



State of the industry: freelance translators in 2012

Introduction: The translation world is flat

Commenting on the impact of the Internet and other factors leading to accelerated globalization, Thomas Friedman, in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, wrote, "The world has been flattened ... global collaboration and competition – between individuals and individuals, companies and individuals, companies and companies, and companies and customers -- have been made cheaper, easier, more friction-free, and more productive for more people from more corners of the earth than at any time in the history of the world."

These changes, of course, have also affected translation. As companies have gained increased access to new potential customers around the world, the need for translation has increased. The translation industry is a healthy, growing one.

Other features of this flattened translation world are, for instance, the increased turnaround times translation projects demand. It is easier now too for clients to find the right professional for the job, in less time. With advances in content management, the use of translation memories, improvements in machine translation, more effective online and offline resources and many other factors, human translators are now more efficient. They are more specialized. They are, through this heightened productivity and specialization, able to provide increasingly higher quality.

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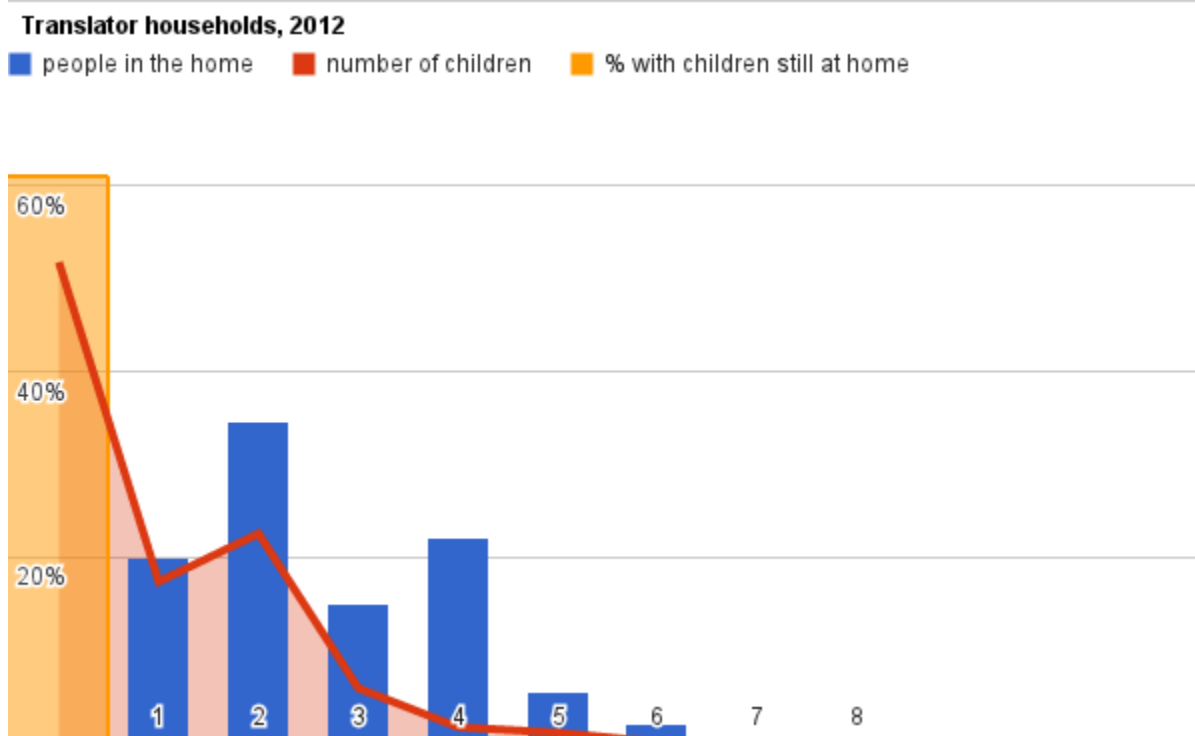
General data

Freelance translators hold a special place among freelancers worldwide. According to the [International Freelancers Academy](#), translators are the fifth largest population of freelancers. The number one benefit of freelancing named by translators is the ability to have flexible work hours, followed by being one's own boss, mobility (being able to work from a variety of locales), project variety, and a potential for higher income. Most freelance translators who come from a background of nine to five work or who have had "regular" jobs agree that they are happier as freelancers.

Some of the challenges faced by translators are common to other freelance professions: Finding clients, dealing with the "feast-or-famine" cycle of work, maintaining a work/life balance, and productivity issues all rank high.

Work and life as a freelance translator is unique, however, and so there are specific twists and turns to these common benefits and difficulties for the translator, as well as other factors that come into play, that make being a freelance translator today both uniquely challenging and rewarding.

Of full-time freelance translators, at least 63% are the main income providers in their households. What do those households look like? At least 80% are composed of two or more people. Just over half do not have children. Of those with children, 61% have children still living in the home.



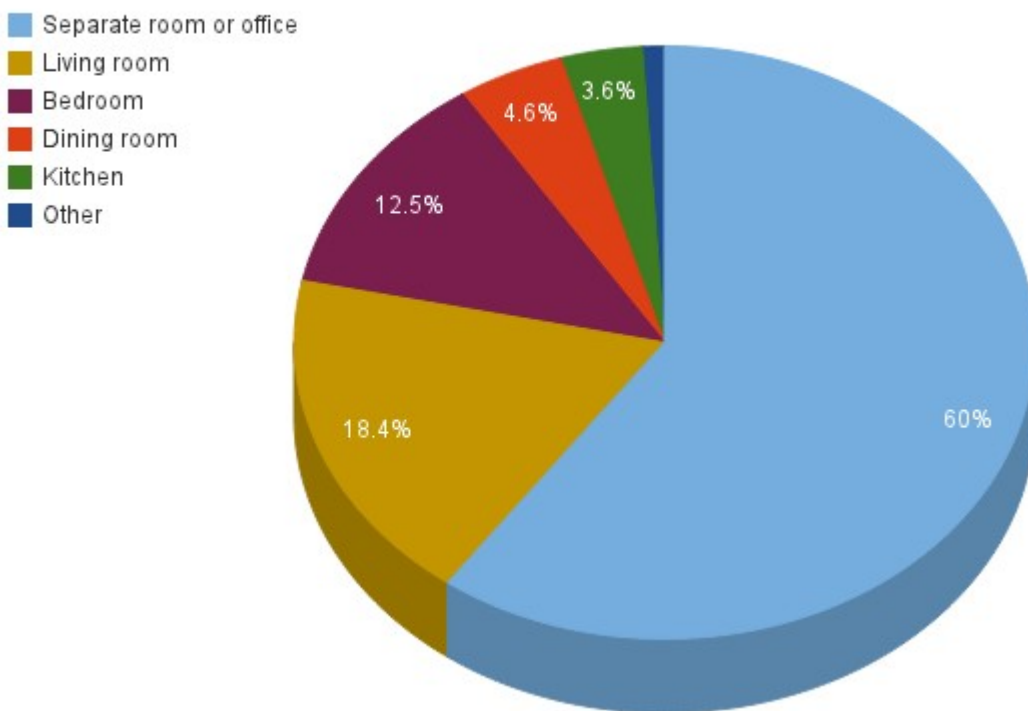
The large majority, 92% of freelance translators, work from their homes. Some who rent or have an office space elsewhere admitted to working there only irregularly. Of those who work from home, 60% have a separate room set aside for their work area. Where do the other 40% work within their homes? The living room ranked highest as a shared workspace (42%), followed by the bedroom (30%), the dining room (11%), and the kitchen (9%). Most would

agree that a translator's workspace has a high impact on their productivity, and close to 68% say there are improvements that could be made to their work area which would make it more comfortable, organized, and productive for them. These workspace "upgrades" vary from new hardware, a larger desk or more comfortable chair to finding a space which better isolates them from distractions during their work hours.

