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Customer/translator relations – Working effectively with translators

Relacje klient – tłumacz. Efektywna współpraca z tłumaczami

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest takim zagadnieniom, jak znajdowanie przez organizację dobrych profesjonalnych tłumaczy, przygotowanie do wspólnej pracy, negocjowanie cen i terminów satysfakcjonujących dla obu stron oraz budowanie i utrzymywanie relacji. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, w jaki sposób organizacja i pracujący dla niej tłumacz mogą uformować strategiczne partnerstwo przynoszące wzajemne korzyści. Jednocześnie ukazane są pewne aspekty pracy profesjonalnego tłumacza w kontekście konkretnych działań organizacji, które mogą wpłynąć na jakość tej pracy, z uwzględnieniem różnicy w pracy tłumaczy pracujących z tekstem (translators) i tych, którzy tłumaczą żywy język (interpreters). Artykuł zawiera liczne przykłady - zarówno z literatury, jak i z praktyki autorki – ukazujące negatywne konsekwencje niewłaściwej selekcji tłumacza bądź nieodpowiedniej z nim współpracy.

Abstract: This paper deals with aspects such as finding good professional translators, preparing to work together, agreeing on prices and deadlines so that both parties have a fair deal, and how to build up and maintain a good working relationship. The aim of the paper is to show how client and translator can form a strategic partnership that benefits them both. It attempts to show what is involved in the work of a professional translator and how the client can help the translator to do the best possible job. It also includes a section on the differences between the work of translators and interpreters as well as examples of what can go wrong if a company does not use the services of a carefully selected professional translator or does not work effectively enough with the translator.

Introduction

No-one would want cowboys to carry out construction work in their home or office but it is amazing how many people are prepared to let amateurs attempt to translate their documents and websites. Yet the effect can be no less catastrophic, wreaking just as much damage and proving to be equally expensive to rectify. Hence the importance of finding a good professional translator, agreeing on prices and deadlines so that both parties have a fair deal, and building up and maintaining a good working relationship. It is

in any company's interest to form a strategic partnership with their translator and cooperate as effectively as possible.

Assessing Your Needs and Avoiding Disaster

The first stage is to ascertain whether your company requires one or more translators and then, if necessary, to set about finding translators. One alternative for an international company is to employ a specialist in their field of expertise who is a native speaker of the target language to write documentation in that language. Since expert knowledge is just as important as linguistic competence, this can be a good solution in some cases.

Another option, much less advisable, is for companies to attempt to translate documentation themselves. Even if you have employees with a very good command of the target language, any texts to be used to present the company externally, i.e. not only for internal memos, for example, should always be carefully edited or proofread by a competent native speaker, preferably one with expertise in your field. Otherwise the consequences for your company's image can be disastrous.

This may apply equally to advertising for a big multi-national company or for a self-employed individual. For instance, Kentucky Fried Chicken's famous slogan "Finger-lickin' good" reportedly came out rather less well in Chinese: the translation read "Eat your fingers off!" Another amusing example of distortion of information content resulting from mistranslation is the following flyer distributed by a Polish cleaner soliciting work in Watford:

- I have one year of experience in England,
- I have the references,
- If you are interesting call me please.¹

Although a flyer, business card, letterhead, logo or other basic marketing or branding tool may seem simple to create, it is essential that these are at least checked by a native speaker to avoid embarrassing errors that can be detrimental to your or your company's image.

