Are you thinking of becoming a Freelance Translator? Read our Guide to Freelance Translation for information and tips to help you start and improve your freelance career.

Why Freelance Translation?

If you have a passion for languages and can speak at least two of them fluently (one of them being your native language), a career in translation might just be for you.

Freelancing is a great gig for people who know how to do it right: being your own boss, not having to go to the office every day, and deciding which jobs you take on are some of the perks of being a freelance translator.

Living the dream: freelance translation can be one of the truly location-independent careers you could have

Financially, when approached as a business and done properly, it can
be lucrative and requires little upfront investment.

Also, it gives you the chance to be somewhat creative – to what degree will be dictated by your specialisation, field and industry.

Uncertain paycheques, fierce competition, difficult clients and crazy deadlines are some disadvantages, but for many people it’s a worthy trade-off.

Still want to be a translator? Read on!

Why this guide?

Although there are a lot of articles online about translation, we wanted to combine a great deal of information into one easy-to-follow guide with practical tips on how to become a freelance translator.

The guide is divided in three parts:

In the **Beginner** section you will find information about the translation industry, the answer to commonly asked questions, and information about educational requirements and credentials – including answering questions like: where do I start, which language should I learn, what’s the career path?

The **Intermediate** section is where we show you how to go freelance, including tips on how to set up your business, acquire clients, set your rates and stand out from the crowd.

The **Advanced** section is for translators who are already freelancing and would like to earn more, be more organised, “hack the system” as cool kids nowadays say, and basically take their career to the next level.

This guide has been ambitiously called “the **definitive** guide to freelance translation” because that’s what it aims to be. We will be adding new information, resources and tips as and when we come across them.

If you would like us to cover anything else, let us know at web@translatemedia.com.
Overview

If you are considering becoming a freelance translator, it helps to understand the current state of the translation industry, how it is organised, and where it is heading.

Size of the industry

According to recent studies from Common Sense Advisory, the translation industry is estimated to be worth over $33.5 billion globally.

The revenue split as follows:

- Europe 49.38%
- North America 34.85%
- Asia 12.88%
- Oceania 2.00%
- Latin America 0.63%
- Africa 0.27%

The latest estimate: in 2015 the global market is expected to be worth $47.3 billion, a rise of over 40% compared to 2012.

A few top agencies control the majority of the market, and the rest is made up of tens of thousands of LSPs (Language Service Providers), typically small-medium sized agencies and freelance translators.

It is estimated that there are around 640,000 translators in the world (source: Translators Association of China (TAC), a quarter of whom are freelancers. Generally, barriers to entry are low, and competition is extremely high.

Due to the ever-increasing trend towards globalisation, translation is more or less considered “recession proof”. Widespread internet access and the e-commerce boom have both contributed significantly to the industry’s expansion.
Structure of the industry

The translation industry’s main players are translators that work in-house for a brand or creative agency, in-house at a language service provider, or freelance translators working for agencies and/or direct clients.

Large translation agencies may commission work to smaller agencies that specialise in a particular field or language, or directly to individual freelancers.

A freelancer with work beyond their capacity or scope will either turn away work, or in many cases, subcontract work to other translators, becoming a hybrid translator/agency.

It looks something like this:

Top Ten Languages in the Internet
2010 - in millions of users

- English: 536.6
- Chinese: 444.9
- Spanish: 153.3
- Japanese: 99.1
- Portuguese: 82.5
- German: 75.2
- Arabic: 65.4
- French: 59.8
- Russian: 59.7
- Korean: 38.4
- All the rest: 350.6

Estimated Internet users are 1,966,514,818 on June 30, 2010
Copyright © 2000 - 2010, Miniwatts Marketing Group
The sectors

If there is a need to reach an international audience then any type of business will require translation services at some point.

Agencies can either be generalists or specialists. Some agencies target pharmaceutical, legal, and media sectors, whereas others target specific sectors.

Finance, IT and legal services are the sectors which provide the largest volumes of work, with tourism and government services showing promising signals of growth.

Other prevalent industries requiring translations are retail, pharma, gaming and marketing.
Types of translation services

“Translation” isn’t merely the transposition of text from one language into another. Given the diversity of sectors, clients and projects required, there are various disciplines that require additional specialisation and/or technical knowledge.

Localisation

Wikipedia defines localisation (or localization for our American friends) as “the process of adapting a product to a specific country or region”.

The main difference between translation and localisation is that the target culture, as well as the language, must be taken into account in order to successfully adapt the product to local markets.

Localisation is most often required for the adaptation of websites, software and video games and usually has a strong technical component to it. It is (or at least it should be) often followed by a QA process, carried out by native speakers.

Localisation is not confined to countries where different languages are spoken: often it can be done for a single language that has regional or national differences – for example, South American and European Spanish, but also UK and US English.

Transcreation

As the name suggests, it’s a mix between translating and creating content.

Transcreators focus on capturing the desired persuasive or emotive effect of the original text and transferring it into the adapted translation.

The result is a creative translation that may differ significantly from the source text in terms of vocabulary, but the message is preserved.

Transcreation has become an important part of international mass communication, especially where continuity of meaning and consistent messages are important (e.g., brand slogans and straplines).
Certified Translation

Clients will often ask for a "certified translation". In this case, the most important thing is to ask which kind of certification they need, as there isn't a single, global certification.

Generally speaking, a certification is a stamp and an accompanying letter from the agency or the translator that states that the translation has been completed by a professional translator and is, to the best knowledge of the agency/translator, of high quality and true to the original text.

Additionally the translation can be notarised. This means that a notary certifies the translator’s signature on the affidavit used to certify the accuracy of the translation.

To complicate things, each country has a different system in place. For example, in France and Spain, translations to be used in court will have to be carried out by “sworn translators”, a classification that doesn’t exist in the UK or the US.

Let’s get technical

If you thought the only skills required for translators are language related, think again. Technology is evolving fast and it plays a pivotal role in the industry as a whole. It is used to guarantee quality, improve productivity, lower prices and improve the day-to-day management of translation projects.

