

CHICATA NEWS

A Publication of the Chicago Area Translators and Interpreters Association

Winter, February 2011

Give yourself an edge: Professional responsiveness

by *Melissa Ramer*

Abstract: There are ways that translators can make themselves more appealing to work with, thus giving them an edge in a competitive industry.

I have before me information about two translators I do not know. Their qualifications are very similar. They are both experienced and ATA-certified. I contact them both. The first responds within a day. The other takes a week. Right off the bat, the first translator has made it easy to work with her. The resume of the second goes right into the recycling bin.

In what ways do you make yourself more or less appealing to work with? Do you get testy when your translation of a passage is questioned? Do you avoid discussions about rates, bowing to whatever a client offers to pay you? Are you someone who creates inconvenience for your employer by not invoicing until three months after a project has been completed?

Because I am both a translator and a manager of translations, I have a view of the profession from both sides. When I am looking to hire translators, either freelancers or language service providers, I know what I'm looking for and I know what I'd like to avoid.

My first step is the ATA directory. Make it easy to be found. Is your information current? I suspect that for many of you, it is not. I can attest that many inquiries go unanswered, perhaps because they were directed to an old email account.

Make It Easy to Stay in Touch

Once you are found, please make it reasonably easy to stay in touch. If you give me your email address but your mail box is full, or your phone number but you don't return my calls promptly, what am I to conclude? You are either too busy or rather unprofessional, so I will look elsewhere.

When I find a good prospect, I like to check references. Be prepared to pass on the names of previous clients (who have already given you permission to do so) so that I can hear your praise from them.

We also need to talk about rates for payment, time available to work, and whether it will be on-site or remote. If I ask for your rates, don't be wishy-washy. Pick a number. I may counter with a different one, and so it goes. (But please don't say you don't know what to charge. It makes you sound unprofessional.) Expected production – words per hour – is a self-measure I expect translators to be able to predict with reasonable accuracy, depending on the quality and difficulty level of the source material.

Attend to Business Details

Be aware of common business practices that need to be included in the professional working relationship. These comprise but are not limited to: the nondisclosure agreement (NDA), statement of work (SOW), payment rates, payment terms, and an invoice.

Translators I work with must sign

an NDA, which insures that my client's confidentiality is preserved. An SOW is another useful document stating the terms of work, payment, due dates, and quality expectations. This provides mutual security: you promise to deliver the goods, and I promise to pay you for them.

When it comes time to be paid, invoice promptly. It is the professional and considerate thing to do. Create a professional invoice including all relevant information, such as whom to pay (and the address), the amount to be paid, the project code or identifier, a unique invoice number, and terms of payment (e.g., 30 days). Putting off invoicing helps no one and will end up hurting your professional reputation.

Discuss Your Work Honestly

Now let's talk about the work itself. I like to start translators off with clear instructions, a glossary, sample documents, and any other relevant reference material I can provide. My best translators take the time to read these documents before starting in on the translation work. They follow these guidelines and ask intelligent questions about any part that is unclear, or better yet, about the exception I have not anticipated.

I welcome meaningful questions from my translators. Every project has a slightly different set of parameters and expectations, so clarifying project needs is essential to doing an excellent job. If a tricky phrase or construction comes up frequently and you'd like to know how others have solved it, get in touch. If you solve a terminology puzzle that you think would be helpful to others on the team, pass that on as well!

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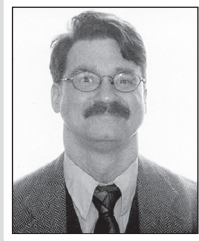
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CHICATA News, published four times a year, is distributed free of charge to all its members. Membership dues are currently \$40. The newsletter provides up-to-date information about its members, association activities, as well as news of the translation and interpretation profession. Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the association or its officers, and are solely those of their authors. Articles submitted become the property of CHICATA News and are subject to editing. No part of the newsletter may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the editor. Materials for publication may be e-mailed to the editor at mrociocj@earthlink.net. Maria Rocio Jaramillo may also be called at 708-383-0453.



Message From the President



Best Wishes to all CHICATA members and their families for a very happy year in 2011!

