Project Management in the Translation Industry

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Abstract

This paper deals with various aspects of project management in a small translation business. It focuses in particular on human resources management: finding the best colleagues for each project according to their areas of specialisation, effective teamwork and communication within the project group. Other topics covered include time management across the various stages of translation, editing and proofreading, customer relations, coordination of terminology and quality assurance, and the financial aspects of invoicing for larger projects.

Introduction

The present paper addresses project management in the translation industry primarily from the perspective of a small business, with a small team of translators working on regular projects. Some reference will also be made to project management in translation agencies.

London-based Italian translator Valeria Aliperta heads her article on the special relationship between translation project managers and those working for them as follows: "Translators and PMs are just like fish and chips: each one needs the other!"[1] This is a valid point. A translation project can only be successful if there is effective cooperation between the translators and project manager or PM, as well as between them and the client. All freelance translators working on larger projects need their colleagues just as much as they need their customers, if not more so.

In an extremely useful webinar on project management in the localisation industry,[2] Tom Connolly defines the project manager as "the person who organises and manages resources to achieve a specific goal within a defined time period at a predetermined cost, meeting required quality criteria." He lists the various roles of the project manager as "multi-tasker, negotiator, driver, scribe, apologist, communicator".

This paper examines the various aspects of this "interesting and involved job", as Connolly rightly describes it, in the translation industry: human resources, communication, time management and project planning, cost management and quality management. A few case studies are also included to illustrate these various components.

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[1] Aliperta V., 2012: Special relationship *ITI Bulletin* March-April 2012, 18.
[2] Connolly T., 15 April 2010 "Localisation Project Management." Webinar available for purchase from the translation industry website www.ProZ.com.

Human Resources

As in many other industries, human resources are one of the most important factors in the translation industry. The optimum scenario is for project managers to work with translators and editors whom they know to be reliable and have worked with previously. Suitable candidates can be recruited from translation groups, 'Stammtische' as they are often referred to in Germany because they tend to meet regularly and informally in local cafés or pubs, or at other networking events and∕or, for example, may be former fellow students from a project manager's translation course. They should be qualified, in terms of experience and, ideally, formal translation qualifications such as a diploma from the Institute of Linguists or a Masters degree or even a PhD in translation-related studies, and∕or be recommended by a colleague or client.

As noted by translator and trainer Johanna Angulo in her highly informative webinar on "Translation Project Management", when selecting a project team, the PM should always keep in mind the project scope and the necessary professional skills. She lists the minimum competences required by translators as follows:

1. Translating competence or the ability to translate text to the required level.

2. Linguistic and textual competence in both the source language and the target language.

3. Research competence or the ability to efficiently acquire the additional specialized knowledge necessary to understand the source text and to produce the target text.

4. Cultural competence, in both the source and target culture.

5. Technical competence or the skills required to use technical resources or tools. This also includes technical knowledge regarding the subject matter or text to be translated.[3]

It is of utmost importance that the translators in a team have expertise in the relevant field as well as the skills to conduct further in-depth research on the subject. They certainly need much more than merely a sound knowledge of the language. It is also essential that they are team players and easy to work with.

If you work with new colleagues as a project manager, it is advisable to try them out with a small job first if feasible. You can also ask them to do a (paid or unpaid) test translation or submit samples of their work. If you do not know your team members, it is well worth taking the time and trouble to get to know them, either by meeting them in person if they are located near enough to you, or otherwise calling them, and nowadays, as a free

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[3] Angulo J., last updated 26 November 2010: "Translation Project Management", HTML Lesson Module 1, Project Planning. Webinar available for purchase from the translation industry website www.ProZ.com.

alternative to both national and international phone calls, it is possible to use Skype or another VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) service.

Case Study 1: Legal Expertise

For some specialised texts, you may also need to work or consult with an expert in the relevant professional field who is not necessarily in the translation industry. Some of my customers sometimes need legal texts translating, including one with whom I have a framework contract. Legal translations are not actually mentioned in the contract and this is not technically one of my areas of specialisation but I want to keep this customer happy.

This means I had to find a legal expert to revise my translations. After enquiring among my colleagues in Berlin, one of them recommended a friend of hers, a qualified solicitor in England who for health reasons is not currently practising but is happy to take on some law-related work. Although not a translator herself, she has an excellent grasp of both German and English legal terminology and is an ideal person to edit these legal translations. She also writes extremely useful comments about the finer points of legal documents. I have also recommended this solicitor to another colleague who occasionally needs legal translations editing and she is also extremely pleased with her work. Sometimes you need to "think outside the box" when recruiting for translation projects.