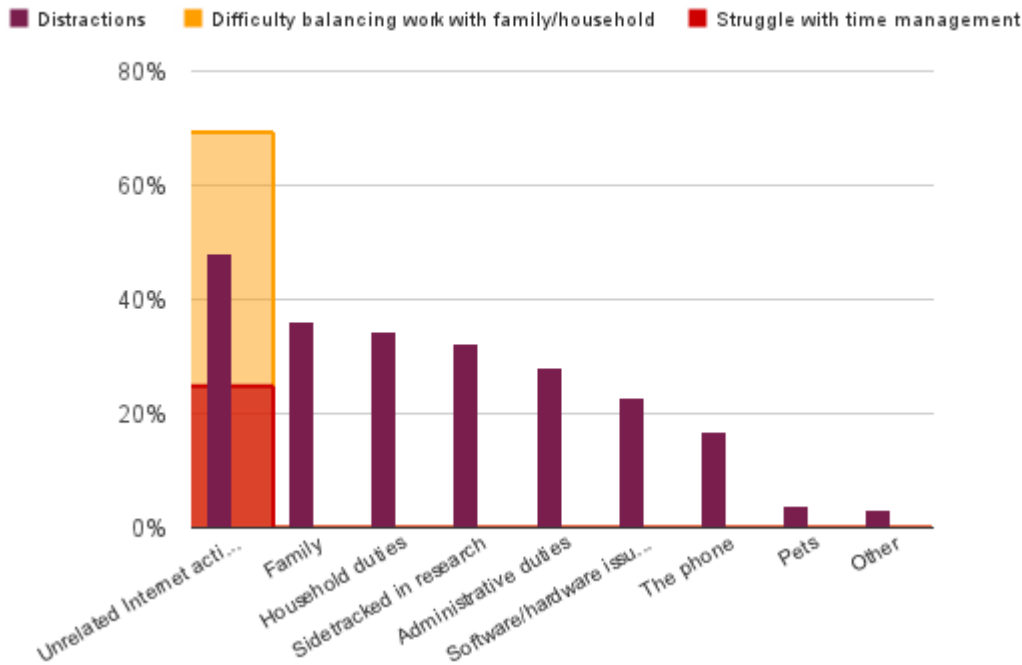
Speaking of distractions, what is it that is distracting translators during their work hours? Not surprisingly, perhaps, Internet activities and sites which are not work-related ranked the highest as a source of distraction. When much or most of one's work involves computer and Internet use,

this can be difficult to escape from. The line can also be further blurred when the translator is performing other activities such as blogging or social networking as part of their marketing strategy. Performing research was also identified as a culprit when it leads to a side-tracked translator; who hasn't started looking for a particular term or piece of material, following one interesting item to another, only to find themselves some time later reading up on something completely different? Between these two sources of distraction are family and household duties. For those working from home, it can seem at times nearly impossible to draw a clear line between time spent with family, on household duties, and work. To make matters worse, many struggle with the perception of friends, family and partners that someone who sits at a computer at home for several hours a day is not "actually working". It may be argued that a separate "office" at home for work, regular work hours and other approaches can help in this respect. Administrative duties and resolving hardware or software issues were also commonly pointed out as keeping one from concentrating on translation work. In some cases this seems to indicate potential for improvements in organization or training which would reduce the time spent on accounting, invoicing, or figuring out why a certain piece of software is not doing what it is supposed to.

Where do translators work when they work from home?

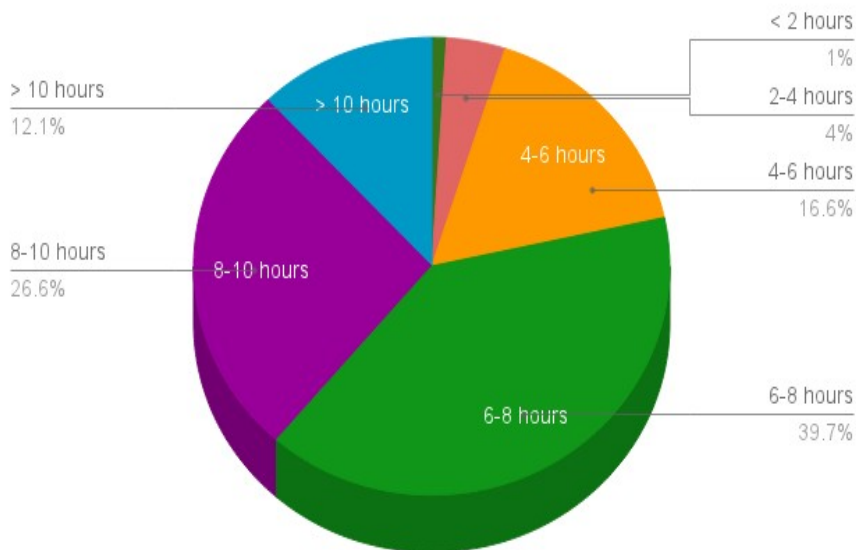


Translator distractions, 2012



Now, what were we talking about? Flexibility in work hours has the potential to equal more free time, though in some cases this develops into the opposite situation. Most translators either intentionally do not set "regular" work hours, or have tried to do so in the past and found it did not work for them. Around 30% do try to stick to more or less strict hours for translation work, though this can be altered here and there depending on workload, of course.

Average hours worked per day



While 22% manage to work, on average, for six hours or less a day, most are working more than that, with around 40% working in the range of six to eight-hour days, and the rest fall into the ranges of 8-10 hours a day (26%) or ten hours or more (12%). How productive an average day of ten hours or more can be is arguable, but we will get to issues in productivity later.

Just over 30% of translators say they feel either overworked or over-stressed. Again, family seems to play a large role in this, as does the "feast-or-famine" cycle. Just under 25% of those asked consider their social life a healthy one, with the rest seeing room for improvement.

What changes do translators feel would make a positive impact on their current work/lifestyle or workspace?