Whether the texts are produced for a large or small audience, the consequences of not using a professional translator can be serious, even a potential health hazard, as in this case cited by one translator: A colleague who worked for a French translation firm received a telephone call from an industrial bakery that made various types of fruit tart, etc. The bakery had received a letter from a rather irate customer in the UK (a supermarket chain) who had analysed one of their pear and almond tarts and - surprise, surprise - found almonds in it, although an "allergy questionnaire" had been completed, declaring that the products contained no nuts. The bakery had avoided the "enormous" expense of getting the questionnaire translated professionally by resorting to a dictionary and their school English. When they got to the question "Does your product contain nuts?" they had translated "nuts" as "noix" - and replied, truthfully, that their pear and almond

¹ Croker C., 2007: *Still Lost in Translation*, 78

tarts contained no walnuts. “Nuts” should have been rendered in French as “fruits à coque” to ensure it covered the generic term covering all nuts.²

Another even more alarming example from France cited in one of the very useful brochures published by the American Translators Association (ATA) is an instance where a translation was required but not provided at all, with fatal consequences:

A California manufacturer of medical equipment sold a device in France without a French translation of the instructions for using it, wrongly assuming that all the operators would be fluent in English. In France, French language documentation is required by law. Far worse: patients died from radiation overdoses administered by poorly informed technicians.³

Translator or Interpreter?

Given the risks involved in not using a professional translator, it is normally well worth investing in the services of a carefully selected professional translator. At this point, it should be noted that there is often some confusion between the terms “translator” and “interpreter”. Translators produce written texts whereas interpreters produce oral texts. Interpreting may be simultaneous, where the interpreter works in a booth with headphones, consecutive where the interpreter text is relayed in sections following the original, or bilateral (also known as liaison interpreting) where the interpreter mediates between two parties interpreting in both directions. Another variation is *chuchotage*, which is whispered or quietly spoken simultaneous interpreting without equipment and can only be effective for a very small number of listeners, normally one or two persons.

Although there is some overlap in the skills needed, translation and interpreting are two very different jobs. While both require a high level of linguistic and cultural competence, normally working with specialised texts and terminology, due to the extreme time pressure under which interpreters work, they are expected to carry out intensive research and preparation prior to the conference or meeting and then rely on the knowledge they have acquired coupled with an ability to think on their feet. For this reason, it is crucial to supply your interpreters with the necessary documentation and other reference materials in good time. This also applies to translators: make sure you provide them with reference materials such as parallel texts and/or glossaries, useful information such as your website address, names and telephone numbers of contact people. You also need to inform them if you require a particular variety of a language, for example, British or American English. Finally, always try to answer translators’ questions as quickly as possible so as to not slow down the translation process.

While it is misguided to believe that translators do not also work under time pressure, the difference is that unlike interpreters they do have the opportunity to consult dictionaries and research the subject as they work,

² Alvin R., 2008: *Choosing a translator* – A Business Matters magazine feature, 4.

³ Durban C. and Melby A., 2008: *Translation Buying a non-commodity*, 3.

since the time pressure is not as extreme. The final version of the text should be much more polished as a consequence, however, since translators are in a position to – and indeed expected to – revise their work in a way that interpreters are unable to once the words have been uttered.

Finding a Translator

Once it has been established that a translator is required, a number of decisions have to be taken before the search can begin. Firstly, it must be decided whether or not to employ one or more in-house translators, and then if not, whether to work directly with a freelance translator or translators or to use the services of a translation company or agency.

The factors to be taken into consideration with regard to the feasibility of employing an in-house translator are the volume of work for the translator, that is, whether this would be enough to merit employing one or more persons full-time or part-time, facilities and resources available (desk, computer with Internet connection, dictionaries, translation tools if applicable) and costs to be covered by the employer (health insurance, pensions, holiday pay, etc.). Many employers find it more cost-effective to outsource their translation work.

An agency can be a good option if you need a translation quickly and have no translators on your books or contacts in the translation business. However, agencies can vary greatly and some take a cut of over 50%, leaving both the client and the translator short-changed. Agencies that charge higher prices – and generally pay higher rates to their translators – tend to provide a higher quality of service, also checking the translations in-house before sending them out to the client.

