

Editorial

Hello and welcome to another *tranfree*.

Since this is the last *tranfree* of the year, let me wish you all a Happy Christmas. As a Christmas special, I'm offering a 20% discount off the price of [Business Success for Freelance Translators](#) until the end of December 2010.

Whether you agree or disagree with what they're doing, Wikileaks is making governments look "silly" and causing a lot of people to think about freedom of speech on the internet. I've found the whole story quite intriguing, but haven't yet fully decided in which camp I stand. Publishing stolen information seems inherently wrong to me, but the handling of the situation has made the US authorities look even sillier than the "revelations" did. It's a classic case of two wrongs make a fight.

One thing is certain though. We're in for a season of change. With the US taking on more debt and the Eurozone bankrupt in all but name, we're in for some "interesting times". We've already got revolting students on the streets of London (deliberate ambiguity – interpret as you will).

Times of change bring threats and opportunities. The opportunities for translation continue to grow. I can't see that stopping any time soon. This edition's feature article covers four facets of marketing, which I hope will help you think about how to make the most of the opportunities out there.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from *tranfree*

Alex Eames

<http://translatortips.com>

helping translators do better business

Four Facets of Marketing

By Alex Eames

Distilled down to its pure essence, marketing is about persuading people to buy what you are offering. It's a huge subject, but in this article, I've chosen to focus on four specific areas that I feel are important to freelance translators. There are many more, but those are for another day. 😊

Marketing is about mathematics

This is a surprising way to start a marketing article, but please bear with me for a couple of sentences. It's a linguistic pun, which I hope will help you to remember the point better.

In mathematics we use calculus to determine the location of a turning point on a graph. (I can hear you groaning from here at the mention of calculus. 😊) This process of calculating $\delta y / \delta x$, is called...

Differentiation

And the reason I dragged calculus into it is that **differentiation is a key part of marketing**. Once you figure out how important it is, it will be a **turning point** in your business life.

How you differentiate yourself from other similar providers is key to...

- Attracting new clients – (why should I choose you and not her?)
- Being able to justify higher prices – (how can it possibly cost that much?)
- Targeting the market sectors you are interested in – (ooh they specialise in my field!)

OK, so let's back up a minute and say what we mean by "differentiate yourself" in the context of marketing. Here are four possible definitions...

1. How do you show yourself to be different from others?
2. How do you stand out from the crowd?
3. What's different about you?
4. What's your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

These are all different ways of saying essentially the same thing. In marketing, differentiation is about differences – the more obvious, the better.

The other mathematical link is that marketing is a “numbers game”. This is particularly true of direct mail, email and web-based marketing. As long as your message is a good one, getting more work and clients is simply a matter of ensuring that it is seen by more and more qualified prospects.

I know. I make it sound easy. **In reality, it can be a long hard slog. And so it should be!** If success were “too easy”, it wouldn’t be success. I think many western economies are discovering the painful truth of that statement at this time, as they brace themselves for some lean years after “easy” growth fuelled by excessive borrowing. **Success requires hard work and lots of persistence.** But sometimes a little luck can help speed things up.

Marketing is about constantly looking for new ways to reach people

Wherever there is a large concentration of people, someone will find a way to sell them something. You need to develop this mentality and apply it to your own business. Always be on the lookout for new opportunities to reach people with your message.

Always be looking for connections that others might miss. Be willing to experiment and open to trying new approaches. Adopt the Thomas Edison approach to experimentation.

*"If I find 10,000 ways something won't work, I haven't failed.
I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is
another step forward."*

Thomas Edison

Experiment with different approaches and don’t be knocked back if something doesn’t work brilliantly straight away, the first time you try it. Change it, refine it, improve it and try again.

Face to face or online? Try it all and see what suits you best, and what works best. If you’re a “people person” you might find it best to talk to people on a face to face basis. If you’re a bit timid about doing that, maybe some form of online communication would be preferable for you? The good news is that both can work. Social and business networking sites; online forums and portals; becoming a regular commentator on blogs you follow; these are all ways of getting your name out there. But make sure you set the right tone (friendly and helpful is a good start). This leads us nicely into the next facet.

Marketing is about impression management

In the film “the madness of king George” the king was behaving strangely, so took a break from public life to recover. At the end of it he said that he was not mad, but he had merely forgotten “how to seem”. He had lost sight of the need to pay attention to how he “seemed” to others. He didn’t have a spin-doctor or a PR officer to manage and massage his image.