1. a separate, organized/improved work area or "home office"
2. regular work hours/routine and breaks from work
3. streamlined administrative/non-work tasks or help
4. more exercise
5. help around the house

This coincides with the main recommendations translators who have made improvements to their work/lifestyle or workspace would make to others, and may play heavily into a translator's productivity.

Specialization as a given

In the [State of the industry report for freelance translators in 2010](#), we spoke of the use of Translation Memories, or TMs, as being a given. A given in that, unless you were one of the few people out there whose work did not by its nature exclude the use of TMs, and you were not using TMs, you should start using them.

Specialization, before 2010, was already a clear trend, and continues to be. So much so that we could look at specialization as being a given as well. Nearly 90% of translators are specializing.

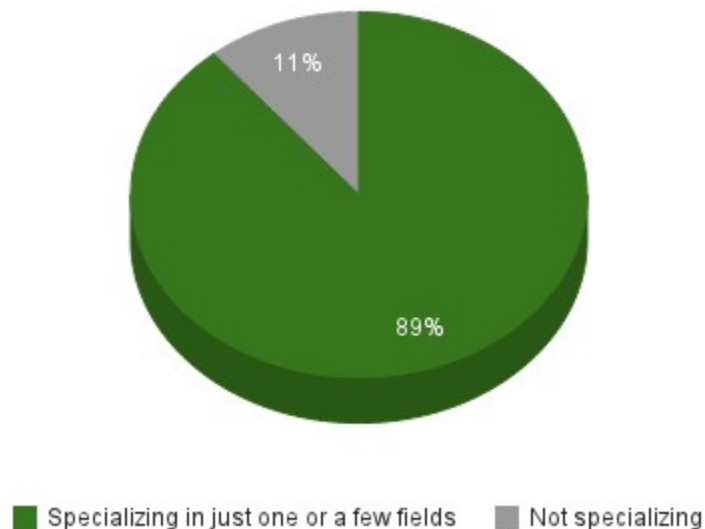
To be clear, let's define what we mean when we say "specializing" here: marketing yourself to clients in just one or a few fields of expertise. This does not mean you need to pass up projects you find interesting if they fall outside of your specialization, but it is clear that taking the "jack of all trades" approach to how you present yourself to potential

clients may not be as effective as specializing. Some things we know about specializing:

- Most translators are specializing.
- Most translation companies prefer to use specialized translators.
- Specialized translators work faster, are able to provide greater quality, and are able to charge more for their work. While they are able to charge more, this does not necessarily represent greater cost to the client.
- Translators who do not specialize are finding it increasingly difficult, for the above reasons, to compete with those who do. This may in turn contribute to a vicious cycle, the sensation that one must keep out of specializing, marketing oneself as covering many or all fields, in order to compensate for work which is actually going to specialized translators.

Throughout this report, we will see specialization coming up again and again. It ties in heavily with trends in productivity, translation quality, translator income, and marketing. So, as several survey respondents aptly said: Specialize, specialize, specialize!

Specialize, specialize, specialize!

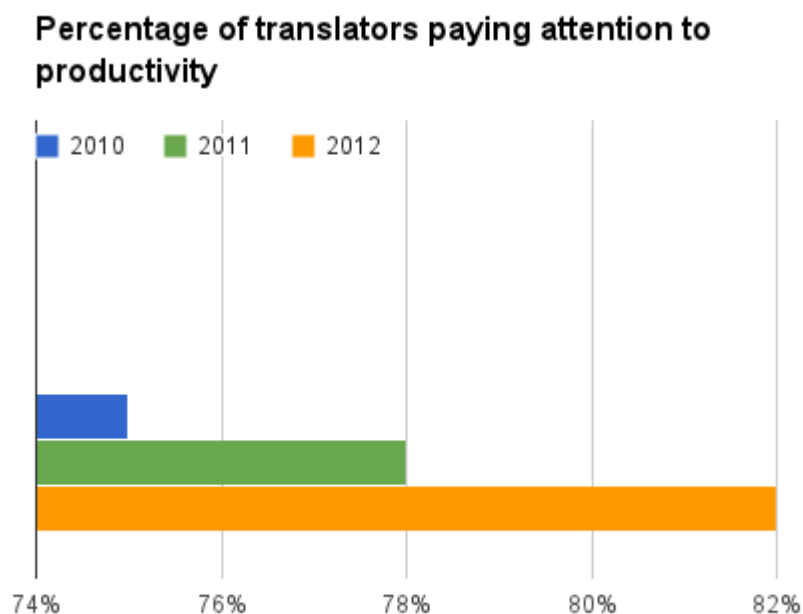


Project turnaround and translator efficiency

"Speed isn't everything," but it can be important. Over 60% of translators find it difficult, at least at times, to keep up with the turnaround rates required by clients, and increased turnaround was the trend that most respondents pointed to as having the greatest impact on them and their business.

Some are struggling with meeting this greater demand for speed. Overall, translator efficiency is up, though. Here we will take a look at how translators are becoming more efficient. As we will see later in this report, this greater speed does not mean that translators are sacrificing quality-- on the contrary. In general, these changes translators are making to become more efficient actually go hand-in-hand with quality.

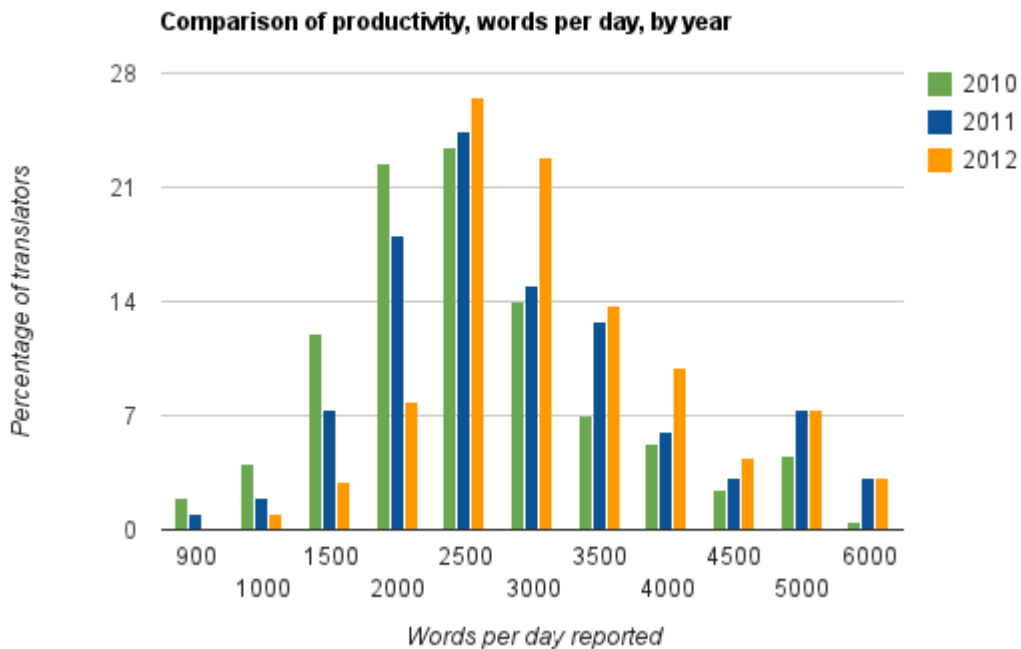
First, a comparison of the last three years shows that more and more translators are watching their productivity.



