients have one today, and make sure you check their updates. Leave smart comments on their posts or blogs and make sure you use correct spelling and punctuation. You want to impress.

Find potential clients on LinkedIn and connect with them. Don't forget to update your profile regularly, it will ensure that they can see you're active and what you're up to professionally. They can also access your professional history, so make sure this is well presented.

Keeping Notes

Keeping track of all your clients is not always easy, but we recommend keeping a short list of all your existing clients (their names, phone numbers, email addresses, Twitter accounts…) and adding a note about each contact where you state some personal information. It will help you to add a personal touch to your relationship, and clients will remember you more. Hopefully this personal relationship will become more natural over time, but in the beginning it can be useful to keep your client's details in such a way.

Although all the aforementioned can boost your relationship with your clients, nothing beats face-to-face communication. If you can, arrange to meet with your customers, even just for a cup of tea and a chat. You could even send a Christmas card or a box of chocolates – they'll be sure to remember you then (hint hint)!

Marketing your translation business does take time and money initially, but it will pay for itself in the end.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

38. Credit control

Credit control – Before you start work

Credit control really starts from the moment you consider taking a job, from any client, translation agency or not. Have you confirmed all costs in writing, with or without VAT? Is it a fixed price or dependent on an hourly rate? Is there a limit on number of hours? Have you been given a purchase order? What are this company's credit terms? When you are clear on these answers, and happy with them, only then should you start work.

Once you have finished the work

Once the work is completed, invoice promptly. Often, the sooner you send your invoice, the sooner you will be paid. Plus, take it from me, it's annoying to receive an invoice several months after the work was completed.

Invoicing instructions

Do follow the instructions on invoicing to the letter. Get all the details correct – including full company name and address. If in any doubt, include as much detail as possible, purchase order number, job numbers and references. Remember that your invoice should also include your full name and address, and contact details in case of any query. Make sure you add how you would prefer to be paid, including any bank details, PayPal address etc. Use a numbering system for your invoices as this makes it much easier to keep track of payments and anything that may have got lost.

Submit your invoice

Send the invoice by the method instructed. Usually these days, an email is sufficient. Some companies (like Atlas), ask you to log in and submit an invoice online.

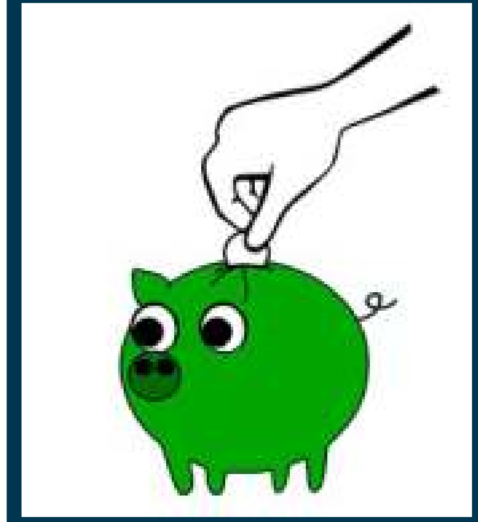
Record keeping

A key part of credit control is keeping careful records of all your invoices, when they were sent and when they were due. Follow up to ensure that the invoice was safely received. If the client has a query, resolve it as quickly as possible to avoid any further delays.

Sending reminders

If payment does not arrive promptly, send a polite message to the accounts department and/or your contact at the company, to check everything is OK and that payment is on its way. Whenever you send a reminder, also attach a copy of the invoice, so if it has somehow been lost, the client now has a new copy without having to spend time requesting it.

Remember that large companies can have quite complicated purchasing systems (and extended credit terms) so it really is worth following up your invoice, even before it is due, to ensure it's been received. If you wait 60 days and then discover the invoice has never been received, you will have to submit



TOP TIP
Be organised and don't let things go. If a client tries to get away without paying you, take the neccesary action.

again and potentially wait a further 60 days. Very frustrating so best avoided to start with.

However you remind clients about overdue invoices, make sure you use a friendly and professional tone, not rude or abusive. No accounts manager will put you at the top of the list if you are grumpy and unpleasant. Delays happen, people leave, managers don't keep up with their paperwork, someone forgets to approve your invoice… Chances are whoever you speak to isn't responsible for the delay. Remember this when managing your own credit control.

Still no money?

Make two or three phone calls, and if no payment is forthcoming, send a Formal Demand for payment. This assumes that no queries have been raised regarding your work. The Demand will clearly state all details of the invoice, and dates of your calls and email messages, and will indicate that despite your very best efforts, no payment has been received. Include a date by which you will be expecting payment and make it clear that this is your last attempt before you are forced to take further (legal) action to recover the amount due.