Our CHICATA Holiday Party and Talent Show was a great success. Those present had a wonderful time. It was really a pleasure to see familiar faces and new faces as well!

Our Vice-President for Programs, Olimpia Hernandez, is now working on programs for 2011. Please watch your e-mails for program announcements and updates. Also, please mark your calendars for the CHICATA annual conference, which is scheduled for May 7, 2011. Further details will be announced later.

Many thanks to the Executive Committee and all volunteers who have worked on various events and “behind the scenes” during the past year on behalf of the members of CHICATA. Everything that CHICATA does is done by members entirely on a volunteer basis.

As we enter the New Year, I would like to remind members that they will have an opportunity to renew their CHICATA membership. Dues remain at \$40 per year, which is quite reasonable, and certainly a good deal when one considers the quality of the programs CHICATA offers. We aim to make further improvements in our web site, and to enhance our publicity and outreach efforts over the coming year.

The CHICATA Executive Committee always welcomes suggestions from members on program topics, speakers, and venues. We also need volunteers to help with publicity and with special projects such as the annual conference and CHICATA Institute workshops. In addition, we encourage members to write for the newsletter. Your colleagues would be interested in reading about your approach to professional issues, new dictionaries, or new software tools. You can also post items on the CHICATA Corner. CHICATA members have a depth of experience to share. There is always more to learn! We all benefit from sharing with each other!

Sincerely,

John F. Bukacek

My ATA 2010 conference experience

by *Olimpia Hernandez*

I am relatively new to the translation and interpretation business; I spent 20 years working as an engineer in the automotive industry, a career that comes with a built-in network of people, a sense of camaraderie, and the defined structure of a large corporation. When, in 2005, I decided to transition into the field of translation and interpretation, I did so because it was a growing field that was interesting and intellectually stimulating.

However, I knew I was going to be facing different challenges because it was my first time owning my own business, and it was different from the corporate world I was used to; I had to develop my own network of colleagues to replicate the camaraderie I used to have, find learning opportunities for acquiring tools to improve my business, and find ways to expand my business.

One great way to address these challenges is attending the ATA conference. This was the second year I attended and I plan to continue attending it in the future because of all the benefits it provides. From the professional development perspective, the conference offers a large number of learning opportunities through the presentations, tutorials, and overview sessions in my areas of work as well as other areas that I have not had any experience in.

I had the opportunity to learn not only about technical tools, but also about the challenges and opportunities available in other fields of translation and interpretation I do not currently work in through experienced professionals presently working in those fields. The tutorial sessions gave me a really good roadmap on how to expand into new areas should I desire to do so.

Another important aspect of the conference is networking, not only with language agencies, but also with other colleagues working in the same or in different languages. Through the parties offered by the different Divisions, the dinners, and networking events the conference also offers numerous opportunities to meet and build relationships with colleagues from different countries and cultures, working in multiple languages and fields. It promotes the sharing of tips and insights based on our experiences. Thus, it helped me build the camaraderie I lost when I left the corporate world.

In addition, the conference provided me with the opportunity to build work partnerships with colleagues from different geographical areas that I normally would not have met through my local professional group and, therefore, supported the expansion of my business.

I do not look at other interpreters or translators as my competition. Even in the same language, we often have different areas of expertise. Thus, we are not all competing for the same jobs. Even for those of us working in the same language and the same field, we can find partnerships that allow us to cooperate on larger projects.

I personally paid for last year's conference with referral work I received from people I met at the conference. This year, I already recovered the registration fee in a similar manner.

In addition, it is just fun, like attending a very large party with nearly 2,000 other people that love doing the same thing you do, and are proud of their profession. As at my previous conference, I returned with my bag full of notes and business cards, as well as with many ideas on how to expand and refine my work. ●

Olimpia Hernandez is a freelance interpreter and translator between English and Spanish. She is a retired engineer, born in the Canary Islands (Spain) and has lived in Spain, Venezuela, and the US. She specializes in the engineering, automotive, manufacturing, energy, aviation, environment and business fields. For more information visit www.oh-translations.com.