**CAT tools**

CAT, or Computer-Assisted Translation tools, are software packages that aid the translation process, resulting in improved speed and accuracy. The software helps with spellchecking, text alignment and creating glossaries and Translation Memory. CAT tools are to a translator what Photoshop is to a designer. Sure, you can translate without them, but these tools radically improve efficiency; they lower word counts and ensure consistency – reducing costs and improving quality in the long term. Learning to use them will increase your chances of working with both translation agencies and end-clients.
**Translation Memory**

Translation memories (TMs) are databases of translated text, separated into segments. The motto of translation memories is “never translate the same sentence twice”. As the translator translates, the tools automatically build up a database of both the source and the target language. When the translator encounters a similar sentence in the source text, the CAT tool can suggest a translation based on the translation memory. At this point, the translator can decide if the translation is appropriate or if it should be changed. It is important to note this is NOT an automatic translation, as the text needs to have been manually translated beforehand and often requires manual editing. TM is very useful for large projects for repeat clients. A company with extensive Translation Memory libraries will notice huge savings in the long term, as well as consistency of terms across multiple products, websites and territories.

**Machine Translation**

The term “machine translation” (MT) refers to the use of computer software to translate text automatically.

There are two types of machine translation: rule-based, where software attempts to model the rules of a language; and statistical, where the computer attempts to learn from large amounts of text that have been previously translated.

Although great advancements have been made in recent years, machine translation should not be used for business-critical content, as the quality is currently far inferior to human translation.
Learning the Craft

Skills required by translators

**Language skills**

To become a successful translator, you will need to be fluent in both the **language** you are translating from (the source language) and a native speaker of the one you are translating into (the target language). Additionally, you must be good at writing in your native language.

Only a few people should attempt translating into a language that is not their native language, and most translation agencies will not consider non-native speakers for professional translation work.

Spending time or living in the country whose language you intend to translate from is an accelerator to your proficiency and often a prerequisite to becoming a translator.

**Computer skills**

While you don’t need to be a computer genius, the ability to navigate through various programs often means greater efficiency and higher employability. Also, it will help with the aforementioned CAT tools and any formatting issues you might have.

As a translator, you will work with a computer every day, particularly with the Microsoft Office suite (or equivalent software) and CAT tools. It makes sense to become adept at your software of choice.

Additionally, knowledge of InDesign and Photoshop will prove helpful when dealing with jobs that require DTP (Desktop Publishing), and enable you to offer that service to your clients.
Some HTML doesn’t hurt either! If you’d like to learn HTML, check out [www.codeacademy.com](http://www.codeacademy.com), [www.w3schools.com](http://www.w3schools.com), [www.udemy.com](http://www.udemy.com)

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**Business acumen**

Good translators’ skills aren’t limited to languages.

If your goal is to become a freelancer, you will also need to develop the skills that make many self-employed people successful. Gaining a good knowledge of sales and marketing techniques, as well as developing professional characteristics such as organisation, punctuality and tenacity will help you craft a successful career.

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**Education requirements for translators**

Although in very rare cases – if you are truly bilingual AND a very good writer AND only translate general subjects – you can do without a formal education. But most translators have a background in translation studies.

The other exception is if you approach translation from a specialist field. For example, if you are bilingual and have several years of experience in the pharmaceutical field and you want to become a translator, theoretically you “could” provide pharmaceutical translations.

Most linguists hold a degree, although recent trends indicate that more and more translators are educated to Masters level. The biggest benefit in studying translation is the fact that most courses tend to be very hands-on, and will provide you with the skills that you’ll need once you find a job.

Additionally, in such a competitive market every detail counts to make you stand out. You might be overlooked if the majority of applicants have a formal translation-specific education which you lack.

Although education is important, an even more valuable asset is—you guessed it—experience. Try to add internships or voluntary work to your studies in order to build your portfolio and enhance your CV.
How to find a university-level translation program

Start here: The following is a MASSIVE list of Universities that offer Translation courses around the world, divided by country:

http://www.proz.com/translator_associations?group_type=is_schoo&country_code

You can also use the following websites to check out reviews of your chosen University:

http://universitytwig.com/

http://www.whatuni.com/

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How much does a translator earn?

Though a love of languages is typically what drives a person to this line of work, we expect that you’re interested to know how much a translator can earn.

The answer is not straightforward. Like many professions, a number of variables determine a translator’s income.

First of all, it depends whether you are employed in-house or working as a freelancer.

In-house translator average earnings

Bear in mind that translators’ salaries are difficult to gauge, because of several factors: the country they live in, their language pair, the sector and specialisation, and so on.

We have found the average salary for translators in the UK and USA to be:

**UK:** Starting salary £18,000 to £21,000 per year

With experience this could rise to £30,000 or more a year

**USA:** Around $40,000 per year.

*Sources: Glassdoor, Totaljobs, Linkedin*
Translators for the EU and UN tend to be the highest paid. Of course the competition is high and you will need to be a really good translator in order to stand out.

**Freelance translator average earnings**

As in a lot of industries, determining average salaries for freelance translators is even harder. For every freelancer who earns a six-figure salary, there are hundreds who need a part-time job in order to make ends meet.

Freelance translation is no different from other freelance jobs in the sense that what you can earn is limited by the demand of your skill set, the number of clients you have and the amount of work you can do in a day.

An experienced translator with a steady stream of clients and work can expect to earn between £30,000-£40,000 p.a.; however, it is possible to earn much more.

**Contributing Factors to Earnings**

*Language pair* – Demand and supply of your native language greatly affects the rate you can charge. More common languages such as French, Spanish and German typically do not demand particularly high rates, while less common languages such as Danish, Korean, and Vietnamese are more lucrative. However, demand for these languages is much lower.

*Evening and weekend work* – Often companies need translations urgently. When the deadline requires that you work late nights and weekends, a good rule of thumb is to add a 25% surcharge to your usual rate. However, not doing so will make you more competitive when these opportunities arise.
Language direction – often as important as language pair. For example, Chinese to English translators can charge more than English to Chinese translators, as there are fewer English speakers who are proficient in Chinese. Specialism – is also influential in determining rates. Medical, legal, financial, and engineering are good fields to be a translator. If you can specialise further—even better. The more niche the subject matter, the fewer people will be qualified to undertake the translation and the higher your compensation is likely to be.

Speed – A faster translator obviously gets more work done in the same amount of time, so they can earn more. The number will vary based on how technical or difficult the text is and how much research the project requires.
Becoming a Translator

The road to your first translation job

Now that you know a bit more about the translation industry, you may be ready to take your first steps on the road to becoming a professional translator.

As mentioned earlier, the market is competitive, and credibility and experience are keys to success.

The best way to gain experience is to start working as an employee in either a translation agency or as an in-house translator for a company in your preferred field.

In order to obtain the position, you must have experience. This can come via an internship and/or through volunteering.