A rise in translator efficiency can be seen in the following figures:

- 32% can translate 10 - 20% more than 2 years ago
- 27.7% can translate 0 - 10% more than 2 years ago
- 20.3% can translate 20 - 30% more than 2 years ago
- 7.4% can translate 30 - 40% more than 2 years ago
- 6.1% can translate 40 - 50% more than 2 years ago

A comparison of average words per day would seem to support this as well. While the percentages of translators translating in the 2,000-2,500 words a day ranges are dropping, those translating in the 3,000 to 4,000 words a day range have increased.

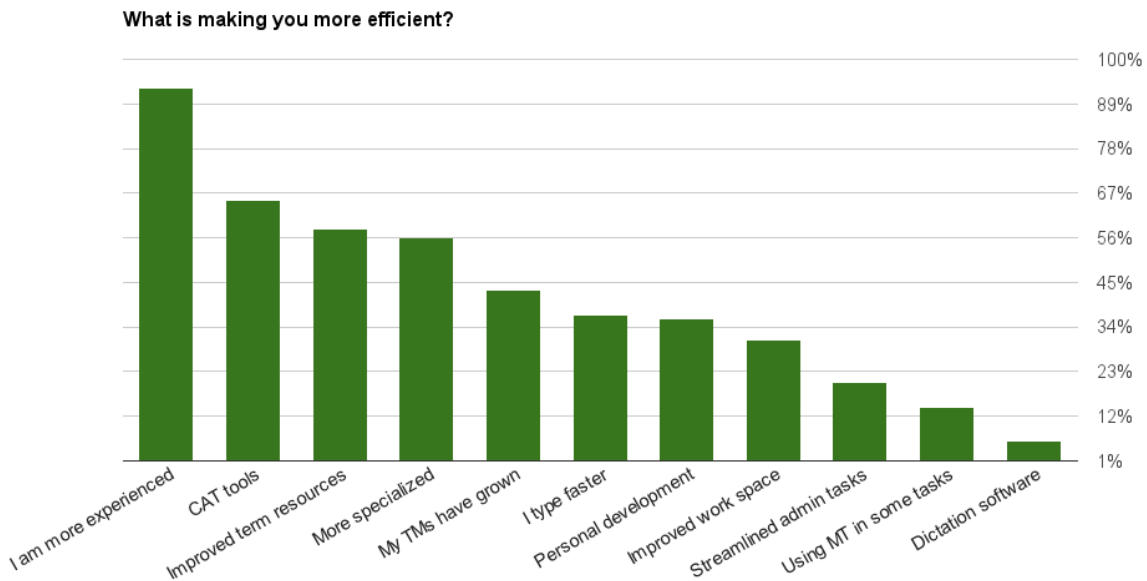


The components that make up one translator's increasing productivity may differ from another's, and there are many variables, but most translators asked agreed on some main factors that went into increasing their efficiency:

Reasons for increased speed:

1. I am more experienced (92.9%)
2. I started using (or became more proficient with) translation memory tools (65.3%)
3. My terminology resources have improved (58.2%)
4. I am more specialized (56.0%)
5. The size of my translation memories has grown (43.1%)
6. I type faster (36.9%)
7. Personal development / mental shift (36.0%)
8. Improved work space / environment (30.7%)
9. I lose less time in non-translation tasks (20.4%)
10. Machine translation is now useful on some of my jobs (14.2%)
11. I started using dictation software (5.8%)

Also cited as reasons for increased translation speed was greater familiarity or experience with tools in general (PC, software, etc.). It is interesting to note that the use of translation memory tools and improved term resources have moved up this list from 2011.



Just as important as reasons for increased efficiency is identifying factors that slow us down. The principle reasons given for reduced translation efficiency were:

1. stress
2. fatigue
3. translating outside of fields of specialization

Family-related stress or duties seem to be a significant source of decreased productivity, along with unfamiliarity with the material being translated. More than half of those surveyed state they are at least two to three times faster when translating material in which they are specialized. Other factors which were a detriment to a translator's productivity included online distractions, a lack of stable or regular work hours, and time spent on non-translation work tasks.

The advice translators would give other translators seeking to increase their efficiency has not changed much:

1. Specialize
2. Build/expand your TMs and use a CAT tool
3. Incorporate new technologies (MT, Dictation/speech recognition software)
4. Invest time in becoming expert in the tools you use
5. Organize/systematize non-translation tasks to free up more time for actual translation
6. Spend time making sure all information and resources available are clearly provided before starting a project
7. Build a solid work environment geared towards periods of little or no distraction in your work

Resources, both general and translation-specific, for increasing one's productivity are plentiful online. One starting point for those interested may be the article [*Productivity for translators: an overview*](#). It is worth pointing out that most efficiency-building tactics will require a certain period of time investment before they can begin to pay off.

"New" technologies

Part of improving one's efficiency is incorporating new tools and technologies where they apply and are useful. Trends in two of these, Machine Translation (MT) and Translation Management Systems (TMS) continue to be relevant and bear some mention here.

TMS

A Translation Management System, or TMS, is a system or platform where at least part of the translation workflow takes place. They come in all shapes and sizes, with varying levels of functionality. An example of a TMS is the [Translators without Borders translation center platform](#). Most translators, at least 70%, have at least at one time needed to use a TMS to do some part or all of a project. Some are not yet familiar with the term "TMS" though they may have already used one.

Around 30% of translators asked stated they do half or more than half of their work on some form of TMS at this point. Fifty-three percent of translators who are using a TMS use just one system, while roughly 40% use between two and three different platforms.

Translation Management Systems seem to continue to increase in popularity, and translation companies or end clients using them cite increased productivity, workflow and quality, along with an overall lower cost in the long term, as benefits of a good TMS. Whether a freelance translator uses one (or many) of these platforms is for the most part up to the client's preferences at the moment, though becoming familiar with how a TMS works can make working on one less frustrating (and potentially more efficient) when the need arises.

MT

Machine Translation (MT) continues to elicit strong opinions at both ends of the spectrum, but the fact is that a high percentage (54%) continue to use it in some form in their translation and translation-related tasks.

