

Editorial

Well hello again. It's been a long time. I've called this the resurrection edition for two reasons.

Firstly, it's been a while since *tranfree* was published regularly and now it's time to end the silence and start publishing articles to help translators with their businesses again.

Secondly, it's Easter time, so it seems an appropriate title.

The Famine's Over

I have been quiet for a while for many reasons, some of which I may go into in [my personal blog](#) at some point. But the main reasons I stopped publishing *tranfree* was that I ran out of inspiration to write new material and I was unwilling to publish junk just for the sake of keeping the business going.

But the good news is that the "seven years of famine" is over and I have a fresh, more mature perspective.

I will probably be looking for a new list host as my current one doesn't seem to let me publish in HTML very easily, which I now want to do. Plain text emails look very retro now. So please bear with me until I get that sorted out. I may well send short summaries or partial articles with links to the full text so you can see them properly formatted.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from *tranfree*

Alex Eames

<http://www.translatortips.com>

helping translators do better business

How To Kill Your Translation Business.

There are a lot of ways to kill your translation business, but here are 18 of the best.

1) Charging low rates.

Charging low rates is a very quick way to kill your business right at the outset. You will end up trying to get too much work, tiring yourself out, working too hard for too little reward. You need to get it into your head that the only way to survive on low rates is to live in a poor country. If you don't live in a poor country, you need to charge realistic rates.

2) Bidding low rates to get work on portals.

Why would you do that? Portals and bidding are OK right at the start of your career to build up some experience – if you need that. But why would you spend years chasing the dregs? Some people do. Oh well. They haven't heard. Or if they have, they weren't listening.

3) Going for the high-volume low rates model.

The only way to earn a lot if you charge low rates is to do an enormous volume of work. I don't know about you, but I suspect the quality would suffer and you would get exhausted. It certainly doesn't sound like the intelligent person's choice does it?

4) Delivering poor quality product.

Obviously if your work is not fit for its intended purpose, when your clients find out, they will cross you off the list of suppliers. Getting good clients is hard, so try to deliver good quality that will meet their needs and keep them coming back to you for more.

5) Being rude to customers.

This is just plain stupid, but all too common. Give them a positive customer experience and they'll be back. Only be rude if you are saying goodbye permanently. Even then, better not to because you never know who they will tell.

6) Delivering work after the deadline.

Just don't do it, EVER! Unless there is an emergency, or a really credible reason. Missed deadlines can cause clients major hassles, lost business and all sorts of other problems.

Be proud to deliver **every** job in time! **Translation Office 3000** helps 5257 translators around the world to manage jobs better. Download your free 30-day trial now:

<http://www.translationmanagementsystem.com>

7) Slagging off customers on public Internet forums.

Why would you do that? It doesn't take much of a brain to realise that anything you type on a public forum could come back to bite you in the bum at some point in the future, does it? Assume your customer WILL find out what you said. Don't expect to hear from them again.

8) Not having a proper credit control policy.

One of our clients, TTC Creative, went bust in 2008. We lost about £300. It's a shame, but not a major hit. One translator on the published creditors list was owed £12,000 (~\$19,000) OUCH. I would cry - literally. But how on earth was it allowed to happen? Would you extend £12,000 in credit to any client? Set a level you are happy with for each client and do not over extend it. Once the credit limit is hit, do not accept additional work from them until you have been paid for the previous work.

Track invoices and payments, set payment terms. Sleep well knowing that all invoices were sent. Try TO3000 for **free**:

<http://www.translationmanagementsystem.com>

9) Not examining the work before accepting it.

You're busy. A project manager (PM) on the phone wants you to take a job, and you just want to get on. You haven't looked at it and you just say "yes" to get rid of them. OOOPS. You just accepted a real pig of a job. It will take you ten times longer than usual because it's got some horrible terminology in it. It's badly written and you'll wish you'd never accepted it – and for a discounted rate too. Oh dear – we have got a lot to learn haven't we?

10) Borrowing money to fund expansion.

This is the best way to go bankrupt. Borrow money, take on staff, fail to grow, bye bye business. Yes it can be done, but very few people have the business acumen to make it work. Don't expand until you can afford to do it with real money that you have already earned.

11) Excessive Internet/Forum Usage.