Working as an in-house translator will allow you to learn your trade in a real-world environment and provide you with plenty of hands-on experience. It’s a steep learning curve; but you’ll learn a great deal and gain confidence in your abilities within the first year or two.

Don’t wait to finish University before applying for your first translation job. You could start learning about the industry, networking with people and building your portfolio while you’re still studying.

The first place you should start looking for opportunities is at university. Often universities will have employment schemes to help you gain some experience. These schemes can provide you with your first opportunity to enter the industry and to see first hand how translation agencies operate.

This will prove invaluable later on if you decide to approach translation agencies for in-house and freelance jobs.
Where to find translation internships

US

- http://www.internmatch.com/
- http://www.experience.com/entry-level-jobs/

UK

- http://www.internwise.co.uk/
- http://www.internweb.com/

European Parliament

- http://goo.gl/ngdyGJ

European commission

- http://goo.gl/lAfrB0
- http://goo.gl/oFlpgG

Google

Don't forget to use the internet to search for opportunities. Become familiar with Google's advanced search options as they will be useful throughout your career.


Begin with something simple. For example, try this search term to find translation agencies advertising for internships.
Where to find volunteering translation opportunities

We recommend that you visit the following websites as they are constantly looking for translators. Most of them are humanitarian organisations, so you can feel that you’re making a difference and improving the lives of others, while gaining vital skills and experience:

**Ashoka**: this social enterprise charity uses the slogan ‘Everyone is a Changemaker’ to respond to social challenges. With many worthwhile causes, it is a great place to begin your career in translation, particularly for those of you who speak fluent French or Spanish.

**Translations for Progress**: a charity that was specifically created to help students gain experience as a translator.

**Global voices**: an international community of bloggers who report on blogs and citizen media from around the world. Global Voices encourages participation and contribution, and welcomes volunteer translators and proofreaders.

**UN Volunteers**: while not exclusively translation related, opportunities can be found here.

**TED Open Translation Project**: translate TED talks! Useful AND interesting, what more could you ask for?

**International Children’s Digital Library (ICDL)**: an organisation that needs help from volunteers to translate children’s books, the ICDL web interface, bibliographic information about books, and author biographies. All languages are welcome.
Translators Without Borders: an organisation that undertakes the translation of documents for humanitarian groups such as Doctors Without Borders, AIDES, and Handicap International FIDH.

Khan Academy: The Khan Academy is a non-profit organisation whose goal is to provide free education to everyone, everywhere.

Idealist: participate in volunteering activities. Sign up to the email alerts to receive custom volunteering opportunities directly to your inbox.

How to find an in-house translator job

If you have followed the previous tips and have done some volunteering and/or an internship, or you feel that you’re ready to take on a challenge and wish to skip those steps, it’s time to look for in-house jobs.

Using Google

You can start your Google search for jobs with a simple search query, for example:

- translation + “work for us”
- “translation” “work for us”
- “translation agency” “careers”

You can also check on each individual job site using their own inbuilt search functions. But wouldn’t it be great if there was a way of pulling a list of jobs from several websites at once?

Luckily…..there is!

Copy and paste the following search strings in Google’s search box:

- site:totaljobs.com OR site:monster.co.uk OR site:jobs.guardian.co.uk OR site:londonjobs.co.uk OR site:reed.co.uk intitle:“spanish+translator” + London
- site:totaljobs.com OR site:monster.co.uk OR site:jobs.guardian.co.uk OR londonjobs.co.uk OR reed.co.uk inurl:spanish translator

NOTE: make sure you change the bold parts to reflect your city, language, and job-searching websites in your country.

If you are in the UK, here are some websites you can use in the string:

- www.itil.org.uk and www.iol.org.uk
- www.totaljobs.com
- www.toplanguagejobs.co.uk
- www.eurolondon.com/foreign-language-jobs.htm
Using Social Media

With recruiters increasingly using Social Media to recruit staff, there are often plenty of opportunities that can be found on social networking sites. When it comes to job searches, LinkedIn and Twitter are probably your best bet.

LinkedIn

With over 277 million users, LinkedIn deserves its own guide. 94% of recruiters who use social media use LinkedIn as their preferred platform to find candidates. This means that you simply must be on LinkedIn if you are looking for a job.

- Use advanced search to line up contacts in industries
- Optimise your profile
- Complete it (LinkedIn will inform you of the completion percentage of your profile)
- Write something catchy – while remaining professional
- Ask for recommendations and make sure they are authentic
- Use a professional photograph
- Insert keywords – what would your ideal recruiter search for?
- Translate your profile into your other languages. Again, ensure these are done to a high standard.

Twitter

Remember to use #hashtags to find the role you are looking for and use it to connect with the influencers and facilitators in your industry.
**Applying**

Once you have created a list of agencies you would like to approach, don’t spam them. Take the time and go through their websites. Often, they don’t want you to send them an email and prefer you to fill out an online form instead. If you don’t follow instructions on applying for roles, you’ll simply be wasting your time as no one will look at your application.

If you are applying with a cover letter, keep it short and functional. Make sure every word on your cover letter and CV has a reason to be there.

**Your cover letter**

Keep it short and divide it into four parts:

- Greeting
- Who you are
- The relevant skills that you have
- Why you want to work for them

Remember: The sole purpose of the cover letter is to get people to open your CV. So make it count.

**Your CV**

Make it easy to read, don’t omit important information, and be sure you remove information that is irrelevant to the role or company.

Resource for a great CV: [http://wantwords.co.uk/school/free-resources/](http://wantwords.co.uk/school/free-resources/)

Ready to go freelance and search for clients?
So you have some experience under your belt and would like to go alone?

Good idea. Since rates for freelancers tend to be higher than those for in-house translators, you may have made the right decision. Plus, with the right network, marketing strategy and production process, you could earn more and do so on your schedule (although do expect long hours, especially at the beginning).

Got what it takes?

So you can translate and want to be a freelancer. But do you have what it takes to succeed?

Freelancing is about finding a good stream of customers, keeping them happy and making sure you get paid. So, you will need to be a salesperson, a craftsman, and a businessman.

The traits commonly associated with successful freelancers are organisation, tenacity, professionalism, self-discipline, and people skills.

Think you can convince people to hire you, avoid the temptation to watch daytime TV and deliver top quality translations?

If the answer is yes, then you may have the potential to succeed as a freelance translator.

A leap of faith?

Save as much as you can before you take the plunge—ideally you want 6 months’ worth of expenses in your account.