Next steps

If you are based in England and waiting for payment from a company based in England, the system is straightforward. This website is very helpful:

www.gov.uk/make-court-claim-for-money

At Atlas we will complete the court forms, including interest and court fees. We then send the client a copy of the form, advising it will be submitted online within five working days if no payment is received.

Court forms

With your record keeping, you will have no problem completing the details on the form – in summary that you took on a job, you have agreement of payment and terms in writing. You completed the work and submitted your invoice. You have tried your best to recover the amount owed (list phone calls and emails, any promises made, formal notice). Keep this factual and do not add in personal details or your frustration with the client. You will need to pay a court fee, which the client will need to reimburse you for, along with interest.

We follow procedures along these lines for any clients who seem to be avoiding paying us. If we need to start court action to recover any debt, even a small one, we will do so.

I wish you all luck and plenty of fast paying, trustworthy clients – as most of them are.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

39. Professional safety & identity theft

Agony aunt I am not, but over the years I've read many reports from translation agencies: "Every day we receive around 50 translator applications which are patently fake. They are easily recognisable because of the incongruous language combinations …Further clues are the clumsy English – many begin with 'Hello Sir' – and the similar typeface. As fakes they are laughably obvious and we just delete them on arrival, nevertheless they are an irritation and have you had a similar experience and do you have any suggestions for "hitting back" at the perpetrators?"

We all know there are scammers out there on the internet. Con artists who tell us we've won the lottery, inherited $4 million, qualified for a tax refund. And that's just before breakfast. Cyber-crime is rife and it's getting more sophisticated – translation companies, translators and clients all need to be alert and aware.

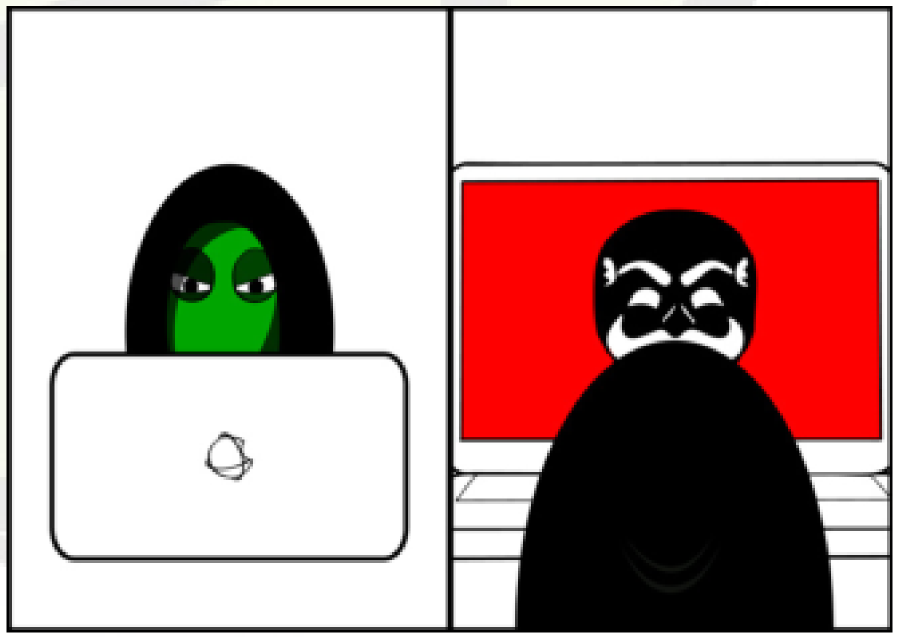
Years ago we became aware of scammers and identity theft in the translation industry and I was puzzled. Why was a translator I knew sending me his CV? But it wasn't him. Someone had pinched his CV online. How could this work? Well, I could have sent him work. He may have asked for a payment in advance. And then delivered via Google Translate, if at all.

Professional Safety and Identity Theft

CVs have always been used to win work in this industry. Indeed, in many industries. But as scammers and hackers become more and more imaginative, you need to protect your CV to ensure professional safety. There is a lot you can do with date stamps, watermarks, passwords and more to ensure your professional safety online, but at the very least:

- Don't put your CV online – have it available on request only.
- Don't include too much personal info – avoid birth date, marital status, children
- Keep track of who you have sent it to, and only send it to someone when you've had a look to make sure they are who they say they are.