Moreover, as another colleague observes, you may need to act as a consultant in addition to carrying out the actual translation work, for instance, making a client aware of the following issues:

a) Which version of the contract, the original or the translation, is to take precedence when it comes to interpretation of its provisions?

b) Under which jurisdiction will the contract operate? Under the law of the country where the language of the original text is spoken or that of the translation?

c) How will disputes between the two parties be resolved and where? This is usually by means of arbitration and reference should be made to a specific arbitration tribunal or similar body in a specified city.

d) It can be stated on the translation that it is for information purposes only and has no legal weight.

e) The client should be urged to have the translation examined by a legal expert familiar with the law in the country in which the client's contractual partner is registered. [4]

Project managers need to strike a delicate balance between trusting their team and keeping an eye on things (especially if people are working under excessive pressure). They should avoid micromanaging every minor detail but they must still ensure that the project is under control in terms of quality, costs and schedule. Referring to one of her experiences of working for an agency, Aliperta underlines the importance of project managers trusting their translators because this is after all the very reason why they are selected for certain projects:

> I once had some (utterly weird) queries arise from a client, which quickly spiralled into upsetting accusations of doing a bad job. The PM I was working with never doubted me. We simply checked the issues and once we agreed that the client was mistaken, we supported the selected terms, explaining why they were used. To cut a long story short: freelancer/PM 1 – Client 0 (even though sorry is always the hardest word!) In a nutshell: PMs should indeed please clients where possible – business is business – but they should always strive to remain impartial, too.[5]

Since good translators are often booked up for many weeks or even months, a project manager needs to secure their services as far in advance as possible. If you are able to provide them with regular work, they will fit this into their schedules and be available every month or however often you need them for your projects. It is important to build up loyalty and goodwill in a team of translators.

As rightly observed by Angulo, a project manager should

> [a]void the trap of believing that because you've been put 'in charge' of a project that you've risen above your peers and friendships no longer matter... The interpersonal and behavioral aspects of a project are crucial to success.[6]

Angulo also points out that the project manager should avoid the temptation to micromanage but allow people to do things their own way, although there are some matters that can only be decided by the project manager. Ideally, all team members contribute towards running the project and their needs or preferences, for instance, choice of texts to translate, are taken into consideration when work is allocated. For smaller

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[4] Barry Appleby, e-mail of 29 May, 2012.
[5] Aliperta, 18.
[6] Angulo, Module 1, Project Planning.

translation projects, the management responsibilities can be shared by the entire team or be the sole concern of the project manager.

Angulo notes:

> Team members may be involved in much of the project's planning and decision-making because early involvement of team members adds expertise during the planning process. This is also a good motivator because it strengthens commitment to the project. Generally, the number of project team members can change as the project progresses.[7]

Good performance deserves recognition and a project manager should make every effort to motivate team members by trying to arrange deadlines that are as reasonable as possible and paying them promptly and appropriately. Particularly if it is impossible to pay a high rate, it is good policy to give extra compensation in the form, for instance, of discounts on the client's products or free invitations to events related to the project. Having the team celebrate milestones such as reaching the halfway point of a project can also help to increase motivation.

Some project managers allow translators to set the deadlines themselves, trying to strike a difficult balance between keeping both the customer and the translator happy. However, they should then accept the deadline proposed by the translator, or at least, try to get the client to agree to this deadline, and not respond by asking whether the translator can deliver earlier than the proposed date.

In his critically acclaimed book *Making Things Happen: Mastering Project Management*, Scott Berkun stresses that projects depend on relationships:

> Project managers are only as good as their relationships with the people on the team. No matter how brilliant or knowledgeable the PM is, his value is determined by how well he can apply his brilliance to the project through other people. This doesn't mean micromanaging them or doing everything, instead it's about seeing the PM role as amplifying the value of those other workers in any way possible.[8]

Angulo also emphasises the importance of interpersonal skills or "soft skills" for the development of a translation team:

> By understanding the sentiments of project team members, anticipating their actions, acknowledging their concerns, and following up on their issues, the project manager can greatly reduce problems and increase cooperation. Skills such as empathy, influence, creativity, and group facilitation are valuable assets when managing the project team.[9]

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[7] Angulo, Module 3, Team Management.
[8] Berkun S. 2005: Making Things Happen: Mastering Project Management, 184.
[9] Angulo, Module 3, Team Management.