If you are employed and can work your 9-5, then come home and work on your freelance career… I admire your stamina. It isn’t easy, but this is the best way to get started.

As is the case with most projects, the beginning is the hardest part. Once you get the ball rolling, provided you put efficient systems in place, it will get easier over time.

Right now, you have to gain experience and build your client network.
It will take six months to (more realistically) a year for all your marketing efforts to start paying off and provide you with a steady stream of clients.

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**Time to write a business plan**

What? Already?

Yes, because:

- You need targets to aim for.
- It takes discipline (and it might make you re-think if you really want to do this).
- Once you get translating, you won’t have time to sit down and do it.
- You are effectively running a business, so you need to treat it like one.

To be honest, most freelance translators don’t have a business plan. But you don’t want to be like most translators, right?

The good news is that as a freelance translator you don’t need a 20 page business plan worthy of a fortune 500 company. At the very least you need to know what you are aiming for in terms of working hours, income, clients, marketing and how you intend to hit your targets.

**Business plan resources**

Don’t know where to start with your business plan? Try here:

- Proz
- WantWords
- Brent Galloway
- eloop.com
- UK Government

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**Setting up your business**

*The legal part*

To work as a freelance translator, eventually you will have to register as self-employed. Consult your country’s government website to make sure you understand what kind of options you have.

In the UK, translators are typically registered either as sole proprietorship (or sole trader) or they can decide to set up a Limited Liability Company.
**Sole proprietorship (Sole Trader)**

As a sole proprietor, you "are" the business. This doesn’t mean that you cannot employ assistants or other people, just that you are the sole person responsible for the business.

You therefore are liable for everything; the upside is that you can keep all of the profit, after you’ve paid tax on it.

Here you can find more information on how to set up a sole proprietorship in UK [https://www.gov.uk/set-up-sole-trader](https://www.gov.uk/set-up-sole-trader)

**Limited liability company**

Before incorporating your company, check if you need to register it with the tax authorities. In the UK, for example, you need to register with Companies House. You can do so online, by post or through an agent.

It will take 48 hours online, or 8-10 days by postal application and will cost respectively £15 and £40. There is also a same-day postal service at the cost of £100.

Companies House provides more detailed information on how to set up a company in UK.
Your upfront investment

**Computer** – You won’t need anything too powerful. We recommend going with a Windows machine, as many CAT tools aren’t supported on a Mac.

**High-speed internet connection** – If working for an agency, you will likely need to be able to access their cloud-based tools. At the very least, you will need to communicate via email, and have the ability to download/upload documents. And even if you are an expert in your subject matter, you will likely spend a lot of your time conducting research online.

**Microsoft Office** – Probably the software you will be using the most, and the basis for many translation tools.

This brings us to CAT Tools:

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**Cat Tools**

This is probably the biggest expense you will face, if you decide to go down the paid route. There are some free CAT tools and even the paid ones usually have trial versions. While there are some tools that are more popular than others, there isn’t “one tool to rule them all”. Which is why, given the large number of choices available, the most common question is:

**WHICH CAT TOOL SHOULD I USE?**

Here is a list of the most common CAT tools. Bear in mind that cost is not the only investment you’ll make: it will take time to master them, but hopefully it will pay off in the long run.

*Click on the table below to enlarge it:*
Head over to Proz.com to compare more CAT tools

Play around with free trials and pick the one you feel most comfortable using, while keeping an eye on industry trends. Obviously, using a popular tool will increase your pool of prospective clients as translation agencies, in particular, often have preferred CAT tools which they may insist on you using. What most Language Service Providers agree on is that you should find the time to become an expert in your tool of choice. This will increase your productivity and will impact your earning potential in the long term.
WHAT IS EVERYONE ELSE USING?

The complete list:
- Trados
- Wordfast
- memoQ
- Déjà Vu
- Across
- SDLX
- OmegaT
- Other

The podium:
- Wordfast: 2
- memoQ: 1
- Trados: 3

You can find more information regarding this poll here:
Finding Work

Where to look

To find your first clients, there are four main areas where you should look at first: your ex-employer, translation agencies, freelancing websites and translator portals.

**Ex (or current) employer**

Providing you left on good terms (and you should always try to), this is an excellent way to start. After all, you had a chance to prove yourself while you were there, so they know your levels of skill and professionalism. Also, you are used to working with them, in their field. So, don’t be afraid to reach out.

PS. Stealing clients from your ex-employer is not cool.

**General freelancer websites**

These websites put prospective clients directly in touch with freelancers in different fields. Although rates on average aren’t great and competition is fierce, you can learn a lot in terms of how to sell your services, with the added security of a third party check on payments.

WARNING: Make these websites work for you, don’t get stuck in races to the lowest rates.

Enter with a clear strategy and an end goal: get reviews, fill your portfolio and get out as soon as you can—unless you manage to raise your rates to a level you find satisfactory.

The most famous ones are: Elance, PeoplePerHour and oDesk.

**How To Succeed**

These tips are from Elance; however, they can be applied to most freelancer websites.

We highly recommend the following blog post—you don’t have to copy his method, however it highlights the need to think creatively, test, and treat it like an experiment:

Translators Portals

Registering with this websites will introduce you to a community of like-minded professionals, industry news and jobs

- Translatorscafe
- ProZ
- Chartered Institute of Linguists

Besides job opportunities, the following associations grant visibility and credibility to their members, so it is worth joining and creating a profile on the ones you think might apply to you.

You can start from the list below:

- ProZ
- Translators Café
- ATA (American Translators Association)-
- ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting)
- IOL (Chartered Institute of Linguists)
- SFT (French Translators Association)
- BDÜ (German Translators Association)
- NAJIT (US National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators)
- ITA (Israel Translators Association)
- OTTIAQ (Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec)

Some points to keep in mind when quoting on ProZ (and elsewhere):

- Reply to offers where you have relevant experience
- Personalise your reply (mentioning relevant experience)
- Include contact information everywhere (make it easy for them to contact you)
- Include your CV
- Contribute to questions to get kudos in your specialist field

Read the whole article here: ([How to stand out on ProZ](#))

Translation agencies

Translation agencies are a great way for freelancers to get work (even if we say so ourselves).

Although you still have to convince them to send you work, they invest in sales and marketing, project management and are therefore able to attract clients that manage large, multinational, multilingual projects.

Far from being easy, you will need to produce high quality work on a regular basis and be easy to work with in order to get repeat business from agencies. Become a trusted resource for a
popular sector and language pair for a few agencies and you won’t ever have to look for new clients again.