Most of this use of MT continues to be on very specific tasks:

1. "Gisting" (52%)
2. For creative inspiration on terms or texts (43.5%)
3. For the translation of lists or simple, repetitive texts (39.1%)
4. To create an initial translation to post-edit (32.8%)
5. For checking some terms (22.4%)
6. For checking terms in a source text which are not the source language (13.8%)
7. To illustrate the difference between MT and HT to clients (10.3%)
8. To communicate with clients who do not speak the translator's languages (3.4%)
9. For quick translations where quality is not needed (3.4%)

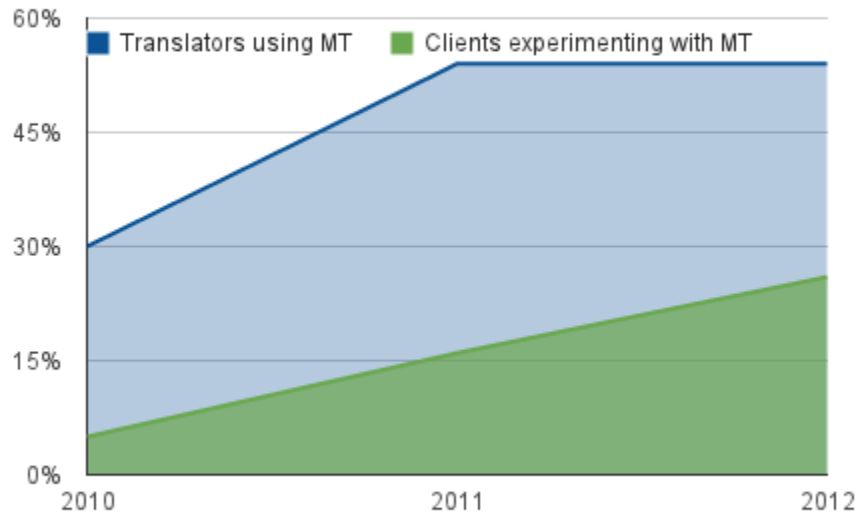
Some kinds of texts where MT has been found useful in some languages:

- general, simple texts
- medical, IT and technical texts
- letterheads
- lists
- repetitive texts

Among those who are using MT, Google Translate is the most popular form (53%).

1. Google Translate 53%
2. MT feature of translation software 18.2%
3. Another online MT engine 3.6%
4. A standalone MT system 3.6%
5. Combination of the above 21.6%

Of translators surveyed, 26.7% report that their clients have incorporated the use of MT in some way. This is up from 16% in 2011. Also up is the number of translators who have done post-editing work, or who offer it as a service: 40% compared to 30% in 2011. Most who report doing post-editing work say they do not find it



faster or easier than regular translation work. Some allowance may be needed here for factors such as the language and direction of the translation, though it should be pointed out that the translators who have reported some level of success in post-editing work or have found it more efficient for some types of material also state that a good amount of training, practice or preparation went into making those results possible. The majority, however, say that still 10% or less of their work comes from post-editing projects at this time.

The usability of different forms of machine translation may still vary from language to language or field to field. What is significant here is that the use of MT continues to rise, and larger numbers of translators are finding it useful in some manner. Most translators are in agreement that the use of MT will not significantly reduce the need for human translation. Many still view its use as the freelance translator's enemy, however. A high percentage (44%) of those who state that MT is not useful for any of their tasks have not tried to use MT for any of their tasks in over a year.

Signs point to MT continuing as a trend, and it continues to be a reasonable statement that the translator who stays on top of the advantages and disadvantages of MT for the work they offer is better positioned to respond to client inquiries on MT when they arise. It is probably less effective, for example, to respond "No, I don't use MT, it's terrible" to a client inquiry than it is to respond, "No, I don't use MT for that, and let me show you why, here's the difference..."

Quality

How is translation quality faring in all of this?

As we mention above, clients are expecting quicker turnaround. Increasing translator productivity is making it possible to meet this demand. Is the demand for quality still increasing as well?

Yes. Both translators and translation companies report a rise in the demand for quality over just two years ago. This is seen in various aspects of the translation process. Translators report that translation companies they work for are:

- implementing increasingly strict screening processes. For translators seeking to work with some clients, it may be increasingly difficult to "get in."
- offering tighter project coordination.
- providing more style guides and term lists to the translator.
- introducing specific rules or guidelines regarding what happens if errors are detected in a translation.
- introducing overall greater quality assurance (QA), both in the employment of procedures and personnel.

Translators are meeting this demand for increasing quality through various means, including:

1. they are specializing
2. they continue to improve their own QA processes
3. they are adopting new QA processes
4. they are getting specialized training and certification
5. they are forming and using translation teams
6. they are showing proof of quality and QA up front
7. they are keeping their rates in line with the quality of work demanded/provided

It is interesting to note that some are also implementing their own stricter screening when it comes to selecting new clients to work with. Many commented that this was yielding good results, and that they found that clients who are serious about quality tend to provide the support needed to ensure quality, and also pay for it.

A concerning number of respondents seemed to believe there was little they could do to adapt to these changes of increasing demand for quality. One piece seems to be missing from some translators' approaches to the quality demand. While the increasing demand for quality seems apparent, and translator quality is increasing, some translators appear to be stuck between what they can offer a potential client, and what they can show a potential client they can offer, in terms of quality.

On clients' expectations of quality:

One respondent said: "They are more suspicious, take less at face value. They demand PROOF of quality."

On quality:

One respondent said: "Good clients always expect quality. Good translators always ensure quality."

What does this mean? Most translators, through the means outlined above and others, are continually improving their translation quality and quality assurance. However, when it comes to *showing* a new or potential client these assurances of quality up front, some seem to be falling short of their potential, with a sort of "the proof is in the pudding" or "they know I provide quality when I deliver the work" attitude.

The times when, in speaking of the quality you can provide, "Take my word for it" may have been effective, are over. It is now reasonable to assume that an inability to *show* potential clients what you can provide in terms of quality, before you provide it,

may affect the kind of demand you see. Quality can be a differentiator, but so is the ability to show quality. Some translators are taking advantage of this and are benefiting from it. Do you have strict QA processes? It may be more effective to outline what they are rather than just say that you have them, just as it may be more persuasive to show certificates of specialized training rather than saying you have them. How else can you *show* the client what kind of quality they can expect?

On screening clients more strictly:

"I get fewer clients than most, but those I get are willing to pay to get quality work that makes a difference."

Demand and growth

Indicators here are fairly positive. Almost 70% of translators asked are handling more volume now than just two years ago (around 12% were unsure if the volume had increased or not), and just under 70% report steady or increasing volume from 2011 to 2012 (5% were unsure).