If you are looking for a freelancer, particularly one to work with in the long term, the best way of finding a good professional translator is word-of-mouth recommendations, either from colleagues in your business who are satisfied with their translator, or from other contacts. Freelancers are not normally interviewed in the same way as in-house translators but there is no reason why you should not arrange a meeting with the translator to get to know him or her. Also, if a translator does not come from a reliable source, for example, if their details have been found on the Internet or in the telephone directory, then you should either give them a short test translation (preferably paid) if you are in a position to judge the quality of the result – or know someone who can do this for you – and/or ask for references, particularly if you require a translation into a language you do not read and thus have no way of telling what the standard is like.

In any case, it is always wise to have a translation proofed by someone who reads the relevant language, as illustrated by one cautionary tale from Wales published on the BBC website.⁴ Since all official road signs in Wales are bilingual, Swansea Council officials needed the Welsh translation

⁴ E-mail error ends up on road sign, 31 October 2008, 17 November 2008, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7702913.stm>>

of a road sign that said “No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only.” An e-mail to the council’s in-house translation service received a reply which was then used for the text of the Welsh sign. Unfortunately, however, the mail said in Welsh: “I am not in the office at the moment. Send any work to be translated.” Photographs of the sign were sent to the Welsh-language magazine *Golwg* and according to its managing editor Dylan Iorwerth, this is just one of many examples: “We’ve been running a series of these pictures over the past months. They’re circulating among Welsh speakers because, unfortunately, it’s all too common that things are not just badly translated, but are put together by people who have no idea about the language.”

Although it depends on the language combination, you would normally expect translators to work into their native language or at least have their work edited or proofread by a qualified native speaker. In addition to language competence, you should also find out about your potential translator’s experience and/or qualifications as well as their areas of expertise. The more technical or specialised your subject is, the more important it is that your translators are familiar with it.

Ask about quality control, for example, whether they work with colleagues who edit or proofread their translations. Since any work to be published needs a second pair of eyes, publishing houses normally pay for both a translator and an editor. Final proofreading also has to be carried out, but this should only be for the purposes of hyphenation and perhaps the occasional comma or typo, particularly if foreign accents are used as these may be automatically converted into different characters by some computer programs. It can prove costly if this is only discovered after printing. The original text to be translated should also be edited by a person other than the author. Here, too, the typeset text should be carefully proofed. It should be agreed with the translator in advance who is responsible for editing and proofreading, and whether or not these services are included in the translation fee or to be paid for separately.

Prices and Deadlines

To avoid subsequent misunderstandings, agreed prices and deadlines should be recorded in writing, at least per email, while for larger projects such as book translations, for instance, it is wise for both parties to sign a more formal written contract. Translation is generally charged per word, for example, in France or the Netherlands, or per 1,000 words in the United Kingdom, while in Germany payment is per standard line, normally of 55 characters although this may also vary between 50 and 60 characters. This exception to the norm is due to the length of German words.

In Germany, for instance, literary translations are paid per page as are translations in general in the Czech Republic. Here, a page rate is also used for editing and proofreading, which is normally paid per hour in Germany. Many translators also charge an hourly rate for translation of documents in a more time-consuming format than Word, such as Excel or

PowerPoint, where it is difficult to count the characters. Translation fees are normally paid upon receipt of an invoice following delivery, but for longer jobs such as books, an advance or partial payment may be expected before completion of the entire translation.

Negotiating prices that give both parties a fair deal can be problematic. Customers would not normally walk into a shop and find something they would like to buy and state that they want it but are not prepared to pay the full price for the product. Yet this often happens with translations, presumably because clients with little experience of working with translators are unaware of the work and skills involved.

Indeed, it is not unheard of for people to expect translation services to be provided free of charge. A translation enquiry was once posted on the mailing list of a translation group in Berlin where an organisation was looking for someone to translate "around 30 pages perfectly within a maximum of four days" – for free. It was presented as a serious enquiry with the argument that the work was for a not-for-profit event in commemoration of the life and work of Lady Diana and that consequently the translator should be prepared to work on a voluntary basis, too. Not surprisingly, there were no takers and comments ranged from indignation that anyone should expect translators who are working hard to pay their way through life to emulate the "unpaid" work of a millionaires to the suggestion that the translator should bill this particular client a large sum in order to cover business expenses while carrying out the translation.