Sending speculative CVs for work?



TOP TIP
Make your CV available upon request only. Most translation agencies will actually require you to complete an application form anyway, so sending a CV to prospective clients is often unnecessary.

We now discard all email applications unless they are personally addressed to us or following up some event or meeting we've attended. It has turned our application process on its head, as we used to reply to every email.
I have often mentioned this problem when I meet translators and students, and advise freelancers to make their CV available on request rather than keep it online on community translation sites.

When it comes to the matter of presenting yourself professionally, I have always advised freelancers to research who they want to work with and make a direct and personal approach. Sending out mass emails attaching your CV has never been the best idea, and now I believe it's borderline pointless.

There really is no way of effectively hitting back, as if one email address is shut down, another will open up, and like the bank managers who contact you regularly to share $20 million with you, they just keep coming back.

More information

A fantastic, free resource is the Translation Scammers Directory who you can also follow on Twitter @tsdirectory. I contacted the busy team and they flagged up new trends:

"Scammers now presenting themselves as "independent project managers."
The way they get and deliver their jobs (if at all) remains the same: fake CVs and Google Translate or substandard translators (who in the end aren't paid).
And let's not forget the fake companies set up by scammers, sometimes with well-designed websites to go with them. Of course, addresses are always fake and, as usual, these companies have no phones."

Reference

www.translator-scammers.com
www.scambusters.org/translationscams.html

(A version of this article first appeared in ITI Bulletin winter 2015).

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

40. Handling feedback on your translation

Translating for clients is often very rewarding but it can be hard to get there when you've just started working in the industry. Once you're armed with the necessary experience and qualifications, you want to ensure your work is of the highest quality. But how will you know if your clients are happy with your translation? If you work with private clients, it's very likely that you'll get feedback from them whether it's good or bad.

Positive feedback on your translation

Sadly nicer feedback is received less often, as naturally clients expect translations to be accurate, and so by providing a good translation, you're really just doing your job. Still it's always nice to hear that your client is happy with your work. At Atlas, we save positive responses on file and forward them onto the linguists who worked on the job(s) so they know the end client is happy. These may be useful people to contact for references or testimonials.

Aside from the nice, warm feeling that kind words can give you, take a careful note of positive feedback. If you've done something the client likes, make sure you do it again. The next time you're contacted by the same (or a similar) client, you should have a record of the style and terminology you used previously. Now you will be able to reference this in the new project, ensuring the client is happy once again.

Negative feedback on your translation

If a client has rated your translation as not entirely satisfactory, you will want to find out the reason behind this. Is the issue simply a matter of style, and the client has a set of preferential terms that were not available to you? Or perhaps they were unhappy with the formatting. Maybe the client has misunderstood something, or not made what they wanted clear in the initial brief. Whatever the reason, if you've not met your clients' expectations it is vital to find out why so you can avoid the same situation in the future.
Politely ask why your client was unhappy with your work, and ask for specific examples so you can see the exact issue(s). Receiving negative feedback is never fun, but it is crucial that you handle yourself professionally. Just because a client is initially unhappy doesn't mean all is lost – you can still turn this around. A calm explanation, justifying the choices you made when working on your translation will demonstrate a method behind your working. It will also show a willingness to work with the client in providing them with an end product they are happy with.

Don't overreact and take it personally – always reply to your clients politely and clearly state your point of view. It is vital to do this whether you agree or disagree with the feedback provided. Show your client that you're open to discussing the matter further and to considering a different perspective. Always remember that the person you're dealing with may not be used to working with translation. They may not have a complete understanding of how it works.

The positives of negative feedback

Receiving negative feedback can become a positive. Firstly you will become more aware of potential issues, and focus on how you can improve your work next time. Also, you will learn how to handle similar situations should this happen again.

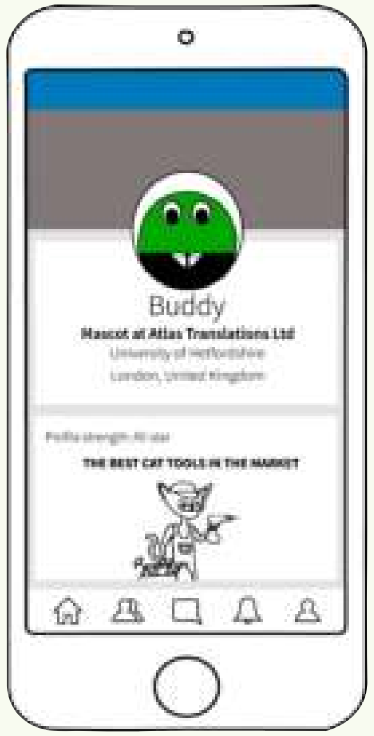
By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Don't take feedback personally, even if it is overwhelmingly negative. Keep communication clear and devoid of emotive language.