Additionally, working with agencies doesn’t preclude having direct clients. In fact, a lot of translators get their work from a mix of personal clients and translation agencies.

At this stage, you need to concentrate on two objectives: finding enough reputable agencies and convincing them to give you a shot. Afterwards, it’s all about the work you produce.

Finding agencies

A good place to start is from associations’ members in your country. This is a list of Translation Associations divided per country. Follow the link to browse the members in each group and start compiling a list of targets.

Czech Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Associations</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Austrian Association of Language Service Providers</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aalsp.at/">http://www.aalsp.at/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Belgian Quality Translation Association</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bqta.be/">http://www.bqta.be/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>SKTOL – Suomen käännöstoimistojen liitto r.y.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sktol.org/">http://www.sktol.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>QSD – Qualitätss-Sprachendienste Deutschlands e.V.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.qsd.de/">http://www.qsd.de/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>ATC – Association of Translation Companies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.atc.org.uk">http://www.atc.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>UNILINGUE – Associazione Nazionale di Imprese di Servizi Linguistici</td>
<td><a href="http://www.unilingue.it/">http://www.unilingue.it/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>VViN – Netherlands Association of Translation Agencies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vvin.nl/">http://www.vvin.nl/</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Polish Association of Translation Companies
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Associations</th>
<th>Website</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>ATCSK – Association of Translation Companies of Slovakia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.atcsk.sk/">http://www.atcsk.sk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>SATC – Slovenian Association of Translation Companies</td>
<td><a href="http://zpp.gzs.si/slo/english/">http://zpp.gzs.si/slo/english/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>ASPROSET – Asociación Sectorial de Proveedores de Servicios de Traducción</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>LINQUA – Swiss Association of Quality Language Services</td>
<td><a href="http://www.linqua.ch/">http://www.linqua.ch/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkish Association of Translation Companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**It’s all in the numbers**

Yes, it would be great if you could only contact a few companies and pick from the best rates offered. But unfortunately it’s not that simple.

At the beginning of your career you are playing a numbers game, as opposed to later on when you’ll focus on quality and might even have to turn down clients regularly.

**You need to apply to hundreds of agencies.**

To make the application process a little less tedious, here is an advanced technique that will save you time and will keep you organised at the same time.

It is the equivalent of using a digger while everyone is using a spade!
1. Open Google Chrome

2. Visit the following link: http://www.onlinesales.co.uk/blog/google-results-bookmarklet/

3. Click + drag the green button and move it to the bookmark bar at the top of the browser.

Close the page, then open google.com

In settings >search settings > “results per page” set the number of results to 100.

Close the page, open google.com

Search for: Translation agency + “your target country/city” – see the example below:

Now you have a list of 100 translation agencies that you can export into an Excel document to keep track of who you contact. Repeat this process for other pages to get even more results.

Try more combinations. For example, try www.atc.org.uk to get a list of all the translation agencies on the ATC website.

Click on the “Simple Google Results” booklet that you downloaded (see step 3). This will create a list of all results that you can easily copy and paste into Excel.

Export to a spreadsheet and keep track of agencies as you contact them.
**Outreach**

Now you have their contact details, it’s time to apply.

- The number one rule: if the agency has an application form on their website, USE IT!
- If you also decide to send a quick heads-up email, keep it short and to the point
- Give professional translation references—if it’s your first job, you can still ask your ex-employer (if you were a translator) or people you interned or volunteered for
- Clearly indicate your source and target languages as well as any industry-specific knowledge or experience you have

**Screening agencies—make sure you get paid**

Unfortunately, as is the case with every other industry, not all agencies are legitimate or ethical. So, beware of scams—you are on the internet, after all!

Luckily you don’t have to rely on gut instinct alone.

You can check out agencies that have been flagged as non-payers and read reviews on the following sites:

- Payment Practices
- Translator-Client Review
- ProZ.com Blue Board
- TranslatorsCafe.com

Note: When consulting these websites, look for trends as opposed to single bad reviews which could be from disgruntled translators and therefore not an accurate representation of how a company treats its freelance translators.
How much should you charge?

Especially at the beginning of your career, setting rates is a delicate balance between trying to be competitive, while not underselling yourself – not only because you will eventually need to make a living from it, but also because clients (the ones worth having) are often weary of extremely cheap rates (and often with good reason).

You can generally expect to earn between 0.04 GBP to 0.08 GBP per word for translation. Also, remember to set a minimum fee that is reasonable. This tends to be around £15 to £30 GBP to mitigate for the accounting and administrative work that goes into even a small job.

There are several ways to decide how much to charge. Here are some ideas:

**Find your absolute minimum and your target income**

First of all, find out what the minimum you can afford to charge is. Remember this is not how much you should charge. At the beginning, especially if you are doing it part-time, you might have to charge less until you’ve managed to gain enough work. Nevertheless it’s good to know the minimum you can sustain.

To do this, you can use this tool: [http://www.translatemedia.com/careers/how-to-become-a-translator/your-first-gig/](http://www.translatemedia.com/careers/how-to-become-a-translator/your-first-gig/). To calculate your minimum rate, fill in your business costs and, in the desired income box, your living expenses. Add the amount of hours you can spend translating (remember you will also have to market your services and deal with administrative tasks), how many words you can translate per hour and how many weeks of holidays you plan to take annually.

The tool will give you the number of words you should translate to cover your basic expenses and how much you can charge per word to achieve this.

Once you know what your absolute minimum rate should be, you should aim higher. In the ‘desired annual income’ box, put your earning target for the year and use the tool again.

It is not an exact science, but at least it will give you an idea of the effort involved to reach your desired income level.
What are other translators charging?

Once again, ProZ comes to our rescue: here you can find the results of a survey they conducted.

Obviously use this as reference only. It is not an exhaustive list, however it can give you an idea of how much others are charging (or, more precisely, how they are pitching their services on ProZ.com).

Enter your language pair in the fields on the top left corner of the page (see fig. below) to display the data you are interested in.

At the very least this tool will help you avoid offer ridiculously low (or high) rates for your language combination and expertise.

Rush charges & weekend work

Does the project deadline force you to work antisocial hours? Then go ahead and add a surcharge. We suggest a 20-25% increase in your rates to reflect this. Obviously, you need to mention this before taking on the project.

However you decide to calculate your rates, it’s imperative that you work hard to get yourself above the first few rungs of the ladder as quickly as possible.