The fact that freelance translators also have operational costs is often disregarded. In addition to covering the costs of the basic equipment of an office with a computer connected to the Internet, office supplies, specialist dictionaries and a telephone connection, like any other self-employed person, a freelance translator also has to pay tax, medical insurance and pension contributions, plus ideally professional liability insurance and disability insurance, although in practice many freelancers cannot afford the latter two. Consequently, income from translation work is not all net profit and many translators struggle to make ends meet, particularly literary translators who invariably have to take on other jobs in order to survive financially.

Translation prices vary as much as the systems according to which they are calculated. Find out the pricing system that applies in your country and then, as with other services, it is advisable to collect at least two or three cost estimates for a translation, bearing in mind that the cheapest one may not necessarily be the best choice. The maxim that you get what you pay for generally applies to translators: those with little experience and/or qualifications charge lower prices, as do "hobby" translators who are often unqualified for this type of skilled work, and the quality of their translations is more often than not considerably lower. If you pay a translator appropriately well, he or she will be able to spend more time on the translation, researching carefully, paying attention to detail and perhaps employing a second translator to edit or proofread the translation.

It is obviously much more difficult for translators to produce high-quality texts if they are forced to regularly work night shifts or double shifts so you can also help your translators work to the best of their ability by giving them reasonable deadlines. As with prices, it is not always easy to judge what is a reasonable deadline but bearing in mind that translators have to rewrite a text in a different language, if, for example, you spend a week writing a text, it is probably unrealistic to then expect this to be translated within 24 hours.

The majority of translations require more or less intensive research of terminology, often much more time-consuming than might be expected. To give an example to illustrate this point, a short abbreviation of a national law may involve several Google searches to find the full name and then the official translation among several different versions listed on the Internet: for instance, *GefStoffV* or *Gefahrstoffverordnung* is officially translated as the Hazardous Substances Ordinance although other translations such as the Hazardous Substances Regulation, Directive or Act are also to be found. Here the translator would need to have the legal background knowledge that "Verordnung" is normally translated as "Regulation" in the context of an EU law but as "Ordinance" if it is a German law. It may be necessary for the translator to contact another expert on a subject, such as a qualified lawyer or technician, for instance, which also takes time.

In many cases, so-called emergencies are in fact simply the result of bad planning and therefore avoidable. Translators will normally try to fit in an urgent job at short notice for a good regular customer but all clients should bear in mind that this is not always feasible. Most good professional translators tend to be booked up to full or almost full capacity at least two weeks in advance, so while it may be possible for them to find time for a short urgent text, any longer job may not be humanly possible. Your translator may be able to put you in contact with a colleague who is able to help you instead but there can be no guarantee of this, either.

You should expect to pay an express surcharge if you would like a text to be translated overnight, over the weekend or during a public holiday. This might vary between an additional 25% to 100% of the standard charge, depending on the circumstances. It is a courtesy to warn the translator in advance that you are in the process of or intending to write a text, give them an estimated timeframe and approximate length and enquire about availability. Try to be as accurate as possible with the information provided to your translators. I have experienced a case where the original enquiry was to translate a summary of 5-7 pages in length – this then turned out to be 57 pages to be processed within the same very short space of time. This was not a misunderstanding over the telephone but a change of mind on the part of the client that was not communicated to the translators in good time.

Similarly, avoidable problems are likely to arise when a customer schedules a translation requiring a team of translators and then finally sends the texts weeks later when all the translators are busy with other projects. Keep them informed about any delays, since particularly for small busi-

nesses or translators working independently, it is not economically viable to keep capacity free and lose out on other work.