How do you think you should “seem” to your clients and prospects? It matters less how good, efficient, friendly, quick, reliable and expensive you are. What matters is how good, efficient, friendly, quick, reliable and expensive **you seem to be**. So think about how can you control, or at least influence, prospective client perceptions of you? If everything you do exudes quality and competence, that’s a very good start.

Do you think the highest earning translators in the world are necessarily the best at translating? I strongly suspect that they are the ones who are best at marketing and justifying high fees. (I bet they’re pretty good at what they do too.) I bet they’re the ones who know how to package a “big picture” value proposition to decision-makers. Of course it helps to have friends in high places, but even that is not enough on its own if your work or approach is lacking.

The best way is to live the part. Professionalism and excellence in all things. Everything you do should reinforce your message. As a translator, this is particularly important in your written correspondence. An occasional typo is permissible in an email, but make sure there aren’t too many – ideally none. It’s all too easy to let things slip when you’re busy. But **quality written communications take time. And you’re selling quality written communications**, so make sure your communications with your clients shout the QUALITY message loud and clear.

Marketing is a way of life

Excellence in everything. Every contact you have with the outside world is marketing of one form or another.

Being good is not enough. You have to be visible – seen to be good.

Be generous – preferably in a visible way – it will come back to you. Here’s a recent story to prove this point. I did some unofficial photos at a friend’s wedding in September. They were so pleased with them that I was commissioned to do some commercial event photography for the groom’s employer as a result of it. It wasn’t planned, it just happened that way. I don’t intend to become a professional photographer (although I do have a history of developing self-funding hobbies). This underlines the point that, very often, if you are helpful and generous, you get rewarded – even if that was not the underlying motive for being generous. But you can also be strategically generous if you choose to be.

Be patient. Everything comes to (s)he who waits. Lasting success rarely comes out of the blue. Most “overnight success” stories have years of hard work and hard times leading up to the “big break”. Don’t expect instant miracles. **You’re unlikely to get into the top tier of any field without earning your stripes.** The world teaches us to want everything NOW. But, hey, the world’s in a mess because of that way of thinking. Instead of “buy now, pay later” try to work your way up to the top in a sustainable way. Instead of “get rich quick”, live well within

your means and invest the rest (perhaps in your own property or business?) If you get wealthy by gradual accumulation, you'll develop the character needed to handle it along the way.

Be direct. It's easy to target agencies – they are a very precise target market for translators. The best paid translators have a (large) proportion of direct clients in their portfolio. Find as many ways as you can of identifying and targeting clients who are likely to have a need for your services. Trade show catalogues, professional associations and trade directories are great for this.

Be careful with your public persona. If you like to rant or discuss controversial subjects in online forums, make sure your name is not associated with this. (It's not hard to have an anonymous ID on an online forum is it?) A good way of thinking about this is to assume that everything you ever post on the internet will be there forever. Will it look good for you in 10 years? I've lost count of the number of people who made posts on translatortips.com bulletin boards and forums since 1999 and later decided that what they wrote a few years ago is embarrassing now. Not everybody will be willing to delete pages and spoil the linking structure of their site for the sake of covering up your naivety.

Be online. Have Your own web site – but make a real one – don't just buy a domain name and point it at your ProZ profile – you're giving the farm away. Why send potential clients to a place full of other translators? Isn't that kind of dumb? If you've got their attention, keep them interested in you and what you have to offer them (remember – your USP?). Your site is also an opportunity to showcase your work and should exude credibility and professionalism.

Be analytical. – My son was teaching me how to play “Card-Jitsu” on Club Penguin the other day. He made the observation that most other people usually start with “fire”. He was right. I was impressed. We used that observation to win a lot more often than we lost. It's just the same in real life. Observe, analyse and spot the details others miss. Then win more often than you lose.

Hang out in places where you can meet clients. Develop useful hobbies, which can either be linked with or used to enhance your business. Join a business or social group or association where other members would likely be in your target market. The best way to become interesting to other people is to be interested in other people.

Be thorough. Most people are fairly sloppy with emails. (I know I've mentioned this already – I'm being thorough. 😊) Every email should read well and contain no mistakes (if possible). If you are overtly careless in small things, how can you be trusted with large ones? OK, I agree that email correspondence is "less formal" than sending a letter, but you carefully need to manage the impression you put across to others. Remember what I said earlier? Marketing is a continuous process and **every contact you have with the outside world should be considered to be some form of marketing.**

Alex Eames is the founder of [translatortips.com](http://www.translatortips.com),
editor of *tranfree* and author of the eBooks...

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