Evaluation Warning: The document was created with Spire.Doc for .NET.

Title:

Tips To Help You Start Your Own All-Round Translation Business

Word Count:

1284

Summary:

There is no shortage of translators who take the plunge and set up shop as self-employed freelancers, but few have the ambition or the spirit to start up their own all-round translation agency. This is not surprising, of course, as the establishment of a full- scale translation agency is a quantum leap compared with what it takes to launch a viable freelance practice. Nevertheless, the intellectual and financial rewards of business ownership can be substantial. Below I will discuss various aspects you will have to take into account should you consider beginning your own professional and all-round translation business.

Keywords:

translation agency, freelance translator, women at work, home based work, starting you own company

Article Body:

There is no shortage of translators who take the plunge and set up shop as self-employed freelancers, but few have the ambition or the spirit to start up their own all-round translation agency. This is not surprising, of course, as the establishment of a full- scale translation agency is a quantum leap compared with what it takes to launch a viable freelance practice. Nevertheless, the intellectual and financial rewards of business ownership can be substantial. Below I will discuss various aspects you will have to take into account should you consider beginning your own professional and all-round translation business.

All-round translations

First of all, what is meant, in this particular context, by the term �all-round�? Basically, it refers to the scope of your product. As a freelancer your output would be confined to your own language combination and degree of specialisation; as an agency owner you will be able to supply your clients with translations across a whole range of source and target languages and disciplines, including commercial, technical, medical and legal documents. In theory, your range would be limited only by the number of staff you would be prepare to contract.

Internal organisation

If you want to establish your own translation company, you would be well advised to find a competent partner first � unless you are willing to hire staff right from the start (which, in most cases, is not a recommendable procedure). Ideally, your business partner should be a person whose qualities are complementary to your own, if only because in such cases the division of tasks is usually quite obvious (and a potential source of conflict is removed). There are good reasons to separate responsibility for product quality (i.e., the quality of the translations) from organisational responsibilities (order processing, account management, etc.). These two roles do not go together very well in practice, and the associated skills are not usually combined within one and the same person anyway.

Find suitable office accommodation that includes at least two rooms: one library-style room where you can work in peace, and one nerve centre where the business is done. Make sure you have at least three computer workstations (one spare station is no luxury) and an office printer, a telephone switchboard with at least two external lines and a fax. Get yourself a straightforward high-quality accounting programme with a CRM module and document your working methods in detailed systematic procedures.

Don�t forget to lay down and formalise a number of essential agreements on tasks and responsibilities with your business partner, so as to prevent any misunderstandings.

Business Plan

Once you have gathered all the information you need, you should draw up a Business Plan. Examples of such plans are available at your local Chamber of Commerce, or can be downloaded (for a fee) from the Internet. These specimen copies are structured in such a way that they will assist you in each step of your own Business Plan. One of the main advantages of having a reliable Business Plan is that it will present you with a realistic estimate of the money you will need to get your agency off the ground. If your capital requirements exceed your private budget (and it is quite likely that they will), you will have to present a thorough Business Plan to the bank in order to persuade them that your plans will pay off.

High-quality freelance translator network

The main asset of any translation agency is obviously its network of reliable translators. Incidentally, you need not be a networking freak to build up such a freelance network. Many freelancers will present themselves to you spontaneously as soon as they get wind of your existence; alternatively, you can actively recruit them and check out CVs on a variety of collective freelance websites, such as Translators Caf� or GoTranslators. The snag is that you will be hard put to appraise a freelancer�s skills if you do not master the language concerned. CV assessment is important, but by no means sufficient: you will need to be able to judge the quality of a freelancer�s actual output before entrusting him or her to your clients!

To obviate this problem, check your own network of colleagues or friends for highly-educated native speakers of the language concerned, ask several freelancers to submit (free) trial translations, have them assessed and select the two or three most promising freelancers for each language combination you intend to offer. Carefully document the strengths and weaknesses of each selected freelancer and list the specialisations. Note that you won�t get a truly reliable picture of a freelancer�s capacity and skills until he/she has had the opportunity to do several translation jobs for you.

Once you have a pool of reliable freelance translators for each language combination, you can obviously also ask them to check and assess trial translations submitted by other candidates.

Another point to bear in mind is that the freelancers you decide to work with should comply with all the requirements imposed by your country�s Tax & Customs Administration. Each freelancer should be able to produce a formal statement, issued by the tax authorities, attesting to his/her status as an independent translator.

Reliable network of suppliers

Your freelance translators are obviously your most important suppliers, but the supply network comprises other parties as well that will need to be carefully selected as you will need to use their services on an ongoing basis. These include the bank, the accountant, the printer and the graphic designer.

Marketing

Once the internal set-up of your agency is in place, your first priority should be to recruit clients in a systematic manner. For many start-ups in the translation business, this is the most difficult hurdle. Obviously there is a multitude of strategies that can help you attract clients in the business-to-business segment (which accounts for most of the turnover of any self-sufficient translation agency). One very helpful tool, if used correctly, is Direct Marketing. In principle, two different Direct Marketing strategies are available:

1. Internet marketing

One effective and relatively cheap method of generating business in the short term is Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), a term that refers to a variety of techniques to help you strengthen your presence on the Internet, and to help prospective clients find you there. A strong position in Internet search engines will increase the number of times you are invited to submit a quote for a translation job, for the simple reason that you will be more likely to be selected if you are easy to find on the Internet.

Some Internet facility agencies have specialised in Search Engine Optimisation and will be able to improve your search engine rating within a couple of months. Most of these companies charge annual subscription fees. If you want immediate results, ask for an adword campaign.

2. Database marketing

This a rather more expensive client acquisition technique. Call large international corporations and government agencies likely to produce texts for translation on a regular basis, and ask for the name of the person who is responsible for translation services (usually an official at the Director�s Office, Communications or the Marketing Department). Gather the information in a database and mail the contact persons four or five times a year. The mailing could comprise your company brochure, a letter of recommendation, flyers, a magazine for business relations or any other item that will help remind the reader of your name and the level of quality that you offer.

An effective database contains at least 1,000 companies or other organisations, and should also contain the names of the contact persons. It goes without saying that you will also have to invest in continually updating your database.