41. Maintaining a social media profile

The first decision is whether you want to have a social media profile. As a translator or interpreter, do you like to stay below the radar, working quietly? Or do you miss the buzz of being in a work place and interaction with colleagues? Has someone told you that you "should be on Twitter?!"

If you want to join social media, you'll find a myriad of groups on all platforms relating to translation, interpreting and languages. If you are joining in, you'll need to decide if you'll have a personal profile and a professional profile, or just one. There are pros and cons for both; this is a very personal (and professional) decision.



If you use your personal profile, do you want (potential) clients and colleagues to see personal information and photos? If you have a professional profile, decide if you want to include any personal information. Think before you post about your audience.

Decide which platforms to join. Do you really want to commit to all of them? Probably not! Ask around and find out what your fellow translators and interpreters are using. Think about what suits you. Instagram is brilliant for photographers and hairdressers, does it fit with you? It will also depend on your subject areas and possibly where your clients may be posting, as well as your fellow workers.

Have a great, professional, good quality photo. A logo if you prefer, but people do like people! Don't be an egg on Twitter or a blank avatar anywhere else. Don't crop a picture of you on your latest holiday, consider finding a local photographer to take a suitable headshot for you.

And then be interesting, be you, be relevant. Pass on tips, news stories, and things you've found helpful. Don't make it all about you – though do remember to mention what you do every now and again. Interact, share and like. Make new virtual friends, and you never know when you might get to meet them in person.

Be consistent – so post regularly. With a little time you'll find what suits you and what you get the most out of – which probably won't be what you expect.

As you might expect, Atlas Translations is on social media, and you'll find us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram

If you do make the leap, come on over and say hello!

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Social media is great for keeping up to date with the industry's latest news and trends but it's not for everyone, so if social media is not for you, don't bother with it.

42. Translating subtitles

Subtitles play a central role in films around the world, allowing speakers of different languages access to films they would otherwise not understand. Many (if not most) film goers prefer subtitles to dubbing. This is perhaps because watching a film with subtitles doesn't take anything away from how the film was meant to look, feel and sound. It is therefore interesting to see how it works, and what to bear in mind while translating subtitles.

Translating Subtitles

It is good to remember that reading text on the screen is very different from reading a document. In fact, when inputting subtitles in the video after a translation, it is important to keep in mind a few things. After all, you need to make it easy for the viewer to read the subtitles and follow what is being conveyed. The translation should be concise and communicate what needs to be understood as simply as possible.

For easy reading it is important not to place too many words/characters in a line while subtitling. There will also be a character limit to what you can fit on each subtitle. When translating subtitles, if your client hasn't stated a character limit, check with them what this is. Remember that people speak more quickly than they read. In all likelihood you won't be able to include everything being said in your translation. The most important thing is to convey the meaning of what is being said on screen. The subtitles should match the images appearing.

If the entire text cannot be placed in one line, then it's necessary to break the lines and keep these grammatically correct, which makes subtitles easy to read. If a proper division of the lines is not maintained, you'll end up with a jumble of sentences causing confusion to the viewer.

The best way to separate lines is after a punctuation mark and before

TOP TIP
Ask your client if there's a character count for each line of translation. There almost certainly will be.

conjunctions (and, because, or, etc.) or prepositions (for, on, in etc.). Also remember not to break down names, abbreviations, numbers, phrases, etc. that will make it difficult for the viewer to understand what is being conveyed.

Here are some tips that can be useful for translators:

- Do research. As with any translation work, you should always research words and topics that you're not familiar with.
- Watch the video, if this is available and can be supplied by your client. It's always very helpful.
- Preserve the meaning of the source text but don't translate word by word.
- Keep sentences as short as possible. If your transcript is too lengthy for subtitles viewers wouldn't be able to read all the text while it is on the screen. Make sure each line doesn't go over the character limit set by your client. This will depend on the target language.
- Depending on the nature of the language you are translating into, always prefer simpler/shorter words when available. You'll convey the same meaning without cluttering the screen.
- Know your audience (social, cultural background of the people who speak the language). This helps you to better communicate the meaning to those who use the subtitles.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

43. Working with international translations and clients

Due to the intrinsic nature of the translation industry, it is almost inevitable that sooner or later, whether it be frequently or rarely, you'll be working with someone based in a different country to you.