Give yourself an edge

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Finally, we come to feedback. The translators who genuinely welcome it are my favorites. In any profession, one who disdains evaluation can be difficult to work with. My feedback may not agree with your interpretation. In that case, I am especially interested in learning what you know. With fellow

translators, we have the opportunity to learn from each other. If translators and project managers can discover the joy and mutual benefit in discussing the work product, we are all strengthened.

The translator I am especially fond of hiring is one who is reliable, thorough, inquisitive, and open to discussing his or her own work, its strengths and areas for improvement. This translator is so pleasant to work with that I call him or her often. I treat translators

the way I like to be treated: with fairness, respect, and healthy feedback. I happily pay promptly—as long as the invoice is filled out properly and actually submitted. ●

Melissa Ramer manages translations for a human capital management company, Valtera Corporation, and is a Spanish to English translator. She may be reached at mramer@valtera.com.

Business plans for the long haul

by Jacques D. Lacava

The setting for the Quarterly Business Plan Workshop on September 11, 2010, was a hospitality room in a Gold Coast residential building. It felt very comfortable, like being in a posh living room or a hotel hospitality suite.

The event was well attended and Olimpia Hernandez addressed a full room. The first hour was devoted to networking. There was a good mix of newcomers and familiar faces. It was a great opportunity to meet new people interestingly representing languages of lesser diffusion.

The business section of the meeting started with introductions, but within the strict guidelines of a 30-second “elevator speech,” a critical and powerful tool to promote your services in miscellaneous settings.

Olimpia shared with us her main personal goals which were at the core of her decision to launch her business. Although financial goals should obviously be taken into account, being a linguist should be rewarding to you and compatible with your social lifestyle.

It was a true bona fide workshop, which entailed some preparation work.

The preparation worksheets sent in advance offered a lot of food for thought about “big goals, business review and challenges.” It opened up with the provocative motto: “Your life should not be dictated by your business, but your needs should come first.” Thus the encompassing goals are of a social, spiritual, financial and relationship-oriented nature.

The second step involved reminding oneself of people and skills you are grateful for. The main questions we had to answer were: “What would you do over?” “What held you back?” And “What are you willing to do differently?” The third step was a full business review of successes but also realistic expectations.

A ninety day business plan is a first step towards a more complex 5-year business plan, a document that a banker would undoubtedly require you to present before extending any business loan.

We discussed several areas for goal setting: skill development, marketing strategy, and sales, among others.

In summary, it was an exciting exercise which forces you to take a step back, put your life in perspective and

reevaluate your priorities, a must when faced with challenging times.

This workshop constitutes an essential exercise which should be performed by any and all linguists who are serious about their endeavors and in business for the long haul. Hopefully this workshop will be offered on a regular basis to help CHICATA members develop their business skills.

A few CHICATA members later went for dinner to a restaurant right down the street, close to Rush Street... I did not get to attend, and “What happens on Rush Street...” ●

Jacques D. Lacava received his doctorate in American civilization from Paris VII University in 1994. He worked at Rotary International as an in-house senior language specialist for 12 years. He lives in Chicago, where he manages Le French Link, a conference interpretation, narration and cross-cultural language services firm, facilitating linguistic exchanges and transactions between the United States and French-speaking countries. Visit his website at www.lefrenchlink.com or contact him at lacavaj@lacava.net.

Enjoying the fun at the holiday party

CHICATA members and friends stir up holiday spirits while sharing their contributions for the international potluck dinner and showcasing their talents in the talent show.



An introduction to translation environment tools

Facilitated by Erika Kugler with
the participation of other CHICATA members

by Alex Carminati

This past Saturday, February 12, 2011, CHICATA successfully held another one of its exciting monthly programs. Attendance was rather good (around 20 members showed up) despite the inclement weather we all had to endure over the past few weeks.

Presenters Erika Kugler and Olimpia Hernandez volunteered to guide us through the intricacies of choosing and then using the most appropriate TEnTs (Translation Environment Tools) for our business. A few introductory slides were initially shown to provide a terminological and historical framework of the topic presented.