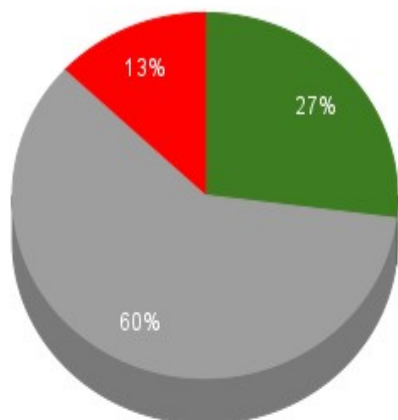
According to [Common Sense Advisory](#), the market for outsourced language services is worth US\$33.523 billion in 2012, and it is calculated that the language services market is growing at an annual rate of 12.17% (up from 7.41% in 2011). [The US Department of Labor](#) estimates that "employment of interpreters and translators is expected to grow 42 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations." [EMSI](#), in a recent report, stated that translation and interpretation services have grown by approximately 50% since 2007 in the US.

These indicators would seem to match with the concept of a "flat world" in translation as we saw at the beginning of this report. Demand is healthy, growth has increased. How is this affecting freelance translators in terms of their own income and growth?

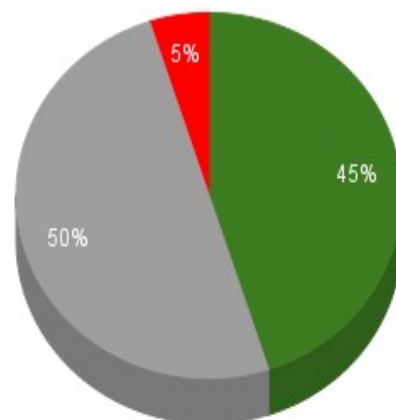
Translator income, investments and expectations

When asked if they felt their businesses were being affected by global or local economic crises, the response from full time translators was nearly 50-50. As was noted in last year's report, these effects are not always negative, however. Some see an increase in demand from some clients, sectors or fields and a drop from others during times of economic pressure, for example.

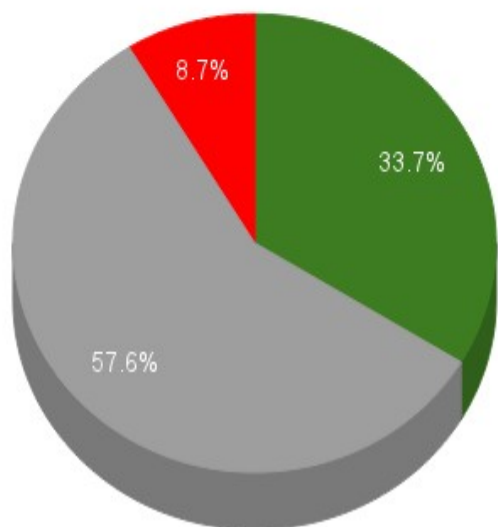
Translator rates in 2010



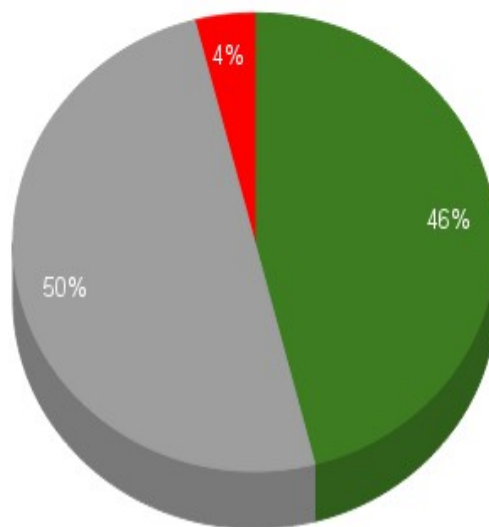
Translator rates in 2011



Translator rates among ProZ.com non-members, 2012



Translator rates among ProZ.com members, 2012



Downward pressure on translator rates has been felt over the past few years. This pressure, in the "flattened" world of translation, continues to be felt. It may be too soon to tell, but this pressure *may* be lessening somewhat. What are translators doing with their rates?

Among ProZ.com members, there has been a slight increase in those who have raised their rates and a slight decrease of those who have lowered their rates from 2011. The same percentage (50%) report maintaining steady rates.

While it may be a rather subjective matter, 80% of those asked consider their current income between adequate and excellent, while 20% find their current income below adequate.

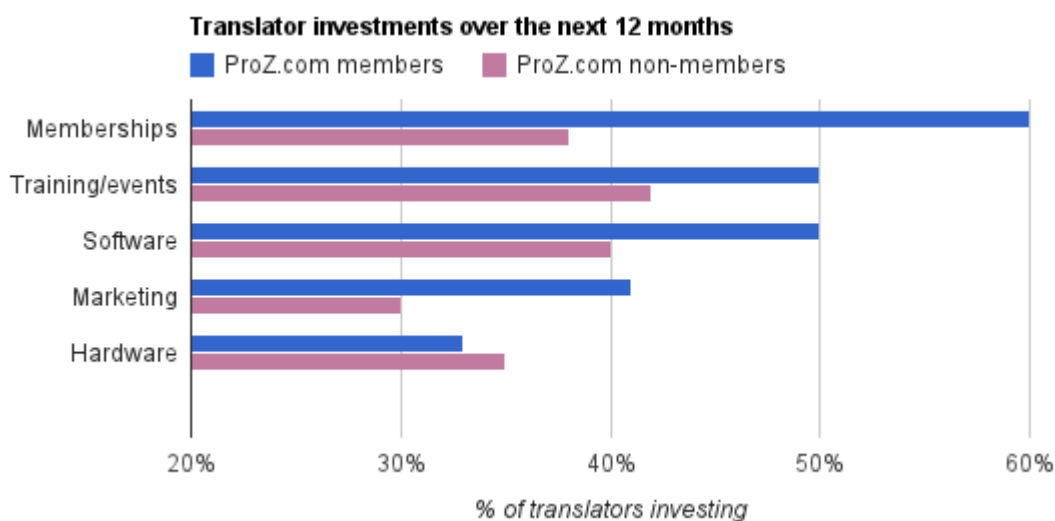
Around 50% of translators reported good financial results in the first part of 2012, and over 60% project greater income in the next twelve months than in the previous twelve. Seven percent would describe their financial results for the first part of 2012 as "terrible", though a greater percentage had better projections for the rest of their 2012.

It would be simpler to focus just on whether translators are raising their rates, but this provides only a partial view of what may be happening. That an important number of translators are raising their rates and others are resisting the downward pressure on rates is good. It may be more comprehensive to look at translator income, since many of the trends presented so far come together and at least have the potential to play into a translator's income. For example, if a translator is working more efficiently than a year ago, it is possible that their income is increasing even if their rates have remained steady for the last year.

In order to capture more or better demand and clients, many translators are focusing in a few main areas:

1. Specialization
2. Increased efforts at differentiation
3. Increased marketing efforts
4. Diversification

Translators continue to invest in their businesses just as strongly as last year, though "Memberships" have moved up to replace training and industry events at the top of the list.



Many translators already investing in memberships, whether they are for online platforms, translator associations, organizations related to a field of specialization or all of the above, consider these expenditures as part of their marketing budget.