This will hopefully provide you with some tips on working with international translations for clients based abroad, and give some advice on how to protect your own interests.

Research

Working with international clients might be essential for you. It will very much depend on the language combination(s) you work in, and what the markets are like on the countries of those languages. Doing some research could be beneficial in trying to find out if there is a particular demand for your services in certain countries. Where you are based can be very important to clients when they're trying to place translation assignments with translators.
For example, a German native speaking legal expert living in London could be better placed to translate British legal documents into German than a translator based in Berlin. This is because being based in Britain, they should have better knowledge of the British legal system. Bear this in mind when trying market yourself to international clients – what are the pros and cons of where you are currently based?

Time Zones

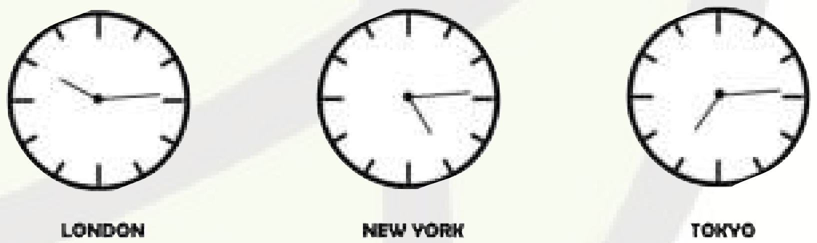
Be aware of time zones. It may be stating the obvious but when a client sets a deadline, it is always best to check you are on the same wavelength when it comes to time zones. First thing tomorrow your time or their time? If you find you are getting more regular work from clients in a different time zone, perhaps consider changing your working hours to fit those. We work with translators based all over the world. We know a couple based in the UK who work later working hours because a lot of their business comes from Latin America. Also be aware of the difference in time zones when you have queries.

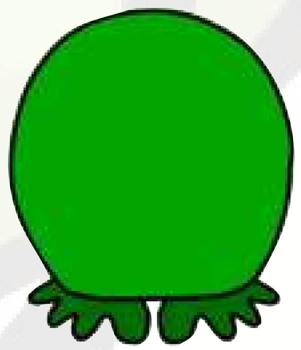
Getting Payment

Of course, getting paid is the most important part of any job. So establish before you commence any work what currency you'll be paid in. Also, confirm how you are going to be paid. Unfortunately international payments can incur charges so you can set yourself up a PayPal account to minimise any costs. Getting international clients to pay on time can also be a worry. What's even worse is when they don't pay at all. All we can say here is be careful.

Do your research on the company, make sure there is a registered address and landline telephone number. Check the company is registered. It can be very difficult to get money owed to you from clients based internationally. Sometimes this is due to different laws in other countries. If you have a bad feeling about a project (and this goes for working with companies based in the same country as you as well) don't be afraid to walk away and turn the project down.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations





TOP TIP
Make the most of where you are based. If you're a native French speaker living in London, tell your clients. You'll be better placed for certain projects than translators based in France.

44. How can I trust my client/agency?

It's not always easy to choose which clients you want to work for, and it can be difficult to tell if they're genuine and trustworthy translation agencies. Now almost everything is done through emails and it always seems like a scam is just around the corner.

Translators are often worried about spending time and working hard for clients that are very difficult to deal with and to trust, especially after they've delivered a translation and sent out their invoice. In some scenarios the client may not even exist.

It is therefore crucial to do some homework and find out as much as you can about your clients before you start working for them.

When you start working for an agency there are a few things that you can do to make sure they're the right client for you, such as:
A quick Google search of the company name should bring up some information. If UK based, check for any details on the Companies House website.
Visit the company website (if there is one) to find out whether the company actually exists. If there is no website, it's not a great sign. If there is, make sure that contact details on the site are present, and that these match what you already have. Ideally there will be a landline telephone number and a postal address.
Browse their website further to find out as much as possible about them. What do they do? How they do it? And who are the people? If they claim to be a member of a relevant association, such as the ITI (The Institute of Translation & Interpreting), check the ITI website to make sure this is the case.
Find out what other translators know about them and what relationship they have with their translators. If there's something to worry about you'll quickly find out by asking on forums or translators communities. There are several sites dedicated to keeping lists of dubious translation agencies and clients.
Ask the enquiring person how they got your contact details.
Make sure that prices are agreed upfront and confirmed in writing or via a Purchase Order before you start any work.

Still not sure?