It is also problematic for freelance translators if invoices are not paid promptly, especially if several customers are late with payments at the same time, as tends to happen all too frequently during holiday periods. This is particularly unfair business practice on the part of the client if a translator has pulled out all the stops to complete a translation under extreme time pressure, perhaps turning down or postponing other work in order to do so. A new law on obligation to pay debts⁵ was introduced in Germany in January 2002 to protect small and medium-sized enterprises from financial difficulties or even bankruptcy resulting from bad payment practice on the part of their debtors. This law penalises them for ignoring invoices and/or reminders, since it entitles service providers such as translators to charge interest if an invoice is not paid by a given date. There are also similar laws in other countries such as the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act in the US. Leaving aside the legal aspects, however, a translator is not likely to work for a client a second time if an invoice is not paid promptly in full. Moreover, since customers or agencies who are bad payers are normally blacklisted on translator forums, they may subsequently find it difficult to get another translator to work for them.

The Human Factor and a Good Working Relationship

A famous anecdote has it that at the end of the day a conference participant picks up the headset used as portable simultaneous interpreting equipment and asks if he can take the interpreter home with him. This is, of course, an extreme example but serves well to illustrate the point that it is easy to forget that interpreters and translators are human beings, too. Neither can work inhumanly long shifts without breaks. Interpreters should work in teams of two and alternate every 20-30 minutes with coffee and lunch breaks the same as the conference participants, while translators can normally be expected to translate an average of around 200 standard lines (11,000 characters) a day.

With the notable exception of the Canadian weather forecasts, translation is not simply a question of replacing one word with another, possibly using machine translation without human editing, but involves considerable work by a human translator. In a world where translation work is carried out mainly by e-mail, today's technology makes it possible to work with people for years and not meet them or even speak to them on the telephone. There is something missing, however, if you do not have some personal contact and bring a human factor to your business.

In another of its very practical brochures, *Translation - Getting It Right: A Guide to Buying Translations*,⁶ the American Translators Associa-

⁵ *Das neue Schuldrecht* (The New Law of Obligations).

⁶ Now available in several languages and downloadable from the ATA's website at <http://www.atanet.org/>

tion advises clients to talk to their translators and make sure they are familiar with the subject they translate:

You will get best results from developing an ongoing relationship with a translator or team of translators. The longer you work with them and the better they understand your business philosophy, strategy and products, the more effective their texts will be.

Whenever possible, know your translators – not just the project managers, but the translators themselves, the people who actually produce your texts. And make sure they know you.⁷

Similarly, the handbook for freelance translators and interpreters published by the German *BDÜ* or *Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V.* (Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators) advises translators for their part to make every effort to meet clients in person, since this is normally beneficial to both sides:

Versuchen Sie, neugewonnene Auftraggeber möglichst bald persönlich kennenzulernen, z.B. durch Besuch anlässlich des ersten Auftrags, bei einem Messebesuch, oder wenn Sie „sowieso gerade in der Nähe zu tun haben“. Der Auftraggeber hat somit Gelegenheit, sich ein Bild von Ihnen zu machen, und Sie können Ihrerseits (oft recht aufschlußreiche) Eindrücke vom Auftraggeber gewinnen, die für eine weitere Zusammenarbeit nützlich sind.⁸

As a client, particularly if you have a number of freelance translators or editors (or authors) on your books, try to involve them in your company as far as possible, for example, by including them on your website or perhaps inviting them to your company's Christmas party or anniversary celebrations. Even just meeting once and chatting over coffee or lunch to get to know your translator invariably helps create a bond that serves to improve the working relationship.

It is important and potentially beneficial to both sides to make your translator into a decision-making partner. Translators can be consulted, inter alia, about terminology, conventions in the country of the target language, style and content of your texts. For instance, a customer of mine wanted to use a particular heading "Click-a-jet" as a navigation point on the company's website and consulted with me to see what impression this makes on native speakers. As noted by one of my colleagues whose opinion was also sought, this is a very wise policy to be recommended to other clients, too.