Communication

In an article on communication in project management, Anita Mehta points out that statistics show that 74% percent of projects are unsuccessful and that in her experience, poor or insufficient communication is one of the many factors that contribute to the failure of these projects. She sums up the importance of effective communication as follows:

> It is clear that project success depends greatly on effective project communication. I have personally found that 90% of my project management time is spent in some form of communication. It may be within the project team or with the customers. I may be working on resolving the issue of the day, working on the overall project plan, solving interpersonal issues within the team or communicating the latest roadblock to the customer. Communication is the project manager's sword as he or she guides the project team through the jungle overcoming the various issues and roadblocks with an eye on the finish line.[10]

It is indeed critical to the success of any project to have a team of people who are all cooperative and communicate effectively. Misunderstandings about each translator's responsibilities can easily arise and it is the role of the project manager to double check and ensure that both sides are on the same page. As Connolly rightly points out, the only way to find out what someone sees is by asking, and then you will know whether or not there is a communication problem. The project manager is in charge and responsible for explaining the project mission and plan to the team members, telling them what needs to be done by a specific date and checking up on their progress. All communication here should be two-way.

The project manager should also inform translators if CAT tools are to be used and give details. One colleague of mine bemoans the fact that agencies normally require translators to do things in a specific way but this varies from one agency to another and they often neglect to tell their translators their exact requirements.

It is also important for team members to let their colleagues know if they have terminology questions, find useful information, parallel texts or background materials and also to inform them of their schedule especially if they are only available at certain times of the day, and to warn the others in advance when they will be away for longer periods of time, for example, on holiday or attending conferences. In order to keep track of progress, the project manager should ask his or his translators to copy messages to him or her, for instance, when they mail translations to their editor, while it is also useful to send terminology questions and answers to the whole team.

It is the project manager's job to negotiate payment and deadlines with the client (and translators) and he or she also has to take the lead in emergencies, for instance, informing

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[10] Mehta A., 2002: Communication in Project Management, 14.

the client and asking for an extension if one of the translators falls ill, or finding a replacement if an extension is not possible. He or she should also make every effort to find a way of covering additional work in a project, such as another text received later, by either finding a translator within the team to do this or recruiting an extra translator or translators. It is good policy to keep the client updated about general progress on a larger project, perhaps sending a short weekly report. Moreover, if there are customer complaints about a translation, the PM has to – and under the law of certain countries, for example, Germany, is entitled to – make the changes requested by the customer in cooperation with the team of translators, liaising between the two parties.

Even if the team members are based in different cities or countries, it is easy to communicate by e-mail or phone. The most practical option is often to send group e-mails within the team (only copying in those who need to read each mail) but sometimes other methods of communication are more appropriate. As a colleague of mine pointed out recently, a half–hour phone call can often resolve more than ten e-mails. Nowadays, as previously mentioned, you can also call using Skype or another VoIP service, or use the chat features of Skype, facebook or various e-mail programs. It can be useful to send a text message, for instance, to let a colleague know you have sent a translation for him or her to edit so he or she can log in and start work.

ITI translator Nick Rosenthal writes about the benefits of a VoIP phone system, which he finds particularly convenient for diverting calls from his office to the respective home phone numbers of his staff if they are unable to get into the office for some reason, for instance, adverse weather conditions. He observes that such a system is very practical for anyone who works from different locations as clients can still easily reach them by telephone on their usual landline number.[11] In addition, iPhones, Blackberries or netbooks are useful for checking mails away from your desk and still being able to answer questions from colleagues.

Case Study 2: Agreeing on Format

Face-to-face meetings are sometimes the best option, particularly for also resolving problems or conflicts with the customer. For the first assignment of a regular translation project, I was sent PDF files of the articles to be translated with a large number of footnotes, boxes, figures and tables. I asked the customer if they could send the files in Microsoft Word format but this proved problematic because the final changes had been made with InDesign in the PDF files, so no Word files of the final versions were available and the customer was reluctant to send manuscripts. Eventually, after mailing three different people, I did get at least a manuscript of the almost final versions in Word format.

One of my colleagues working on this project used a translation program which also

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[11] Rosenthal N., 2011: Computing in Nick's attic, *ITI Bulletin* January-February 2011, 22.

converts the PDF files and delivered the translation with the same layout as the original, i.e. with columns, etc., which I thought the customer would be happy with. However, a few days later, I received an angry mail from the typesetter, telling me not to send the translations in this format again, as it had caused him a great deal of extra work and claiming that the format to be used was stipulated in my contract, which was not in fact the case.

The best way to resolve this issue was to set up a meeting in Berlin with the coordinator and the typesetter. I had told them I would have to charge extra for formatting PDF files; this would involve an hourly rate, which they did not want to pay, while my team and I had our hands full with the actual translation work. The coordinator and typesetter then agreed it would be best to have the studio that converts files for them send the texts to be translated in exactly the format that the typesetter needs, i.e., continuous text first, and then all the tables and figures at the end. At the meeting, the typesetter proved to be very constructive and it helps to put a face to a name and know who you are dealing with.