This should be one of your first goals (along with getting great reviews and building up your portfolio and reputation).
Tips for a successful first job

So you’ve made it. You’ve convinced that agency or direct client to give you a shot.

This is no time to relax, since this is where the “actual” work starts!

As returning clients are the best kind of customer, you need to make sure you deliver exceptional work that meets or exceeds your clients’ expectations.

Questions for the client before starting the job:

1. Who is the target audience?
2. When do you need it by?
3. Are there any previous translations/glossaries/translation memories I should use?
4. What format do you need?
5. Is there a style guide I need to read?

...and some tips for you:

1. This is your first job: so make sure it’s “perfect” for a chance of working with that client again
2. Make sure you can do the job before agreeing to it
3. Whatever you do, deliver on time
4. If you do run into problems, let someone know ASAP
5. Take constructive criticism on board without getting offended – it helps you improve

Remember that you are only as good as your last job. Competition is tough: so don’t let your standards drop!

Head over to the Advanced section for tips, hacks and other tactics to enable you to work faster, earn more and become a translating superhero.
Making It Rain

How to earn more as a freelance translator

So now you have work coming in from a few clients or translation agencies, you’re comfortable with your skills and are loving the freedom that being a freelancer gives you.

If only you could earn more…

Rather than being a generalist, you need to specialise in order to command much higher rates.

However, if you are a generalist, what can you do to earn more?

Besides improving your productivity (see the next chapter), to earn more you need to do one or both of the following:

- Win more work
- Charge more

Getting more work from agencies

The best method of getting more work from agencies that you currently work with is to consistently produce great work.

Most reputable translation agencies will have some sort of review process and scoring system for their freelance translators. They are always looking to improve their service to clients so always attempt to select the translators with the highest scores for their clients’ work. This is a policy translation agencies have to employ due to the huge numbers of translators available and the competition that exists between agencies.

Besides being good at what you do, you should aim to be a great resource for an agency. How?
By being easy to work with
By being reliable
By being available when they need you

With time and experience you will be able to increase your credibility, improve your skills and, eventually, command higher rates.

Specialise

If you haven’t already done so, now it’s time to specialise in order to win better paying jobs or clients.

According to a ProZ 2012 industry report “Nearly 90% of translators are specialising”.

As a general translator, you will eventually reach your maximum earning capacity—no matter how much additional experience you gain along the way.

You can find more “insiders’ tips” on how to get more work from translation agencies in a post I wrote for Translator Thoughts.

Get direct clients

Now may be a good time to look for direct clients. Keep in mind you can always work for both direct clients and agencies. This is a good way to diversify and future-proof your business.

With direct clients you will be able to charge higher rates compared to agency work. The flip side is that you might receive less work and, since you are now a savvy business owner and not just a translator, you will need to factor in the higher cost of sales, as well as the time, resources and money spent on attracting direct clients.

Small businesses are an ideal target, as they are likely to require smaller volumes of translation work which you should be able to handle. More importantly, they are more likely to require fewer language pairs and specialisms. Often, when large organisations need text translated into many languages they will only work with professional translation agencies.

Additionally, bigger businesses often like the fact that agencies act as guarantors for the work and take on the legal liability for work carried out by translators.
If specialising is desirable when working with agencies, it is essential when working with direct clients. A legal firm, for example, will be more likely to work with someone who has a lot of experience providing legal translations.

The reality is that there aren’t that many clients that require general translations in just one language pair.

**Growing your client base**

The first step to improve your marketing efforts is not to create a website, nor to focus on SEO and social media.

The first thing you must do is to decide who you are selling your services to and tailor your approach accordingly.

**Find your target customer**

Be as specific as possible. Some questions you might want to work with are:

- In which field do they operate?
- How much are they willing to spend?
- Where are they located? Where are they spending their time on- or offline?
- How can you help them solve their problems?
- How does translation fit in with their overall business objectives?
- What do they look for in a translator or translation agency?
- Are they willing to pay well for high quality translations, or do they expect a lot of work for very little pay?

**Additional reading**

Use this resource to create your target persona: Free Target Market Persona
**Market yourself**

Will you present yourself as a translator who provides the lowest rates or one that focuses on quality and customer service? Either approach is fine. You just need to decide on which one will work best for you (and makes the most of your skillset).

Remember, you can't be everything to everyone. How you decide to market yourself will, in part, determine the businesses you target and your future success.

Once you've identified your target clients — you can start contacting them.

Although some sales people are happy to cold call clients, most translators don't like the idea (and most prospects prefer not to be cold-called either). So, email should be your primary method of communication.

Once you have targeted a customer segment, it's all about numbers. Contact as many relevant clients as possible, making sure you keep your target market and objectives in mind.

But, never spam. This will immediately create the wrong impression about you and your translation business to prospective clients.

REMEMBER: Test email formats and content, and optimise your approach….reusing the ones that work.

**Be where your customers are**

Try to attend events and join online communities where your target customers are – including industry conferences and networking events related to your niche.

This is a very informative post on [finding direct clients through industry conferences](#).

Remember that you are not there to sell your services directly. The key is to contribute with useful information and add value with all your posts. Many forums and LinkedIn groups will revoke access if you are thought to be using them to promote yourself.

Be selective and identify a list of forums and groups where your posts will be well received and target these with relevant content regularly.
Word-of-mouth referrals

Providing you have a few happy clients, there is simply no better way to obtain new ones than through word-of-mouth referrals.

Firstly, a recommendation from someone you know and trust beats most sales and marketing strategies.

Secondly, it's the most cost-effective way to get new business. In fact, it's virtually free.

The best way to get referrals is to have a system in place. After all, why leave it to chance?

To begin with, your work has to consistently delight your customers. If it's average—or worse still—poor, you're unlikely to attract positive word-of-mouth referrals.

Then:

1. Create the profile of your ideal customer – this way clients will refer you to pre-qualified prospects.

2. Natural referrals happen very rarely so ask your satisfied clients for recommendations. Generally customers tend to speak up more when they are unhappy than when they are satisfied, so make sure you are proactive in seeking referrals from happy clients.

3. Incentivise referrals – sometimes people need a little push. You can offer a discount on future translation, or a complementary service, for example. Do the maths and make sure the acquisition of a new customer this way makes financial sense.

4. When should you request a referral? After receiving positive feedback is always a good time, but you can be more organised than that. How about after three days from delivery? Or once a month? Pick a schedule you're comfortable with, set reminders and stick to it.

