

Episode 236: Beginning Translators - Investments and Earning Money

Welcome to Marketing Tips for Translators. A podcast with marketing and business tips and strategies specifically for interpreters. I'm your host Tess Whitty - a long time freelance translator with an education and the professional background in marketing. Tune in to hear tips from my own experience or from other translators and industry experts.

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Hello and welcome to Marketing Tips for Translators. My name is Tess Whitty and I am bringing you marketing and business tips weekly. And today I am answering one question from a listener and subscriber. What to invest in for beginning translators and how to start earning money? This is a long question and I will try to answer it in detail. Rosie says "My big question is does the translation profession really exist? I am starting to think that the translator no longer exists, but that there are only many sellers are tools to become translators. Whatever I turn my head on the web. I'm required to spend money to be a translator. Obviously specific training is needed and that is not something I'm arguing."

So Rosie has invested in two post diploma courses to specialize in translations. That's great! Travel and tourism, hotels, hospitality and the other one in translations for the web and have the relevant certification. I already have a diploma but in Business Administration in foreign languages all this sounds really good Rosie - good credentials. You have printed business cards. You have bought a CAT Tool license and you have taken a course to learn how to use the CAT Tool and after 2 years of purchase, you upgraded the CAT tool and now Rosie is attending a third course at the same educational institution in addition to previous course to get further specialization. In addition to all this, I constantly follow all possible free webinars according to my time, of course, but if I could do it, there would be numerous webinars and very good paid courses I would like to attend which are offered to me all the time including Marketing Courses for Translators. Also, I should invest some more money to have a website and to continue I would have to pay for the membership of some portals, for example ProZ and a membership in a National Association. In the meantime during these three years, I have translated and translated and translated free of charge for friends, relatives, acquaintances etc. and not earned any money. At the moment, I'm translating free subtitles for the TED Talks platform in order to learn to subtitle too. So far, I've applied to several agencies, but nothing. I have responded to job postings, but nothing I have received a few small proposals for reviews that pay really low and you refused which I think it's a good thing and you think it's just paid so low. So for this reason

and at this point, I repeat my question "does the professional translator really exist?" I doubt it now and start to believe that the market out there promises to make you a translator, but in reality no one makes you work. There's only everything that revolves around the translator to make him spend money and that's it. I'm not mad at you. I like to listen to a podcast when I can and I really appreciate them but you can't always spend money.

So thank you so much for this letter and question Rosie. And I feel for you and I understand you and it's really not easy to get started. But I'm going to bring you some tough love here too. So my short answer would be to stop investing and start marketing. Look at your resume. Is it really convincing and focusing on your skills? And have you gotten testimonials, recommendations and referrals from all the people that you have translated for free from so you can prove your experience etc. I think you are a little bit of a learning junkie and I tend to be that too sometimes but I'm working on not being that. You're always investing in something, your time your energy and your mental space. The time and energy and space, you could be investing in other or the business actually and your relationships. By focusing on information and not action, you're actually limiting yourself growth and by ignoring - I think you want experience but you are not getting it and you think that more education will help.

So one important question to always ask it's what are you creating on a daily basis? How am I adding value to the world and not just learning from it. So to avoid becoming an information junkie ask yourself "what are you doing on a daily basis that brings you closer to your goals?" Take a second and write down the small steps that you can start taking within the next day. And another important rule of thumb to follow is for every webinar, video or podcast that you consume try to add identify at least one action you can take based on the information that you learn from it and always remember that learning isn't enough. We must put our knowledge into action or whatever we learn is meaningless.

So I think you have both a great educational background and you already have some translation experience and subtitling experience. Now, you just need to start keep marketing and keep going until you get some paid jobs. Apply to a hundred of agencies to get some paid jobs etc. I know it sounds easier said than done but that is just what you should probably focus on. I also have had an episode on what to invest in when you first start out. So, yes, you do need to invest in something to get started as a freelance translator, but it doesn't have to cost very much. So the first thing you need to invest in is experience and it sounds like you are doing that and that is great.

But make sure to use this experience that you have and get testimonials and ask them to be referrals when you applied for jobs. And then you need to make - I really highly recommend to become a member in a professional association. This gives the professional impression. You will get you become part of a network and you will learn a lot more and you will be in their database. So that is a good investment. And you say you have purchased and learned a CAT tool which is great. There are also a lot of free cat tools out there these days so it's not absolutely necessary

to invest a lot of money, although when I got started for 16 years ago, investing in a CAT tool really paid off for me by getting more jobs because they required this CAT tool. So those are some things to that you should be investing in and then keep marketing and applying to agencies registering databases and trying to get as much experience as possible and I will link to an episode that I have on the tips to find your first translation jobs. Actually, I think it's a blog post. So like I said, you have to apply to hundreds of agencies, 10 is not enough. I don't know how many you applied for but keep applying. Keep getting testimonials, keep getting referrals and references. Also, make sure that you claim specialization. It sounds like you already got a certification in tourism and I know that there's a need for translation in this. I'm not quite sure what language combination you have but follow up also with the agency you contact to see if they need your language combination. I would invest in more specialization in another area right now and instead try to focus on either to subtitling and the tourism or both of them and just stick with those for now.

And finally, I'm going to link to another blog post about specialization, getting an experience and getting the proof of the specialization and experience in form testimonials and referrals. This also brings us to our mindset and how to protect and develop our mindset because you need to believe in success. You need to have a success mindset for it to work. So this can be kind of hard and I know sometimes we feel both desperate and sad but we should try to focus on the positive instead and stop complaining about everything and everyone - from low rates and bad clients to weird colleagues and focus on what you can actually do, how you can develop your business and get better rates and that if clients. Try to associate with positive people, this brings more positivity to you. So sort of the woo-woo attracting negativity or positivity. So expand your network, seek out positive proactive people, if you join a professional association, you might get colleagues in the same language combinations that you can talk to about how to get started finding clients and actually talk to about the profession and how viable it is.

So to conclude to you Rosie, being a freelancer translator is a viable career and there are hundreds of thousands of freelance translators working full-time and making a decent living so it's not a hoax but it's also definitely not a get-rich-quick scheme. It requires hard work and some investments in the beginning, but if you are good at translating and consistent with your marketing and not giving up, I promise you that you can also become a successful freelance translator. Feel free to reach out to me if you want more coaching or guidance or help with your resume or anything. I would be happy to help you because I know that you can also become a successful translator because I can see that you've already invested in it and taking some really good right steps. So thank you Rosie for the question. I hope you and the other listeners found the answers and tips useful. If you have any other questions or feedback, please don't hesitate to email me or have a comment below. And if any other translator that is listening to this have any tips for Rosie too, feel free to add them in the comments and we will make sure she gets them.

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Thank you so much for listening and have a great week. I hope to see you in the next episode.

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