There are various OCR (Optical Character Recognition) programs that convert PDF files into Word documents, for example, ABBYY FineReader, but those that work best tend to be expensive so it is advisable to have the customer send the files in a format that you can work with, such as Microsoft Word, wherever possible. This is also an important consideration for translators working with CAT tools because not all of these can be used with every text format.

Time Management and Project Planning

Around 70% of project management is generally held to be planning, which begins with understanding what has to be done, what Connolly refers to as the mission. This includes, for example, the number of languages a text has to be translated into, and whether all languages have to be completed simultaneously. It is essential for project managers to have all this information – and also see the actual files, not just take the customer's word about the length, etc. – and ensure that they and their team are able to complete the project before committing to it.

Angulo gives an example of a responsibility assignment matrix (RAM) that can be used to show the connections between what needs to be done and project team members. The matrix or table format makes it easy to see all activities associated with one person or to see everyone associated with a particular activity. The matrix shown below is a type of RAM known as a RACI chart since the names of the roles documented are Responsible, Accountable, Consult and Inform.

RACI Chart	Person				
Activity	Tom	Pat	Ana	Rajid	Bern
Translation	R	R	A	I	I
Editing	I	A	R	C	I
Proofreading	I	A	I	R	I
DTP	A	I	I	A	R

The above table shows the work to be done in the left-hand column in terms of the various general activities involved in the translation process but RAMs can also record responsibilities in more detail.[12]

Not only are deadlines important but also specific timelines. Trainer and management consultant Peg Pickering stresses the significance of timelines in her practical guide *How to Make the Most of Your Workday*:

> Timelines are critical. A timeline is an essential, ongoing schedule of steps that must occur over time as the project moves toward the deadline.
>
> The timelines in your projects provide a motivation for action. They enable you to develop meaningful plans, with mileposts along the way to chart your progress relative to a predetermined completion date. In short, the difference between success and failure in your projects will depend on timelines that work.[13]

Pickering goes on to say these timelines must be specific and, in more detail, reasonable, equitable and self-imposed, which makes them realistic and much more likely to be met.

The various stages of a translation project that have to be planned in – and this will be further dealt with in the section on quality assurance – include, in short, making a bid, agreeing a price and conditions if it is not a regular project, assigning the texts for translation/editing to various colleagues according to their specialisations and availability, reading background materials, the actual translating, including consulting on terminology, etc., translators revising their own work before passing it on to another colleague for editing. Then more time has to be allowed for the translator to review and accept/reject the editor's changes, discuss any issues arising, ask the author(s) if there are any outstanding questions and wait for a reply, and, of course, final proofreading and/or check for consistency across several texts if applicable. Customers also have to leave enough time for typesetting, proofing the typeset version and printing, if applicable, so this all has to be planned for when setting deadlines.

The translation project schedule may be documented, for example, in a Gantt chart, which is a bar chart showing the start and finish dates of the various project stages. Alternatively, an Excel spreadsheet or simple Word table may also be used. Normally, translators have to work back from the deadline and plan a timeline for all these processes. In a section of his webinar on scheduling, Connolly suggests starting by working forward to negotiate the date of the deadline, asking questions such as what has to be done, how long each task will take, how many people will be needed, whether everything can be done twice as fast with twice as many people, etc. It is also helpful to look at the milestones during the project, for example, finishing the first drafts of a translation.

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[12] Angulo, Module 3, Team Management.
[13] Pickering P., 2001: How to Make the Most of Your Workday, 243.

Connolly also recommends that project managers use a checklist from a previous project for the next one. He advises them to put themselves in the driving seat, in a position to start negotiating and compromising, if necessary, which is only possible by working forward first. They can then begin to work backwards, this time asking questions such as the date by which the project must be finished (bearing in mind that clients often say they need something earlier than they actually do), what is the last (and second last) deliverable, in other words, which texts have priority, whether resources can be doubled up, or a task started earlier.

Case Study 3: (Un)realistic Deadlines

On the first working day of a new freelance contract with my main client, I received an e-mail from the person responsible for administration for the executive board asking when I could do a translation by, stating that they needed it by the end of the week at the latest. This was on a Tuesday afternoon and, as is often the case, I was already booked up for the rest of the week. I opened up the file and saw that it was 48 pages, just over 14,000 words, of very dense text and estimated it as approximately ten days of translation work, plus at least two days for editing and proofing.

