

Episode 237: AMA – How to Find “Good” Translation Agencies

Welcome to Marketing Tips for Translators! A podcast with marketing and business tips and strategy, specifically for freelance translators and interpreters. I'm your host Tess Whitty, a long time freelance translator with an education and 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. I am so glad you're here today and I hope you're all doing well. This is the last in this year's series of ask me anything, questions and answers. And today I want to talk about working with agencies and how to find the good agencies.

The first question comes from Alexander Grabowski and he says, "Please give me a list of respectable companies which pay well on time and give good projects larger than say a kilo words?".

We all want that, right? And I cannot give you a list. You need to go find them yourself and apply yourself. But here are some tips to find good agencies because if you can get work for the good agency, you can get a constant stream of work. And without having to do so much marketing. There is a difference between small and large agencies and where they're located and how professional and ethical they are. Bigger agencies have more automated tools and systems and you are one of many, but they can provide you more work because they usually have bigger clients. Smaller agencies have that personal touch and are usually translators themselves or have been. But they might not be able to provide as much work as the bigger agencies can. So what should you look for when you try to find good agencies? You should look for agencies that have great rating center reputation, especially for payment practices. They should have focused on your areas of specialization and have previous experience in it. They should have a solid website and be easy to contact. And how do you then look for these? The best place I think is Professional Translation Associations Directories. Because if they have paid to be a member in this that is just the first step of being a professional agency I think.

But you can also find good agencies on portals or doing an online search or looking for them on LinkedIn or something. And then when you contact the agencies, they often have different wishes on how to contact them and the direct freelancers. So I would go to the website and see is usually on their careers or in the footer or are you a freelancer etc. and it gives you instructions of how to apply for them. It's a good idea to have a solid email templates and resume to contact them. I feature an agency email template and resume. I have that as a checklist and a template. So I will try and link to this in the shownote.s and then you have to apply to many and see what their systems are, etc. and keep track and follow up.

So you yourself should also be strategic and professional. You can use a template but don't send out mass emails without adjusting them to the different agency and what they ask for. And now some tips on how to protect yourself and your business. Usually you need to sign a contract and this is just what you need to do. And some of them are long. I recommend that you do read them carefully and don't sign things that you don't agree with and be strict about payment terms. Make sure that you understand how they work for them and how they work for you and if they can be combined. You can find translation agencies to work for in national translation associations directories like I said, on portals and payment practices lists such as paymentpractices.net because there you can also see if they're good payers or not and what kind of reputation they have.

Alexander's second question is the most sensitive problem is they avoid paying or invoices, which is not good and those don't seem to be good agencies. So here is more information on how to get paid and protect yourself. So apart from reading the contract and signing it be strict about your payment terms, but you might need to adapt to different country rules. Have a system to send reminders and if they ask you to put the invoice in an online system, you have to do that, otherwise you won't get paid. So it's your choice then if you want to work with an agency that has an online invoicing system or not. Also avoid agencies that post jobs on the internet or contact you by email, but don't give you detailed information about the company or use free email accounts. So beware of unsolicited emails from agencies asking for your CV and rates. It's usually a trick to scan the competition. Also never accept work that you haven't seen. Make sure the deadlines are reasonable. One general rule of thumb among agencies, at least as far as I know, it's about 2,000 to 3,000 words per day, so don't agree on volumes you can't handle.