5. Analyse – set some time to look back at your referral initiatives and measure their effectiveness. If they are working well, tweak them to increase the success rate. If the results are disappointing, change your system. Keep a log of all activity and track long-term success – and adapt your approach based on what works, and what doesn’t.
NOW it’s time to create your website

There is just no reason not to.

Yes, lots of experienced translators don’t have one. But remember that you are operating a remote business and dealing with clients via email/telephone: a website is a great way to attract new clients by advertising your services indirectly.

A website can also be a great way to showcase your expertise.

If you have followed the previous steps in this guide then you will have the advantage of developing your approach and identifying your target clients before embarking on your website development project.

This will allow you to tailor your design, content, and call-to-actions to suit your target client personas.

In general, you want to convey expertise and trust while highlighting your unique selling point (USP).

USP

What can you do for me? Why should I use you? What sets you apart from all other freelance translators? These are the questions your prospective clients will be asking.

Expertise

A blog is a good way to show off your expertise—but how can you decide on the type of content you’re going to publish? Again, your content calendar should be developed with your target customer personas in mind. The content you produce for your blog should be of interest and provide value for your target customers.
Trust

User reviews and testimonials can be a good way to portray trust and influence new customers to use your services. If possible, display a list of your clients and the work that you have completed for them. Or even better—ask your clients to provide testimonials.

For an example of a great translator’s website, with good positioning, design and copy have a look at www.wantwords.co.uk

For general information about marketing internationally have a look at our guide to international marketing.

Additional reading

www.Translatorthoughts.com has a detailed guide that will help you with the process of creating your own website.

A note on SEO

While building your site and creating your content, you really need to consider your Search Engine Optimisation strategy. Luckily, most CMSs and templates, even free platforms like WordPress and Joomla, are now search-engine friendly.

Be aware that ranking for translation related terms is not easy. There’s a lot of competition from translation agencies who can afford to employ entire marketing departments and assign large budgets to their SEO to make sure they rank as high as possible.

Your priority should be satisfying your customers’ needs and using the insights to create content that will deliver you high-quality leads.
How to raise your rates (yes, also for existing clients):

As you get work, and if the quality of your translations stays the same or improves, you can start raising your rates and picking and choosing the jobs you decide to take on.

Obviously the best way to raise your rates is to find new clients that are happy to pay more for quality work. However it is possible to raise your rates for existing clients.

**Step 1**: try new rates with new prospects:

- Find out what others are charging—make sure you are comparing like for like—same industry, similar language pair, direct client with direct clients, not agencies, etc.
- Play around with rates until you find the sweet spot—but avoid doing this with the same clients.

**Step 2**: Once you have some new clients at a rate you are happy with, contact your old clients and announce the increase.

You may lose some clients, but it will allow for a better work/life balance. Plus, you may be working less, but earning more.

The main barrier stopping you from taking those two steps is likely a mental one.

To get you in the right frame of mind, watch this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy2xxhfKDNM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy2xxhfKDNM). Yes, translation is a bit different from other freelance professions and no, you won’t be able to use exactly the same tactics, but the information is useful nonetheless.

Just keep what works for you and discard what doesn’t.
Subcontracting

There will come a point where you will reach the limit of your productivity and you won’t be able to take on bigger jobs alone.

That’s when you could start thinking of subcontracting some work to other translators.

This will allow you to take on jobs that would be too big to complete alone. You could also begin to offer multiple language pairs (this usually works best with direct clients, as an agency would be reluctant to use a translator for more than one language pair).

You will likely be unable to subcontract agency work due to clauses in agreements that prevent you from subcontracting. And, let’s face it—the rates offered by agencies might not make subcontracting worthwhile.

If you do decide to subcontract, it is imperative that you are giving work to someone you know well and trust. If you have worked with them before and rate their work, that’s even better.

Make sure you have enough time to personally review their translations – after all, your name is on the final deliverables which means your reputation is at stake.

Other points to keep in mind when subcontracting are:

- Split work intelligently
- Have an agreement in place before you start
- Remember, there will be more management involved so factor this into the quote and timeframe

Another way to boost your income is to improve your productivity.

See the next chapter for productivity hacks.
Productivity tips

The one thing that all translators have in common is the number of hours in the day that they are able to work. So, making sure your business is efficient in order to enhance your productivity is the key to success.

“The first way to improve your productivity is to improve your skills” – Wise Old Man

Speed

**Touch typing**

Have you ever seen a world-class pianist looking down at the piano to find the right keys? Thought not. This is the first thing you can do to improve your work speed. As basic as it sounds, there are plenty of translators that cannot touch type effectively. Since your profession revolves around writing on a computer, it goes without saying that you should be among the best typists around. The issue is that we often don’t learn the proper way to type and it becomes difficult to then go back and change old habits. How fast are you?

Search online and you will find lots of tutorials and exercises that will correct your typing form. These two are pretty good:

- Typing Club
- Typing Study

**Dictation/speech recognition software**

Why type when you can speak? Although there is an initial time investment involved to train the software to recognise your voice, diction and accent, a lot of translators swear by voice recognition software, particularly when translating into English. Admittedly, there are some free options out there (for both Mac and Windows), but they currently don’t seem to be good enough for professional use.

Most people swear by Dragon NaturallySpeaking, arguably the best paid option out there at the moment, and certainly the most popular.

**Additional Speed-related tips:**

1. Become an expert in the CAT tool of choice
2. Bookmark sites that are already translated in your industry
3. Only translate within your area of expertise

**Additional reading:** Check this out for a comparison of [Mountain Lion Dictation vs Dragon Dictate](http://vip.aersia.net/vip.swf)

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**Concentration**

Your ability to focus has a huge impact on the speed at which you can translate. Use the following tips to improve your concentration:

**Music**

Although some people prefer to work in silence, music can help you get “in the zone”, especially if it has no lyrics and is of a repetitive nature

- [https://www.youtube.com/user/music2work2](https://www.youtube.com/user/music2work2)

Beautiful classical-style music with no lyrics, created purposely to create “flow”.

- [http://vip.aersia.net/vip.swf](http://vip.aersia.net/vip.swf)
Over 900 video game songs. Video game songs are created to induce hyper-focus without getting in the way of gameplay, so they might be useful for aiding your concentration.

**Pomodoro Technique**

The good old Pomodoro Technique makes the most of the human brain’s window of attention (25 minutes on a task, 5 minutes break). You can go low-tech with an egg-timer or pick one of numerous online options [for example, moosti.com or their chrome extension]

**Blocking websites**

According to a poll by ProZ, unrelated internet activities rank first among the reasons translators get distracted. This trend is increasing as using social media to market yourself and constantly being online to do research mean that you are highly vulnerable to distraction. Use this extension to get work done by blocking a selected website for a certain amount of time.