I made several phone calls to the customer and my colleagues in Berlin. The person in charge of my contract wondered if her colleague in fact meant by the end of the following week, but when I spoke to her, she insisted she had been told it had to be done that week. My colleagues who also work for this customer were, like myself, also booked up for the rest of the week but two of them were available to work on this project the next week. I sent a mail to the administrative contact person that she could forward to her head of department to the effect that the translation was around twelve days' work and ideally we needed until the end of the following week, although the earliest possible delivery date was the following Wednesday. They agreed to that Wednesday deadline and we delivered by then.

I later met the customer – the person who handles the administration – in person and asked her to request that her bosses forewarn me when another lengthy text needs to be translated. She said they do not always know in advance, but in fact they do know when they are writing a text and need to plan in time for its translation. Often customers simply fail to realise how much work is involved or that, as mentioned in the section on human resources, most professional translators are booked up days, weeks or months in advance and cannot suddenly fit in a large project without advance notice.

Translation deadlines generally tend to be tight, frequently because customers do not realise how much time is required, and/or due to poor planning, but it is often possible to get clients to agree to later delivery dates than initially stated and avoid putting in too much overtime. It is all too easy to work long hours straight through as a freelancer without fixed lunch breaks, etc. For increased overall productivity, it is essential for

translators to build in breaks and exercise. It is equally important to take time off at weekends and not regularly work seven days a week at the risk of burn-out or medical conditions caused by excessive use of the computer such as eye strain or repetitive strain injury (RSI). As also pointed out by translator/interpreter Michael Benis, particularly when an express surcharge is mentioned, customers find that the translation is in fact not as urgent as first claimed.

> Occasionally overworking is something most of us do when developing our careers. Even when young, it's important to monitor how much we overwork very carefully, to avoid any deterioration in quality or risk of burn-out. Clients are apt to remember that our quality was variable, rather than we pulled out all the stops to meet a deadline. At the same time, many deadlines are not as rigid as one might imagine. It's always worth either proposing a later delivery date or explaining that you'd like to charge an urgency surcharge for the date requested, while at the same time offering a later date without the surcharge. This will often result in a deadline that's equally acceptable to you, yet still allows you to show that you are willing to go the extra mile to meet their needs.[14]

It is also essential to have a contingency plan in the event of a project not going to schedule, which can often happen despite all the planning in the world. This could mean building in extra time for emergencies such as illness or problems with computers or Internet connections, and possibly also having other translators in mind as back-up. Other technical problems may be encountered, such as not being able to open files to begin with and having to have them sent again. In general, as Connolly points out, risks need to be managed, not avoided, and project managers should use the experience of previous projects and their team's know-how for planning new projects. He also notes that as far as rescheduling is concerned, there is a big difference between an overall slip and just a disruption, from which it is normally possible to recover. For regular projects, contingency planning should also be more long term; for instance, project managers would be well advised to enquire in advance about the availability of other colleagues for holiday or maternity leave cover for regular team members.

Sometimes projects need to be replanned along the way if, for instance, customers have new requests, more texts to translate or other requirements. For example, a client of mine recently asked for a translation of a letter of reference to be certified so I had to arrange for this to be sent to a colleague who could check, stamp and sign this and post it to the client. Normally, as in this case, additional services generate extra costs that have to be passed on to the client after obtaining their agreement. For larger projects, the project manager may have to outsource work to other colleagues if it cannot be covered by the original project team.

It often happens that multiple projects clash, sometimes various different projects for different clients, and in other cases different people within the same organisation might be competing over resources such as translators. It is useful for project managers to have

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[14] Benis M., 2007: Hog, share or grow, *ITI Bulletin* March-April 2007, 16.

all projects listed in one place, either electronically, for instance, in an Excel or Word table, or on a wall chart. I personally like to have a job list on paper pinned up on the side of my in-tray which I monitor and update as new jobs come in and older ones are completed. I also have a separate list with the availability of my colleagues, including dates of upcoming holidays.

For planning a work schedule, as Pickering points out, it is useful to have a list for the day, a list for the week and a list for the month (or for all the projects in your in-tray). Time can be saved by writing all invoices in one session and later paying all invoices for a particular project together. It is also more efficient to read mails at certain regular times, such as 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 6 p.m. and then perhaps once more later in the evening before logging off, and to bundle phone calls, too. Moreover, it is much more productive for a translator to work on one project intensively for several hours rather than stopping to do other small rush jobs since you have to open up all the relevant reference materials and immerse yourself in the subject matter, while it certainly helps to work for at least an hour at a time uninterrupted by e-mails or phone calls.