It may take you some time to do all your checks beforehand, but it is worth the diligence.

If you've checked all of the above points but still have doubts, pick up the phone. Less trustworthy translation agencies and clients will be more reluctant to speak with you over the phone. That's not to say they won't do it, but by speaking with someone over the phone you will hopefully be able to tell whether this is someone you want to work with.

Most importantly, trust your instincts. If you don't have good feeling about a project don't be afraid to walk away. The hassle and time you'll have to spend chasing payments with bad clients isn't worth your time. Far better to spend your time working for a client you know you can trust.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Always do your due dilligence before working with new companies. If you don't have a good feeling about a client, don't be afraid to turn the project down.

45. Splitting a translation project

Often large translation and urgent projects will need to be split between different translators to ensure a deadline is met. Here are few pointers on things to look out for when working on a job which has been split.

Naturally the greatest issues with split translations involve the terminology and consistency of the translations, which will be affected by having more than one person working on the materials. The best thing we can do is to try and limit this as much as possible. Hopefully the client will be having the large translation proofread which will add some consistency to the overall translation. Then again, maybe the translation is for information purposes only and consistency is not too important? This is worth checking because then you won't have to worry too much about the consistency, terminology and style.

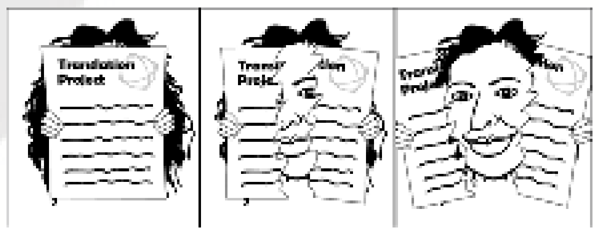
If it is important, maybe ask to be put in touch with the other translators working on the job. We would usually ask if translators are comfortable with this. Then terminology and stylistic choices can be discussed. You can also help each other with any queries you might have. Fundamentally, it is the project manager (or whoever is heading up the project) who is responsible for making the translation as consistent as possible, so you probably shouldn't worry too much about consistency anyway, but I know how conscientious and proud of their work most translators are so thought it was worth including.

Request a translation memory or a glossary. If the client doesn't have something like this, hopefully some reference material or similar materials they've had translated previously would be useful. This should give you a good starting point.

Something else to consider is the formatting. If you're working on a single large document which has been split up into different sections, consider how the translations will be pieced back together at the end of the project. Hopefully the materials will be fairly straightforward to format. If not, talk to the project leader about this. In most cases both they and the end client would rather you spent more time on the translations and less time on the formatting, so you should be able to come to a compromise.

Contents pages and page numbering can cause problems so I would leave these until the end, and it's probably worth asking the client if these can be left altogether. Sometimes (especially in Word) contents pages pull the information from the titles of chapters/sections automatically. However when a large document is split up, translated, and pasted back together again in the new language, this can cause issues. It will depend on how the project leader wants to handle it. But be aware that this could create an issue.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP
Ask to be put in touch with the other translators working on the project. A Skype or WhatsApp group is a perfect forum to raise queries and share terminology which will add to the consistency of the overall translation.

46. Backing up your work

What's the reason for backing up data? Nowadays, many people work with a computer or a laptop to do their job. It is crucial that your data is regularly backed up, and stored in a 'safe' place where it can be retrieved if anything goes wrong.

Most freelance translators are already aware that backing up needs to become a habit if they want to avoid losing hours of hard work. Always remember – you won't get that time back. Furthermore this could affect your client relationships. If something goes wrong and you're not able to meet an agreed deadline because of an unpredictable error, or because you've lost the files from your computer, who's to blame? IT disasters happen. Everyone understands this. But you need to have a back up system in place to minimise the damage.

There are different ways to protect your data and ensure it can be accessed even if your computer dies.

One quite basic but always valid solution is to back up your work onto an external hard drive. Alternatively, to an optical disc (CD-R, DVD or Blu-ray) or USB pen drive. This will protect you in the event that anything happens to your PC. However in the event of something more serious (fire/flood etc.) it is a good idea to periodically store data at an alternative location (a friend or family member's house). Just in case something happens to your usual work space.

Backing up data to a separate drive partition of your PC is not necessarily a great idea. Many PCs have their hard drive divided into C and D for the operating system/programs and data respectively. In fact, copying files from C to another partition does not mean that your data has been backed up. If anything happens to the hard drive or your PC is lost or stolen, you lose all the partitions on that drive.