- **Strict Workflow** – uses the Pomodoro Technique and blocks access to selected websites during the 25 minutes of concentration;
- **StayFocusd** – as an extra touch you get told off (“shouldn’t you be working?”) every time you are tempted to open a blocked website.
- **WasteNoTime** – very useful blocking extension with added motivational quotes.

**Email**

Email can be an enormous distraction, especially if you are one of those people that checks your email every 5 minutes.

- Turn off email desktop notification and set specific times to check email and adhere to it. This way you can decide when it’s time for email, not the opposite.
- Don’t use your inbox as an archive: it’s not good for productivity, it forces you to keep checking your emails and it is daunting to keep reading the same tasks over and over again. Want more? Check this out: [http://content.sanebox.com/100-email-hacks](http://content.sanebox.com/100-email-hacks)
Your office

The location-independent lifestyle is both a blessing and a curse of the translator. As you strive to minimise distractions and increase your output, the location where you work has a huge effect on how well you do your job.

- A good home office should be well equipped, minimising the need for you to go elsewhere to find work-related items. At the same time it helps if it is clean, tidy, and uncluttered.
- If possible, it should be in an area of your house that is relatively quiet and where you won’t be disturbed for a set amount of time. To help you separate work and leisure, try not to work in your bedroom or living room.
- If you live with other people, make sure they know you are “at work”—share your schedule with them if you wish.
- In terms of extra equipment, consider investing in a second monitor (no, really, it’s great).
- If you work from a laptop, an external keyboard might be easier to use and allow you to type faster.
- Get a good chair—you are spending a lot of time in it, make sure it’s comfortable and promotes good posture.

Get dressed up

You don’t have to wear a suit, but staying in your pyjamas all day can make you less productive.

“Go to work”

Some translators have suggested going out in the morning, having a walk around the block and going back home to start working. Not only does this force you to get dressed (see point above), it also prepares you psychologically to the working day ahead. Repeat in the evening for a “proper” commuter’s experience.

Exercise

“How do you become more productive?“Work out.” The above quote is from Richard Branson. When the founder of 400 companies gives you advice, it’s a good idea to listen. Besides improving your productivity, finding time to exercise is particularly important in this profession, as you will spend many hours sitting down in front of a screen.
Now you should have enough clients, a website, and the tools to be hyper-productive.

There is one thing left to do, and that’s improving the parts of your business that waste time.

Perhaps the two biggest time-consuming tasks that aren’t directly related to translation are administration and marketing.

First of all, remember there’s a time for planning, and a time for execution. If you attempt to juggle too many tasks, they will all suffer as a result.

To avoid this, the first thing you can do is schedule accounting and prospecting activities so that you can carry them out at the same time each day/week or month.

**Prospecting**

Use your digital calendar and set alerts to automatically send you emails, so that you will be reminded to keep on top of your sales and marketing activities.

Setting a schedule will also remind you to keep to it. Finding new clients can be daunting and some translators tend to leave it until they really need them – which may be too late.

Remember to set the system around you: find out when your concentration is at its peak, then protect that time and use it to complete your translation work.

You can always write your prospecting emails in the evening and schedule them to be delivered in the morning.

When setting up your sales activity schedule, it might be useful to split it in three sections:

- Prospecting
- Touching base with existing clients
- Requesting referrals & testimonials
Create a strategy for each of these sales activities, choosing the most suitable timeframes for each. You don’t want to annoy people with too many touch-points and messages but you do need them to remember you.

Creating processes

Taking time to look at the activities you carry out most often can help you decide what can be automated and what should be delegated.

Here is how to turn activities into processes:

1. **Describe the desired outcome of the activity – why are you doing it?**
2. **As you go through the process, take note and describe them step by step.**
3. **Decide if all the actions in your process are needed. If they don’t help you achieve the desired outcome – modify or remove them.**
4. **Create a visual representation of the whole process in the form of a flow chart. This will help you see the big picture.**
5. **Now that you have a documented process in place, you can decide whether it is possible to automate it or delegate any processes.**
Delegating

You’ve set up all your alerts and reminders, and batching activities has helped you save some time.

But wouldn’t it be great if you didn’t have to do anything but translate content for your clients? After all—that’s your biggest strength, right?

At this point you may want to consider getting additional help. Employing staff is a good way to scale your business and allow the resources to be focused on the areas that they are best suited to. But, you don’t have to hire full-time staff (yet).

If it makes financial sense, you can just delegate some tasks.

If you have done all the work beforehand, by profiling a target audience and crafting targeted emails, you could use a Virtual Assistant (VA) to send them to potential clients.

As one type of email won’t work for everyone, you should create a few different types and segment your list. As you work with your VA and you get to know each other, you can delegate the creation of prospect lists, or give them the freedom to personalise the emails even further (with guidelines and support).

The key to this arrangement working well is having an efficient and effective sales process in place. An assistant won’t make a mediocre system great, but will make a good system run more smoothly.

- www.Freelancer.com
- www.oDesk.com
- www.Elance.com
- www.Peopleperhour.com
- https://www.247virtualassistant.com

Once you have set your assistant loose, remember to measure their effectiveness. If the work they are bringing in justifies the cost of hiring them, you can think of adding additional assistants, effectively creating your own remote sales force. If not, you may need to scale back or find someone else who might be more cost effective.
**Administration**

With all tasks, including prospecting activities, be sure to keep organised. Disorganisation is the biggest driver of inefficiency.

Create clearly labelled folders on your machine and establish naming conventions for your documents—and stick to them! No more “invoice.doc” document names.

Importantly, remember to back up your data. You can use services like Dropbox or Google Docs to save your documents in the cloud and make them accessible remotely from anywhere. This will save you time and heartache if your hard drive fails or your machine is hacked causing local copies of your files to be lost.

The quickest and safest way to get administration off your hands is to hire an accountant.

You can also automate your admin tasks to some extent with software such as Translation Office 3000 – ProZ has a good offer for their subscribers here: [http://www.proz.com/TO3000](http://www.proz.com/TO3000).

**Additional Reading:**

27 Free Invoicing Tools for Businesses on a Budget

"How to succeed as a Freelance Translator" by Corinne Mckay

Congratulations! You now have the knowledge and resources to make it as a freelance translator.

If you found this guide useful – please share it with your friends and colleagues.