When managing their time, translators and, probably to an even greater extent, project managers also have to plan in all the non-billable hours that are part of their job. A consultant told one of my colleagues that it is normal for about a third of all working hours to be spent on administration, a third on acquisition or marketing, and then the final third on actually earning money.

Freelance Italian technical translator Maria Antonietta Ricagno also stresses the importance of factoring in time for activities such as marketing:

> Marketing is time-consuming and may also be boring. Still, it is necessary, and you should dedicate a few hours every week to looking for new customers, polishing your public profile, writing articles and press releases, compiling specialised glossaries, keeping in touch with colleagues, reading any marketing literature you may deem useful, and so on.[15]

Benis recommends translators or would-be project managers to carefully consider in advance whether or not they would like to take on more work related to running a translation business and to ask themselves questions such as the following:

> Would you be happy spending less time translating and more on project management and managing your business in general? Will you want to build on your new role and gradually expand to become a fully fledged translation company? Many started in precisely this way. And, of course, if you do a good job of this, you may be able to actually reduce your work hours, though most business owners find it difficult not to remain fully involved.[16]

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[15] Ricagno M. A., 2011: Effective time management, *ITI Bulletin* January-February 2011, 17-18.
[16] Benis, 17.

Benis goes on to remind translators who are considering taking on projects to be outsourced, or setting up a translation company, not to forget the marketing aspect of the work and ask themselves whether they will enjoy networking outside their profession, maybe cold calling and travelling to meet clients in person. His advice is that if these social aspects do not appeal to certain translators, then perhaps they are not suited to regular subcontracting or running a translation company.

Cost Management

As observed by Angulo, effective cost estimation is one of the most important activities in project management yet also one of the most difficult for translators to master. She notes that cost management consists of cost estimation, cost assignment and cost control. She quotes the definitions of the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) of cost estimation as "the process of developing an approximation of the cost of the resources needed to complete project activities", cost assignment as "the process of aggregating the estimated costs of individual activities or work packages to establish a cost baseline" and cost control as "the process of influencing the factors that create variances, and controlling changes to the project budget." [17]

Angulo recommends the translation project manager to draw up a project cost estimation sheet including the following costs: labour costs, hardware costs, software costs, networks cost, on-going support, administrative costs not in overheads, factoring in a provisional contingency sum for possible risks and changes. As she also points out, the project manager preparing the cost estimates must know the unit costs, such as translators' rates per line or hour, for instance, and be able to estimate scheduled activity costs for each resource. If the actual rates are not known, then these will have to be estimated according to standard market rates.

Throughout the project, the project manager should carry out cost control, first establishing reference baselines including a cost baseline, then monitoring the work and making any necessary adjustments as the project progresses. Otherwise, he or she may end up paying what one of my German colleagues calls 'Lerngeld', literally, 'learning money' – the price for learning a lesson – if a project takes more time than anticipated and budgeted for and, consequently, team members must be paid more. Angulo lists various cost control techniques which should be used to save money and reinforce the financial strength of the translator's business: financial management training, cash flow forecasting, project performance reviews and variance management. She underlines the need for project managers to have some financial training themselves or work with people who do, so as to ensure that they comply with legislative requirements for tax returns, etc:

> The most important of all the cost control techniques is to train you[rself] in finances or appoint a highly qualified and experienced person to manage the daily finances of your translation business in a very professional and

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[17] Project Management Institute, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) Third Edition, 2004, quoted in Angulo, Module 2, Cost Management.

systematic manner. The finance decisions this person should make in terms of cost control are related to opting for less expensive materials and resources without compromising project quality.[18]

The project manager should be paid a reasonable cut of the translation fee (10 to 20 percent but not 50 percent or more, which is quite common with larger agencies). It is important to make sure the project team are happy with their conditions, not only that they are valued and not put under excessive pressure but also that they are paid properly and quickly. Invoicing normally has to be done through the project manager rather than each team member sending individual invoices to the client.

The project manager should also send reminders to the end customer if payments are not made promptly and might also sometimes have to remind colleagues to submit their invoices. I tend to do this on a regular basis because I report quarterly and have to send all my invoices to my accountant at the end of each month. Furthermore, I like to pay all my colleagues' invoices at once as soon as the client pays me.

The project manager should also check the invoices received from his or her colleagues, count the number of lines for the team and check that the titles or subject, number of lines/hours and prices, dates, and VAT amounts and VAT numbers are all correct. It is possible to tell from Word's Track Changes feature how long has been spent on editing a text and should the number of hours billed not tally with this, it may be necessary to call the translator and ask him or her to amend the invoice accordingly. There are various sites where it is possible to verify online whether an EU VAT number is valid[19] and a good accountant should also check this and inform the translator or project manager if a colleague or client's VAT number is not recognised.