Now to ensure payments. Only accept jobs from agencies that have a good payment reputation. So check them before you apply to them and start working for them. Invoice the job as soon as you deliver it or make a day at the end of the month when you do all the invoicing, prepare an invoice in the client's language. Include the PO number, the method of payment, and provide all the payment details on the invoice. If you have a delayed payment, contact the agency first to clarify the issue. You might have forgotten to send the invoice, I know I have done that and if you still are not getting paid, informed the agency politely that unless they pay you by a specific date, you will send their details to non-paying list, non-payer lists, etc. But usually I've found if it's a good agency, the problem is that you haven't registered it the way they want it in their online system or something like that. Always remember to be

polite. And then the other question you had that, you say use really sophisticated and intricate sites or project management tools, which is impossible to master, takes so much time and yes, that is true. Many agencies these days, especially larger multinational ones have their own project management systems. So here are things that you might need to deal with automated increase. You decide whether you like that or not. I usually ask to be taken off the list if they send out mass emails to all translators. They have online CAT tools, online project management and billing, automated translation, you have to fill in a calendar and availability and you might need to give discounts for fussy matches. So you need to see what kind of system they have if it's something that you can work with. If not, I suggest you're looking for another agency that is has an easier system to work with. I have had to do that too. So some systems are good and some systems are bad and try to have something with a personal touch. So to summarize, there are both bad and good agencies out there. Agencies are listed in translation association directories, on online portals, payment practices, lists and more. You can also find good agencies by asking around among your colleagues. And when you find an agency, you should first research their payment history and ratings on paymentpractices.net or on Blueboard or similar services. And then look for agencies with good ratings and feedback that deal with your language combination and your area of specialization. So we need to do some homework first. Don't buy or use lists and send mass emails because this might lead to finding the bad agencies or risks that your email is just never read. In Google-ing the agency, if the agency doesn't have a website, if it uses a free email address or doesn't provide a phone number or doesn't answer when you call, I would be very cautious. So I hope that answered your questions and gave you some help.

Another related question comes from Marie. She says, "My most pressing question is not really about marketing. I've been able to join a bunch of translation agencies lately, which is great. They usually don't discuss my rates that I increase now and now I have due on university formation in sciences and translation. My main issue right now is that I don't know how to draw these translation agencies PMs attention to me so that when they have a project, they will say, "Hey, let's see if Marie is available." I've managed to convince the talent manager that they should have me in their pool of translators. That is great, but I rarely get project offers from these agencies. One of my colleagues and friends, who is the CEO of a translation company told me to try to write a monthly newsletter saying what type of projects I have done during the month to remind the PMs I exist and show them what I'm able to do. What do you think about that?"

Thank you Marie for the question. That is a dilemma. If their translation pool in your language combination and area of specialization is full, it is hard to get your foot in and I think that your friend's suggestion is quite good as long as the PMs don't mind being sent newsletters. Most of them are just too busy to read them but it can be worth a try. For example, I usually send an email once a quarter to my best agency clients and I update them on my upcoming availability and recent projects I've done in case they have similar projects. Some of these read them and some really appreciated them and some just don't read those emails. I also recommend sending an email to the vendor manager or whoever put you into the pool because that's the great first step and just follow up with them every once in a while and I was in Corinne McKay's March Marketing Madness last year. It's also coming up this year and she gave us a suggestion for an email to write to them and it went something like this:

Dear or Hello,

I'm writing to check in with you because I'm interested in working with your translation company or technical translations for your companies and etc.

Looking over my records, I see that I applied through your website on [this date] and I passed the tests and I'm in your database but I don't think I've heard from you since then. Please let me know if there's anything else you need to complete my application and I look forward to the opportunity of working with you soon.

So you can always follow up with them. I hope you found these tips useful. Other options are to reach out before the holidays when many of the usual translators are taking time off. This could be your chance to get your foot into the door because once they have a translator or a few translators for a certain client, they like to keep them, but this can be your chance. Apart from that, just keep applying to other agencies until you start getting jobs. Eventually someone will need just your skills, I'm sure.

So good luck and keep marketing. Thank you so much Marie for your question and to Alexander. 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 add a comment in the show notes and the show notes can be found <https://marketingtipsfortranslators.com/237> - Episode 237. If you like this episode, please subscribe on your favorite podcast listening app. Leave me a review or share the episode with anyone else that might benefit from it. Thank you for listening and have a great week.

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