Spending all day moaning about low rates instead of actively looking for new direct clients? Bleating about the latest 0.0000000000001 cent per word offer (even though it was posted by one of your "friends" to wind you up)? Try to limit your forum usage to specified periods of the day or you may find you waste the whole day chatting and getting wound up by other people with no work.

12) Accepting a large project from a new client without checking them out.

Unless you can negotiate staged payments, this is a sure-fire way to commit commercial suicide. Always check out new clients to make sure they are not known scammers. There's enough info sharing sites out there, so there's no excuse not to do it.

13) Not answering the phone, emails or other correspondence.

I read something on a forum the other day about not answering the phone while you're working. Well, from the client's point of view, if you don't answer the phone, I will ring the next person on the list. Surely it's not rocket-science? OK, if you're busy working, you might not be able to take that job right now anyway, but how do you know? Can you afford to take that chance? No. If it's a timewaster, just hang up. It could be an excellent opportunity though.

14) Poor security, breaching confidentiality.

Don't ever post identifiable portions of a job on the internet without permission. Don't submit your translation memory (TM) containing such jobs to a public web site (otherwise the SOAR project could become a SORE project). I'm not saying don't submit (that's your choice) just be VERY careful about what you submit.

15) Trying to steal your agency's clients.

Don't be naive enough to think you will get away with it. This is stealing. It's unethical and you WILL most likely be caught. You will then get a bad name

(don't for a moment think that agencies don't talk to each other about translators).

16) Working into a language in which you don't have native level ability.

Just because you can understand a language and translate out of it, doesn't mean you can write at an acceptably good level in it. I can always tell when English is written by a foreigner because the articles are horribly abused or simply not used at all. (The definite article THE, and the indefinite article A). If I tried to write sentences in Polish or French, the readers would be laughing their socks off before reaching the third line of text. Don't do that to your clients. They might not be able to get the work checked until they get laughed out of a meeting.

17) Sub-contracting large jobs by splitting, without checking and unifying the quality of each submission.

Two sins in one. Firstly, splitting up a job is to be avoided if at all possible. If not possible, the whole lot needs to be Quality Assurance checked (QA) by one translator to make it consistent. Oh, and you did ask the client's permission to sub-contract didn't you? I thought not.

18) Taking the wrong advice.

There seems to be a large number of translators out there on the Internet, who think that the way to go is to continually keep dropping rates and chase the work all the way down to the bottom. This only works if you are in a low wage economy. If you live in a country where you can make a good wage and earn a decent living for 10% of what I need, there is never going to be a way that I can compete with you on price.

To all of you out there, who are worried about these people – STOP! There is nothing you can do about it, so spend your time on something more worthwhile. You will never get rich by chasing after the bottom end of the market. It's simply not the way in the service sector.

Bidding for jobs might be a good way to get some experience when you are first starting. But it is not the right way to go if you want to build a successful, satisfying, high-earning business as a freelance translator.

It seems almost too obvious to state, but **the secret to high earnings is high rates**. There. I've said it now! There will always be people out there who are

willing to pay decent prices to get decent service. How cheap is the translation which costs your company millions of dollars in lost business?

You need to educate clients. It takes time. It might not be easy. But it is certainly worth it. How is it possible that a company will spend thousands or millions creating their corporate communications and then let some fairly low-grade secretary “who knows a bit of the language” translate a very important document for them. It’s ignorance – pure and simple.

Educate those clients, win them, keep them. Build your own future. There is more than enough work out there for those who can do this. Are you one of them?

Alex Eames is the founder of www.translatortips.com ,
editor of *tranfree* and author of the eBooks...

How to Earn \$80,000+ Per Year as a Freelance Translator
<http://www.translatortips.net/ht50.html>

Selling Your Professional Services on the Web
<http://translatortips.net/sell-your-services.html>

tranfree Subscription Additions, Deletions and Changes

To change your registered email address, just unsubscribe the old address and subscribe using the new one.

Unsubscribing

If you ever need to unsubscribe, visit <http://tranfree.com/tranfree-off.html> or send an email to unsubscribe (AT) tranfree.com

Subscribing

Subscribe to the email version of *tranfree* by sending an email to subscribe (AT) tranfree.com or at <http://tranfree.com/>

RSS	http://feeds.feedburner.com/tranfree
HTML	http://tranfree.com/tf68.html
PDF	http://tranfree.com/tf68.pdf
Podcast (MP3)	http://tranfree.com/tf68.mp3