Case Study 4: The Value of a Good Accountant

The project manager should have a reliable accounting system and not forget to write or pay any invoices, which may sometimes happen. A colleague's accountant recently discovered he was still owed quite a substantial amount of money, around 800 euros, for a job for another colleague completed several years previously. He was paid immediately when he enquired about this and he subsequently told me that his accountant had certainly earned her fees that year. This underlines the importance of having a good accountant. Even if this may prove to be expensive initially, it is normally a wise investment because it will save the translator or project manager time and money in the long run.

Jenner and Jenner of Twin Translators also list other items that are worth the investment for a freelance translator:

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[18] Angulo, Module 2, Cost Management.
[19] For example, on the European Commission's website under Taxation and Customs Union: http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/vies/vatResponse.html.

- A good office chair

- An ergonomic desk

- A good desktop or laptop computer

- Anything that will help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome: ergonomic wireless mouse, wrist rests, etc.[20]

Investing in continuing professional development (CPD) by attending conferences, courses or webinars could also be added to this non-exhaustive list. Jenner and Jenner also give a few tips for areas where savings can be made, such as bulk-buying office supplies, using alternative phone options or consulting the resources available at your local library. It is also possible for freelancers to save money by renting an office with colleagues and sharing Internet and telephone costs, etc.

Quality Management

As Angulo remarks, the project manager should have a quality management plan describing how the desired quality policy will be implemented, addressing quality control (QC), quality assurance (QA) and continuous process improvement for the project.[21]

> According to PMBOK, Quality Assurance (QA) is the application of planned, systematic quality activities to ensure that the project will employ all processes needed to meet requirements.[22]

In order to measure the quality of translations, which can sometimes be difficult as there are normally a high number of equally valid translations for the same text, translation standards have been developed. The main ones, also listed by Angulo, are:

• EN 15038 (European Quality Standard for Translation Services), supported by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) and addressing processes and base requirements for providing high quality professional translation services;

• ASTM F2575, a quality control standard for translation published by ASTM International (an organisation accredited by ANSI) defining quality as the degree to which the characteristics of a translation comply with the requirements of the agreed specifications and valid throughout the US;

• SAE-J2450 (Society of Automotive Engineers J2450), used by the automobile industry;

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[20] Jenner J. A. and Jenner D. V., 2010: The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business School Approach to Freelance Translation, 41.
[21] Angulo, Module 4, Quality Management.
[22] Project Management Institute, quoted in Angulo, Module 4, Quality Management.

• and LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association) which has standards applying to various areas, including terminological data and the exchange of translation memory data.

Quality is enhanced and, ultimately, time spent on research saved, if, before the translation process begins, the project manager and/or translators find and read background materials, which may or may not be provided by the customer. Ideally, the translator should read the whole text through before beginning to translate, or at least skimread it, even if splitting a longer text with a colleague. The translator should always perform a spellcheck and carefully read through and revise his or her own translation before passing it on to a colleague for further revision or editing.

This is what the Germans call the 'Vier-Augen Prinzip', literally, the four-eyed principle of double checking by a colleague. Even if the translator leaves the text overnight and reads it again the next day with relatively fresh eyes, there are still things that will be missed by the translator but caught by another professional translator reading the text with a second pair of eyes. It should also be checked carefully against the source text for any possible misreadings of the original.

The translator should review and accept/reject the tracked changes, and then any issues arising should be discussed with the editor and/or author(s). Ideally, communication should be directly with the author(s), although it may have to go through the coordinator in the client's organisation. It is always advisable to check any points that are unclear at an early a stage as possible. The project manager is responsible for asking back to the author(s) if the translators have questions and so, ideally, he or she should also be working on the translations for the project and therefore be familiar with the subject matter and terminology. Sometimes, however, the project manager may not have time to do any of the actual translating due to extremely tight deadlines.

There should also be a final proof, ideally on paper because it is easier to spot mistakes on paper – although first reading through on screen with the spellcheck underline function activated can also be very useful.

Case Study 5: Quality Checks

For one translation project I work on, my team and I do all the translating, editing of each other's work and final proofing before sending the finished texts to the customer and then all these are read by the authors before being typeset, and sometimes also by their in-house native speaker translator. Occasionally, mistakes are later inserted into the translations by the authors, which is rather frustrating for the translators, but normally the authors contact me as the project manager if, for example, they want to change the headings or make other changes to the text.

The articles are proofread by an in-house editor after typesetting and also read by the

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head of the communications department before publication. There is a danger of "too many cooks spoiling the broth" but in general, all the double checking by different people does enhance the quality of the final texts.