I was recently asked by another customer if I would prefer to have a text in bad English to correct or have the original German text and translate it from scratch. This shows an awareness of the problems with proof-

⁷ Aparicio A. and Durban C., 2003: *Translation - Getting It Right: A Guide to Buying Translations*, 19.

⁸ Baur A. et al., 1991: *Erfolgreich Selbständig als Dolmetscher und Übersetzer*, 54. "Try to get to know new customers in person as soon as possible, for example, by visiting them in connection with your first job, at a trade fair or when you "happen to be in the area". This gives the client an opportunity to get an idea of you, while you, for your part, can get an (often very informative) impression of the customer that is useful for further cooperation." My own translation.

reading unintelligible texts and is a good way of cooperating well with a translator who can judge whether or not the translation available is at all useable. Often it is easier and faster – and ultimately cheaper for the client – to produce a new translation than to substantially rewrite an existing sub-standard one.

Your translator may also be able to advise you, for example, on which parts of your website or documents to have translated. The American Translators Association gives sound advice on this matter in its brochure *Translation - Getting It Right: A Guide to Buying Translations*, suggesting deciding together with your client or sales team what actually needs to be translated. The ATA recommends only translating relevant sections of existing documents or producing shorter documents in the source language and having those translated.

The following case study cited in the brochure illustrates how translator and client can cooperate effectively with the translator participating in the decision-making process:

A firm of patent lawyers in California regularly calls in a specialist translator to review Japanese patent documents and give a quick oral summary; together lawyers and translator then determine which documents need to be fully translated.⁹

Translator Micheal Benis argues, quite rightly, that translators should cooperate with their clients to ensure that translations are of a high quality which he defines as “suitability for purpose”, for instance, in the case of a user manual:

If, for example, the technical support line serving a customer finds that consumers are continually encountering problems with using a particular function of the product on “our” market, we should work with them to consider whether this is a product usability issue or a cultural/communication problem that could be overcome by rewriting the relevant section/s of the manual. In short, we should act like every other industry, measuring quality not only during production, but also during use and in the minds of our users.¹⁰

If a translation is not comprehensible to the user, or perhaps reads well but does not serve its intended purpose, then it does not constitute a good translation. Hence the importance of clear communication between the client and translator regarding the intended purpose and audience.

Finally, as well as consulting with your translator before a translation is commissioned and while the work is being carried out, it is a good policy to provide feedback to your translators as often as possible even if they do not ask. If for any reason you are not happy with a translation or part of it, perhaps where the translator has misunderstood or misread something in the text, you should ask them to rectify it. Many professional translators will inform you that they will be pleased to answer questions and/or make any re-

⁹ Aparicio A. and Durban C., 3.

¹⁰ Benis M., 2005: Quality & the translation market, 5.

quested changes to their translation and they are entitled to do so by law in some countries, for example, in Germany.

If a translator uses an expression you are not familiar with, this is not necessarily an incorrect or poor translation. It happens that customers mistakenly suppose they have a better grasp of a language than the professional translator who is a native speaker of that language. One rather amusing example I recall is when a customer of mine was under the misconception that the English expression “to take out insurance” that I used in a translation meant to stop paying insurance, i.e. the opposite of what was in the German source text and therefore contested the translation. The actual meaning was pointed out to the client by the agency I was working for, I spoke to the customer, too, and they accepted our explanations.

A customer is, of course, always entitled to ask if he or she has any queries about a translation and translators should be able to defend their choices if necessary but, as Hans G. Hönig rightly points out, translators inevitably have to make decisions when translating and should not have to justify each of these decisions:

Übersetzer können sich vor der Verantwortung für ihren Text nicht drücken; sie können – selbst wenn sie es wollten – niemals so “defensiv” übersetzen, daß man ihnen an einigen Stellen nicht doch subjektive Entscheidungen nachweisen kann.

