How to Find Translation Work and Jobs by Karel Kosman

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The most standard and possibly old-fashion approach how to find translation work is to put on a good suit, put together an impressive CV and approach all the translation agencies in your area and which you can find in the local yellow pages or online directories. A face-to-face and personal approach can create a good impression and get you farther ahead of the game than someone who is applying by email. If you are applying locally, chances are you know the local language, which the local agencies primarily focus on.

Finding direct customers can be more difficult, and the workflow a lot less than can be provided by an agency, but the rewards can be greater in terms of a higher rate and a more personal and flexible working relationship with the customer. For this I found faxing a good approach. Everyone is used to emails these days that deleting them is almost a habit, but an old fashion fax early in the morning can receive special attention and find its way to the director's desk. You can quickly punch into an Excel file fax number from the Yellow Pages or online directories and then feed that list into some fax software which will busily send your cover letter overnight while you are sleeping and the phone line is not in use. The next morning the secretary will find the fax, when she is fresh and perky and able to respond to it better. In this manner I've found great customers who have sent me enjoyable translations for many years.

After that you could try websites where agencies and/or direct customer post translation projects and which you can bid on. Local sites are good because most of those posting will be interested in the local language, which presumably will be one which you have mastered. Then you could try some of the international translation job sites, the most prominent of which are: proz.com, translatorscafe.com, gotranslators.com. Many require a fee in order to properly take advantage of the service, but proz, the most prominent of them all, allows you to respond to translation job posts without a membership. The catch is that you usually have to wait about 12 hours after paying members, but most of the time you can find the name of the agency, look them up on the internet and approach them directly.

But even with a membership I have found that getting translation work by these means can yield disappointing results.

The best approach is to approach the translation companies directly, because most agencies prefer to work with translators who are registered in their own database. This way they can enter comments concerning the translator, and feel a closer relationship with them. It is also easier to search for translators based on language combination or other criteria when working with one's own database.

But approaching many agencies can be a formidable task. In terms of time invested, I found the best results were achieved by emailing a CV with brief cover letter to a list of translation companies. Over 20 years of operating a translation agency I have compiled more than 16,000 email address of translation companies, and by experience I found that this is the most effective way of quickly filling up your schedule with translation work. Some agencies will store your CV and inform you that they will get back to you when they find something in your language combination. Others will not inform you but do the same, and you will find that the work will start to trickle in on its own.

But many others will ask you to fill in their application forms - either through online forms or ones they send you as attached files. Whenever you are not busy with translation work it is a good idea to go through all these and complete them. These usually concern larger companies who can quite

possibly offer you a lot more work than the smaller agencies satisfied with saving your email in some folder. But you will often have to jump through a few hoops and loops to get your foot into the door of these larger companies, or provide a free translation test. In any case, the more work you get and customers you accumulate, the more experience you will gain, reputation you will earn, and you will be in a better position to start increasing your price. This is the key to the entire game.

Once the work does start flowing in, you will want to make sure you will get paid for your translation work (explained through links below), because there are many sharks out there whose business plan is based on transferring their existing and fancy webpages to a new domain and simply change their company name in the header. So be careful!

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Karel Kosman - About Author:
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