Another customer also pays attention to quality assurance by sending all translations for printed matter, including, for instance, sales brochures, to a copywriter in Ireland to revise the texts before publication as advertising material. They then also send the final typeset versions to me for proofreading.

In addition, as mentioned above, it is a very good idea to have legal texts checked by a qualified solicitor because it can have serious – and potentially expensive – consequences if there are mistakes or ambiguities in this type of text. It is also advisable for a translator specialising in legal texts to take out professional liability insurance to cover costs in this eventuality.

Not only in the case of legal texts, but for any specialised texts, it is also important to have access to translator forums or experts in their various professional fields to answer questions about terminology, etc. Other valuable resources include parallel texts, perhaps available from the author(s) or coordinator, official websites, etc., including that of the EU, where the same regulations can be found in all the official EU languages.

If the texts are on similar topics, the translators should build up and share a glossary. A CAT tool with a database can help here, for instance, Across, Déjà Vu, memoQ, Star Transit, Trados or Wordfast. Particularly for translating repetitive texts, it is worthwhile for team members to invest in training courses to learn how to use at least one of these tools. Webinars are also available from sites such as ProZ.com and there are also a number of videos on YouTube. In addition, there are tools on the market that can be used to check for consistency of spelling, hyphenation, etc., such as PerfectIt.[23]

The project manager should pass on clients' feedback to colleagues, both positive and negative. He or she should also liaise between the translators and the customer, author(s) or coordinator in the event of queries or problems, carry out damage limitation, for example, by offering to go through the text again if required. Another important role of the project manager is to answer colleagues' questions promptly, asking back to the client if necessary.

The question of when a project is actually completed is not clear cut. Some translators say it is when the client has paid, while Connolly's response is that it is not finished until you have gone through it and seen what you have learned from it for the next project, which is very sound advice. He suggests always conducting a final project review, even if there are no particular problems and to use this review for future planning. More specifically, Connolly proposes getting the project team together and asking what went well, what could have been done even better and, perhaps more pertinently, what should have been done better, and then choosing one or two aspects to improve upon next time.

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[23] http://www.intelligentediting.com/default.aspx.

Customers often turn to larger translation agencies because of their glossy marketing brochures, but if they have a more personal relationship with a project manager and a small regular team, this can pay off in terms of quality. Some of these agencies send the translations to different translators each time so there is no consistency, and not all of them perform essential quality checks or pay their translators enough to gain loyalty in terms of regular availability and quality translations.

Particularly for language combinations in high demand, most translators only work for agencies in their first few years in the business to gain experience while also acquiring direct clients, so although there are some high-end agencies, the quality of translations through agencies is not necessarily the best despite the fact that they normally charge their customers high prices. As mentioned above, agencies take a large cut – at least 50% or possibly even more – so the translators are usually not well paid, which is frequently reflected in the quality of translations. Larger agencies cover a wider range of languages but sometimes the in-house translator editing or proofreading the texts may not understand the source language and will therefore be unable to check for possible misreadings of the original.

Conclusion

In her article "A Step by Step Guide to Translator Project Management", translator Sanaa Benmessaoud notes:

> Project management in translation, like in all other professions, is subject to the 'Triple Constraint' (Rosenau, 1992: 15) of time, cost and quality. A translation project is only successful when it is completed 'on schedule, within the budget, and according to previously agreed quality standards' (Esselink, 2000: 429). A project manager will, thus, be required to plan the budget, track the workflow to ensure the project is completed on time, and control all the phases of the project to make sure its outcome will meet the client's requirements.[24]

The translation project manager can only achieve this difficult balance of time and cost management and quality assurance with the aid of the right human resources, in other words, an excellent team of professional translators who work well together, and through effective communication both within the project team and with the client. The skills required by a translation project manager are aptly summed up by Angulo as follows:

> In order to successfully meet the needs of a project, it is important to have a high-performing project team made up of individuals who are both technically skilled and motivated to contribute to the project's outcome. One of the many responsibilities of a project manager is to enhance the ability of each project team member to contribute to the project, while also fostering individual

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[24] Benmessaoud S., 2002: A Step by Step Guide to Translator Project Management.

growth and accomplishment. At the same time, each individual must be encouraged to share ideas and work with others toward a common goal. The project manager, then, must be a leader, communicator, negotiator, influencer, and problem solver. The level of skills and competencies to successfully fill these roles helps distinguish good project managers from great ones.[25]

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[25] Angulo, Module 3, Team Management.

http://www.intelligentediting.com/default.aspx, accessed 11 April 2012.