The best backup system involves an external drive or the Cloud. Online storage can be quite expensive and many people don't have fast enough internet connections. While this makes things slightly more complicated and less affordable, you do have access to your data wherever you are, whatever happens to your physical computer. At the moment, it's easy enough to store and/or synchronise files in online drives such as Dropbox, GoogleDocs and Microsoft OneDrive, but these services are only suitable for backing up a limited amount of data.

Always protect your work and your systems. Make sure you use trustworthy antivirus software to prevent being infected by a virus. This will help you keep your data safe, at least until the next back up.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Reference your back-ups clearly. You never know when you'll need to find something you did ten years ago.

47. Perfect invoicing tips

Nowadays at Atlas Translations, we have a bespoke invoicing system for all suppliers to submit invoices. This reduces potential problems/issues and ensures you receive payment more swiftly. However there was a time when the supplier invoices we received came in all different shapes and sizes, and many companies still require you to submit an invoice by email. Here are some tips for creating your own invoices.

The number one invoicing tip is to have a system and keep this up to date. Use whatever system works for you, but be organised. Keep a record of the jobs you have done with each company and any POs you've been sent, and make sure these are invoiced every month. We often receive invoices for work done two or three years ago. Of course, we keep good records and are able to quickly to locate any older jobs that suppliers still need to be paid for (and I'm sure most agencies are), but if you're leaving it this late to invoice you client you're giving them an excuse to avoid or delay payment, so don't let this happen.

When creating your invoice, make sure everything is laid out clearly in a way that makes sense. Include dates, purchase order numbers, and reference details to the job. Also, if you have a company name, include your personal name too. Your client may know you by one and be less familiar with the other. Be sure to state your preferred method of payment and include details of your bank, PayPal or other account. Include any payment terms that you have set, but check the POs you've been sent to see if they comply with these. Lastly, put your contact information (email, telephone number(s) and address) in a place of prominence so if there are any queries, the client can get in touch with you quickly.

Once the invoice is sent, have a credit control system in place and dedicate some time in your working week. Set your own policy for working with late paying clients. Protect yourself against those who are less reliable with payments. But again, it is important to be organised and let nothing slip through the net.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Getting paid is the most important part of the job! Make sure you manage your credit control efficiently.

48. Translation myths debunked

Translation is one of those professions that people have no real idea about. Are we sitting with quills, poring over a dictionary? What do we do all day? Isn't it just a hobby? Can't anyone who has learnt a bit of a language translate? Are we not all redundant now thanks to Google? Here we debunk several myths which surround the translation and localisation industry.

As for interpreters, two words – Nicole Kidman. That's a whole other article though.

So what myths about translators and translation do we hear regularly?

Myth #1: Anyone who speaks two languages can translate.

Translators have trained and honed their skills over many years, and they have specialised in particular subject areas – be it computing, marketing, finance, tax or wine. I'm English and couldn't claim to understand all of my mortgage paperwork… let alone translate it into another language!

Myth #2: Surely there is no need to translate this – everyone speaks English.

It's true that English is popular, but when people are doing business, shopping and communicating, they want to be 100% sure they understand all of what you are saying. And it's courtesy to cater for all clients – and potential clients – in their own language? If all your clients speak English, all that may prove is that you haven't attracted any non-English speaking customers.

Myth #3: Translators work on books, interpreters just work at the UN and EU Parliament.

Practically everything you pick up has translations – food packaging, how to use your camera, instructions for your washing machine, your car manual… Interpreters are sent to conferences, court cases, business negotiations and lots more. Once you start looking, you'll see that languages really are everywhere.

Myth #4: With GoogleTranslate and technology these days, who needs a real person?

GoogleTranslate is great to get the gist of a message, but if you want to be confident that you are using a professional, fluent translation, the only option is to use a person. Currently packages such a GoogleTranslate can only go so far, and cannot handle nuances, cultural references, humour or complicated sentences. Most people will spot an automatic translation a mile away, and it may make them laugh – not so good when you want to be taken seriously in business.

Myth #5: All translators do is type one text into another language.

Take into account writing skills, top-notch grammar and spelling, working out what the original author intended, research and terminology checking, and add in cultural considerations. Translators draft a translation, revise and rework, and ideally sleep on ideas to allow them to tweak their work until they are happy with it.

Myth #6: With a good dictionary and Google I can work out a decent translation?

See number 5.You can't.

Myth #7: Translators sit around in dusty libraries all day and are out of touch with technology.