Wenn sie jede dieser Entscheidungen verteidigen oder gar ihre “Korrektheit” beweisen müßten, wären sie gar nicht mehr in der Lage, ihre Leistung zu erbringen. Die Diskussion über die Richtigkeit dieser übersetzerischen Entscheidungen würde am Ende mehr Zeit beanspruchen als die Übersetzung selbst. Mit anderen Worten: Übersetzer haben einen Anspruch auf Vertrauensvorschuß, er ist das Kapital, mit dem sie arbeiten.¹¹

Hönig goes on to point out that if the customer does not have confidence in the translator to do a good job, he or she should think about why this is so. It may stem back to the choice of translator and if, for example, the translator has been selected on the basis of charging a low rate, the client should perhaps reconsider this choice for future work. It may be related more to the importance of the text than to the choice of translator and if this is the case, the customer should take the time to speak to the translator and provide him or her with all the information required to ensure that he or she is able to do a good job. Just as the cheapest translator is not normally the best choice, the most expensive one is not necessarily the best, either. As Hönig concludes:

¹¹ Hönig, H.G., 1997: *Konstruktives Übersetzen*, 182. “Translators cannot shirk responsibility for their text; they can never – even if they wanted to – translate so “defensively” that it cannot be proven that they have still made subjective decisions at some points.

If they had to defend each of these decisions, or even prove their “correctness”, they would no longer be in a position to accomplish their work. Discussion about whether these translation decisions were right or wrong would take up more time than the translation itself in the end. In other words, translators are entitled to trust in advance: it is the asset they work with.” All translations are my own.

Es ist zwar richtig, daß Auftraggeber für die Übersetzung besonders wichtiger Texte etwas investieren sollten. Aber in den meisten Fällen investieren sie an der falschen Stelle: Eine Investition an Zeit zahlt sich meistens besser aus als eine rein finanzielle Investition.¹²

Once a translation has been completed, whether or not you have any questions about the text, if you – and/or your client – are pleased with a translator's work and you communicate this to the translator, it can only serve to improve his or her level of job satisfaction and commitment to the customer, so he or she will be more likely to find time to accommodate you next time you have an urgent translation for them. As with any employees, the importance of interpersonal relations in motivating your freelancers should not be underestimated. Particularly if a freelancer is in the fortunate position of being able to choose which assignments to accept, as is often the case with established translators, there are a number of factors taken into consideration in deciding this.

One factor considered to be extremely important by many freelancers, myself included, is the human factor, i.e. a good working relationship with the customer who commissions the translation and the knowledge that if any problems arise, the translator can discuss them with the client and normally find a solution together and that the customer appreciates the work done for him or her, particularly if deadlines are tight. Other factors include interesting and well-written texts, reasonable or flexible deadlines, a good rate of pay, prompt payment and referrals leading to other work.

If you have a book edited or translated, it is only common courtesy to give the translator and/or editor at least one free copy, include their name(s) in the book and invite them to the book launch. View your freelance translators, editors and interpreters as equal partners, bearing in mind that it is no less difficult to translate a text than to write the original; since translators effectively rewrite texts in another language, they are also a type of author. For instance, do not forget to thank the translator in a speech he or she has translated that includes thanks to everyone else involved in the project. If you neglect to do such things, it does not bode well for good interpersonal relations or motivation – yet the situation is surprisingly easy to remedy.

Conclusion

Overall, if you are prepared to invest time, effort and money into finding a good professional translator, agreeing on prices and deadlines so that both parties have a fair deal, building up and maintaining a good working relationship, it should pay dividends. If interpersonal relations are based on mutual respect where both parties are willing to learn from each other, cooperation with your translator can lead to a strategic partnership that will enable

¹² Hönig, 183. "It is true that clients should invest something in the translation of particularly important texts. In most cases, however, they invest in the wrong place: an investment in time normally pays off better than a purely financial investment."

you to present your company effectively on the international stage for many years to come.

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