Plans for the future

The freelancer life is full of freedom, and this is one of the biggest benefits cited by freelance translators of what they do. It would seem that in some respects this "absolute freedom" has the potential to be harmful if not reigned in when it comes to certain aspects of the freelance life. A concerning number of freelance translators, running their own translation business, and as their own boss, seemed to have only somewhat vague plans for their professional future. Most short term and long term goals could be summed up as "get more clients, keep translating."

What about retirement?

Roughly thirty-three percent of those asked say they have made plans or preparations regarding retirement-- this is up slightly from over three years ago. Sixteen percent said they do not plan to plan for retirement at all. Many agreed that these were plans best approached sooner than later, since the available options may tend to "dry up" the closer one gets to the age at which one would like to slow down or stop working, or in the event that one is unable to continue working, either temporarily or permanently.

Diversification

An ongoing trend which plays into translator income and also differentiation and marketing (which we will see in a moment) is diversification.

In previous reports, two main types of diversification were identified. Both are ways of supplementing and increasing income.

1. Diversification within the translation industry, where translators are delving into offering other services such as project management, desktop publishing, training to other translators in areas of expertise, etc.
2. Diversification *out* of the translation industry, where translators are applying their skills to other lines of business, for example education, or in sectors which relate to their fields of expertise.

In 2012, 36% of translators are diversifying within the industry, 13% are considering it. This is down just slightly from last year. Translators diversifying *out* of the industry are around 27%, with 15% considering the idea.

Some areas of diversification that survey respondents are exploring within the industry are:

- Proofreading
- Desktop publishing (DTP)
- Translation or business-related training
- Project management
- Voiceover
- Language teaching
- Copywriting
- Quality management
- Transcription

Differentiation and marketing

If the translation world is flat, and it is increasingly easy for clients to find the right person for a project, it may also be increasingly easy for some of the right people to get lost in the hustle and bustle if they are not prepared.

A thread that was much stronger this year in freelance translators' conversations and responses to surveys were the issues of differentiation and marketing. Some

consider marketing a necessary evil, others try to avoid it altogether. Some struggle with finding ways to differentiate themselves from the competition. From some of the information already presented here, we know that most clients seek specialists, and are looking for better quality with faster turnaround. We also know that clients are tightening their screening processes to ensure these conditions. It would be reasonable to consider that some professionals do not reach that screening process, or in other words fail a sort of "pre-screening" through either not reaching the client or not showing the client up front that they might be the professional the client is looking for.

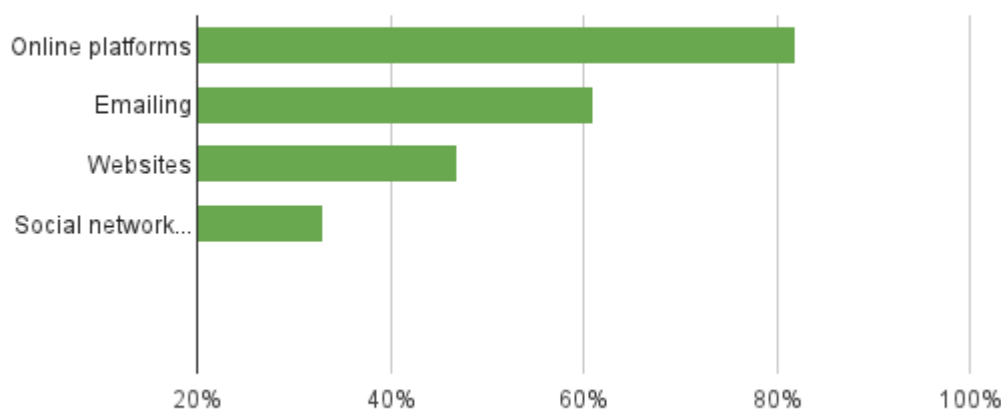
On marketing efforts:

One respondent said: "I market when I'm most busy, as then I have the most confidence, negotiate harder and get better rates as a result."

Where are translators doing their marketing?

Online platforms and emailing rank highest as marketing channels being used by translators, though it should be noticed that most agree that mass emailing is not as effective as more targeted, "personalized" email contact, which of course usually requires more time and effort.

Favorite channels for translator marketing, 2012



Interesting numbers still use methods such as newspaper or yellow page ads and flyers/pamphlets, though most seem to agree that these methods have not been very effective. Phone calls and in-person visits to potential clients are also used, in most cases with apparent decreasing results.

Building and maintaining a strong online presence being at the top of marketing methods used, translators were asked about their own online presence. Most would rate their online presence as "adequate", and admit that it is something to which they need/would like to pay

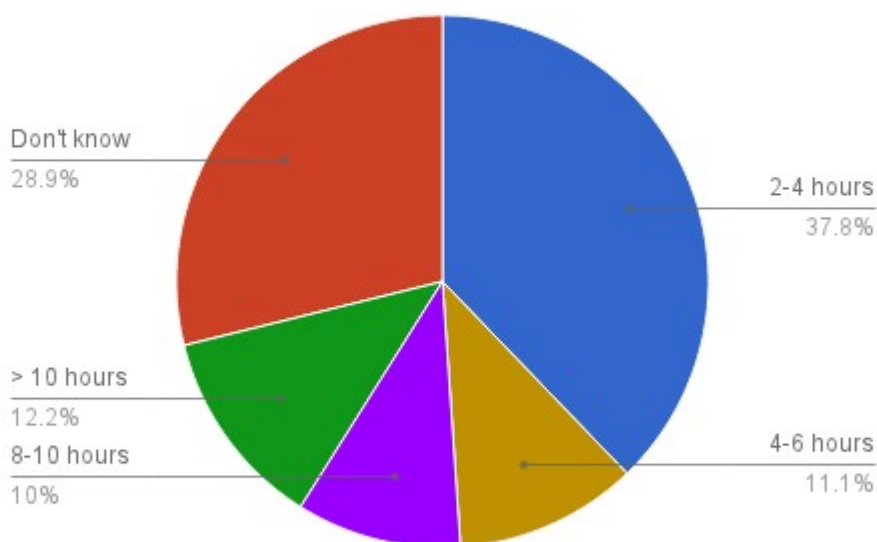
more attention. Even those who maintain an adequate to poor online presence report that a good portion of their new client contact comes to them that way, indicating unexplored potential.

The tendency noted in last year's report of some established freelance translators to neglect marketing when they are fully booked and find themselves in a difficult position when that demand dips seems to continue, though somewhat less strongly.

How much time are translators investing in marketing their services?

Only 13% of those asked state they market their services in an ongoing manner, whether they are fully booked or not. Over half perform marketing only occasionally or not much at all, though it should be noted that some marketing methods require less ongoing effort; if you have already made the initial time investment of building a stellar online presence, maintaining that presence is often something that will require relatively little of your time.