In fact translators have always been ahead with technology. They are running businesses, marketing themselves as professionals, qualified and highly skilled in their area. You're much more likely to find them in their home office using speech recognition software to take down work, or out updating their considerable skills and continuous professional development at conferences and seminars.

By Clare Suttie, Director, Atlas Translations

49. You've delivered your translation. Now what?

So you've delivered your translation by email (on time!) and are not waiting for a proofread version or the answers to any queries you've raised, now what? Let's take a look at some tips on things to do in the days and weeks following your first assignment with a new client.

Next Hour

Hopefully your client will have confirmed receipt of the translation. If not, perhaps follow up to make sure they have. If they haven't answered their email maybe call them to make sure they've got it.

Next Day

The day after you've delivered your first assignment is a good time to follow up with your client. Were they happy with the quality? Did you deliver everything correctly? Is there anything they'd like you to do differently next time? Welcome any feedback they can provide on the quality of your translation. Keep a note of this and take it on board for the next time. Also remember to submit your invoice in accordance with the client's procedures.

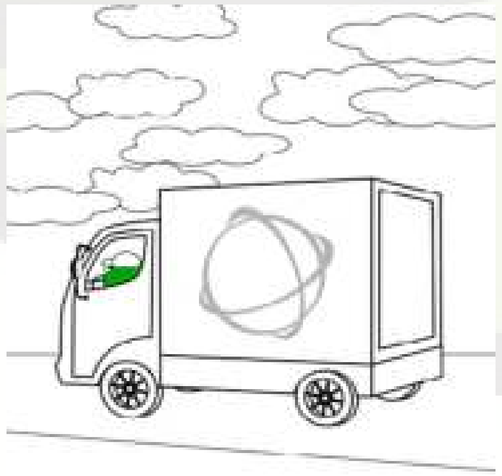
Next Week

Hopefully now you've heard from this new client again since the first assignment, but if not, contact them a week later to check if there's any reason why not. Chances are the client will not have had any suitable projects in, but if there is an issue there be sure to find out as soon as possible. Just a friendly email confirming your availability for new projects would suffice.

Next Month

By now hopefully you've worked with your new client a few times. If not, try contacting them again to find out why. From this point on it is worth making a point to contact your client every so often to confirm you're still actively available for work in your language(s) and field(s). You may just strike lucky and time the email just as your client gets a new project in your language combination.

By Jim Hearn, Manager, Atlas Translations



TOP TIP
Keep the contact details of everyone you've worked with. If they've needed your help before, it's likely they'll need it again.

50. Remaining professional at all times

As a professional freelancer, it is important that your commitment and professionalism in delivering quality work shines through in both the work you produce, and in the way you present yourself. Here are a few tips for making sure you come across in a professional manner at all times.

Although face-to-face interactions for freelance translators can be rare, interpreters meet face-to-face with clients all the time. Always be sure to dress smartly and appropriately for the occasion.

In all correspondence be friendly but remain professional. Although emails are seen as a more casual form of correspondence, it is still important to come across in the right way. Choose an appropriate font for your emails. No comic sans! You can address clients with a fairly informal 'Hi' or 'Hello', and decide on the formality of your writing according to your relationship with the client. But before you know this, err on the side of caution – a friendly but formal style of writing will present you in a professional light.

Whether you like it or not, you will almost certainly have an online profile to some degree. Make sure that if you have a website, any featured images are appropriate and professional. If you want to keep your social media profiles away from the professional sphere, no problem. But if you do want to connect with your clients over social media, be sure the images and posts/messages you sending out aren't inappropriate.

You must protect your professional reputation. The best approach to doing this, is to maintain honesty with your clients and with yourself. Never accept jobs you are not qualified for, or accept too many jobs at the same time. Although it can be hard to turn down work if you are free to take it, especially as you want to be helpful in all situations. However it is more important to keep your word than accept a job you're not going to be able to deliver to the best of your ability or on time.

Being reliable will certainly go towards building a solid relationship with your client or agency. Your clients will feel that they can trust you, and you can offer them the quality and professionalism they're looking for. Always keep to your deadlines.

If you foresee any issues meeting a deadline while you're translating a document for a client, let them know ASAP. Whether this is due to an unexpected IT problem, a power cut or something to do with the document difficulty being underestimated, always make sure you inform the client as soon as you can, so that they can do what they need to do. Displaying a high level of professionalism will increase their faith in you. This will lead to more working opportunities.

By Stefania Orlotti, Project Manager, Atlas Translations

TOP TIP
Being friendly and professional will go a long way in the translation and interpreting industry.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