Time spent marketing (monthly)



Nearly 29% of translators who are marketing themselves in one way or another are not sure how much time they might be putting into it, at least on a monthly basis. Most seem to fall into the range of two to six hours a month spent on marketing their services. However, only 26% regularly track the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. If this is true, it may be reasonable to conclude that many translators are putting effort into marketing methods which may not be providing a return, and unaware of other methods they are using or have used which have provided a return which was not recognized as such. An obvious advantage of tracking the effectiveness of your marketing methods is being able to more easily detect where you are wasting your time, where you could spend more energy, and potential changes which will increase the effectiveness of your efforts.

How much money are translators investing in marketing?

Responses on this varied widely, from zero to thousands of dollars or euros. Those who are investing money in marketing may spend an average of 200 to 400 USD a year. Many ProZ.com members include their membership fee or membership at other online platforms in their estimation of expenditure in marketing. Some are hesitant to spend

money on marketing, but those who do tend to report better results than those who don't. Here it is equally important to be able to gauge whether there is a return, just as in selecting the channel(s) to use for marketing; if a given method provides results, the money invested can be greatly outweighed by the result, though it may not always be immediate.

What marketing method has been particularly effective for you?

One respondent said: "Cultivating connections among fellow translators and interpreters. All my biggest jobs and best clients have come to me via colleagues..."

What about networking?

Freelance translators asked about the role of networking in their marketing efforts seemed divided over its importance. Many who did draw the relation between the two have had positive results when networking led to a system of referring colleagues and being referred by colleagues to clients. This networking occurs both online and in

person, and represents strong potential when it comes to getting your name out to new clients. In general, clients appreciate being referred to a trustworthy professional when you are unable to work on a project, and so does the translator you are referring. They may meet a new client this way, and so may you when they return the favor.

On networking:

One respondent said: "In my experience, many clients are reluctant to look for a freelancer themselves and prefer to ask freelancers they know for referrals."

What do translators who are successfully marketing themselves recommend to others?

Advice from those who are marketing their services successfully:

- Spend time building a strong, professional online presence. On this, one respondent advised, "Market yourself as a business, not as a job seeker."
- Specialize, specialize, specialize!
- Look for other ways to differentiate yourself from the competition.
- Be constant, make it an ongoing activity.
- Network!
- Be patient, don't give up.

There is a wealth of resources available for those interested in better marketing themselves, many of them translator-specific, and a good number of ProZ.com members who provide training, articles, blog posts and other material on marketing your services as a language professional.

What about differentiation?

This seems to go hand in hand where translators are successfully marketing themselves. In building an online presence or crafting the message you want potential clients to see, showing the potential client what makes you different will be important. As we saw above, showing potential clients quality assurance up front will be more effective than just promising quality. Quality is a differentiator, as can be specialization, rates, familiarity with new tools and technologies, training and certifications, and so on.

Strategies for success

In the presentation [*ProZ.com and the future of the translation industry*](#), a four-part strategy was presented for freelancers to survive and thrive in the industry. Those strategies continue to be good advice, and bear mentioning here as well. They were:

1. **Be good:** Being good means loving what you are doing, translation, and being good at translation. [Get trained](#). Specialize. Join [translator associations](#), and associations in your fields of expertise. Collaborate with other professionals. Watch your efficiency and work towards improving it.
2. **Differentiate yourself:** This is not always easy, and it is probably not enough to just say “I’m different, I’m better.” Look for [ways you can show this to your clients](#), to show them how you are good. Your rate, for example, is a differentiator.
3. **Be confident:** Know that you are good and show it. Stay abreast of what is happening in the industry and embrace the new tools or working methods that help you work better rather than shying away from them.
4. **Charge accordingly:** Know your [rate](#), what you need to make to have the living you want to have, remember that you are the one who sets that rate, and [charge accordingly for your work](#).

Do not forget to market yourself

A note we can add to these strategies, which ties in with the others, is **do not forget to market yourself**. A bit of ongoing marketing can go a long way. Hopefully, you have all the work you need or want right now. Even if you are fully-booked at the moment, keeping yourself out there in front of new potential clients is important. If you are networking and collaborating with colleagues, or you have a team, you can always refer clients to other trusted professionals (clients appreciate this). Hopefully, you are all booked up and that demand will never drop off. But if it does, it is better to have some new potential demand already lined up, rather than having to run around deciding how and where to market your services to new clients to make up for that drop-off.

There are many, many resources out there for the professional translator who wish to follow these strategies-- make sure you are making the best use of them. ProZ.com is one of those resources as well.

ProZ.com membership

There are many ways to market yourself as a translation professional, and ProZ.com membership is one. Membership plus [a strong profile which accurately reflects you](#) as a professional is one of the most powerful marketing tools you can invest in, and gives you a high level of visibility to potential clients and collaborators, both on ProZ.com and on the web in general. Members are shown in the first layer of [directory results](#), the directory and direct profile contact being the most common ways in which jobs are passed on the site. ProZ.com members meet clients at least four times more often than non-members.

The price of membership is negligible in comparison to the return on this investment. Ask a member, or have a look at the list of [member benefits](#) and [testimonials](#).

If you are already a ProZ.com member, remember that your membership will take care of giving you a high level of visibility to potential clients, but that *you* control what you show those clients with that visibility. The key to this presentation is your profile. Use it as your online "shop window" and fill it with the best you have to offer. In cases where members experience less client contact than desired, the problem usually lies in a profile which does not effectively communicate to a potential client how that translator is good, or different from the competition. Why should a client choose you? ProZ.com offers a series of free webinars designed to help in this respect. The "[Meeting clients at ProZ.com](#)" webinars are short, free, offered in several different languages, and include a hands-on workshop during which a member of the ProZ.com site team will help attendees with feedback and pointers on building a strong profile, along with other [winning strategies](#).

ProZ.com Certified PRO Network

Differentiating yourself is also important, and there are also many ways to stand out from among the competition, to show why and how you are different, why a new client should choose you for that next project. It may be less effective to rely on just one way of differentiating yourself. The [ProZ.com Certified PRO Network](#) is a community-driven initiative designed to provide professionals a means to distinguish themselves, and to meet, work and collaborate in a network composed entirely of other screened professionals.

Entrants to the CPN are screened in three main areas:

1. Translation ability
2. Business reliability
3. Good citizenship

Participation in the [Certified PRO Network](#) is an opportunity for professional translators to provide an additional differentiator to others, and to collaborate on a deeper level with other professionals.

If you are not familiar with the CPN, or would like to apply to the Network but have not yet, visit www.proz.com/cpn, where you will find information on the CPN and the screening process.

State of the industry reports for freelance translators are published annually at ProZ.com. These reports are free to ProZ.com members. To read the online version of this report, or to see previous reports, please visit <http://www.proz.com/industry-report/>



The translation workplace

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