Erika skillfully explained the evolution of these translation tools, also explaining the meaning of widely used industry terms like “fuzzy matches” and “TMs” (Translation Memories). It was a really nice little refresher for our more seasoned translators and a real bonanza of useful new information for other fledgling translators.

An excellent real-life example on the use of SDL Trados was followed by a rich Q&A session, where pros and cons of owning this product were widely discussed. From what we could gather from the small sample of users present, SDL Trados appears to be a product which is mostly imposed by translation agencies and not really loved by many freelancers out there.

A few people blamed the excessive cost of the tool (be wary if your translation income is not very high), its high complexity or low user-friendliness, or even its lack of features. On the other hand many translators regarded it as a great time saver for large documents with more than 30% matches to previous translations (good for busy transla-

tors with large translations from the same client/industry).

A brief section was also dedicated by Erika to glossary management. The overall consensus was that glossaries were a nice feature to have but they were generally too time-consuming to maintain. Unless specific translations are terminology driven (plenty of time spent on translating specific highly technical terms), people seemed to be more inclined to use the “concordance” tool rather than the glossary feature. Apparently, using “concordance” is much faster than using the glossary and it helps maintaining a good translation flow.

Olimpia Hernandez then took over the presentation and kindly explained to all of us why she prefers using MemoQ. In her eyes MemoQ is less cluttered and has a much cleaner user interface, which may help less tech-savvy translators. She regularly translates very large PDF documents, especially manuals with plenty of pictures and this tool is of great help to her.

MemoQ keeps the pictures in the right place, therefore saving her several painful hours of after-translation editing. When working on documents one hundred or two hundred pages long, the benefit is truly significant.

Olimpia also suggested creating TMs (Translation Memories) for every document translated. Many translators prefer to maintain just one TM but, apparently, the file gets pretty large and performance may decline as a consequence. A trick she frequently uses is to create a new TM for every new translation and then link several other related

TMs before starting translating. This way she is able to draw terminology and phrases she has already translated from previous related projects.

The presenters ended with a very useful list of websites where translators can test different translation tools and maybe even get a nice discount on the product, not bad! The day ended with several members heading for a nice burrito dinner at the local Chipotle. It is always nice to spend some time together. Let’s get ready for the next program! ●

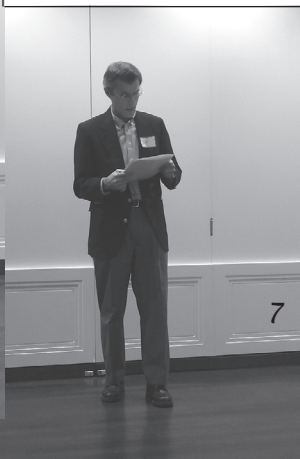
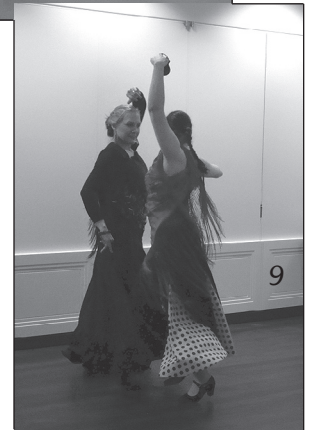
Alex is a native Italian and married to Brittany, who convinced him to move from England to enjoy the balmy Chicago weather. After obtaining his MBA in entrepreneurship at DePaul University, Alex decided to become a freelance translator, working between Italian and English, and to also help Brittany in launching her successful IT consulting firm (Carminati Consulting, Inc). Alex and Brittany are active angel investors and members of various charity organizations aimed at supporting local communities and talented young entrepreneurs. If you would like to contact Alex, please feel free to use the following details: Alex Carminati, Carminati Consulting, Inc. His email is acarminati@carminaticonsulting.com, and phone number is 312-371-3906.

Save the Date
For the
Annual
Conference
May 7
2011

Holiday Potluck Party December 4



1. Tasty dinner. 2. Cecelia Davila presents the donation to Hamed Ghezali of the Alliance Francaise. 3. Yian Yang plays the piano. 4&8. Traditional Mexican dances by the Xochipilli Dancers. 5. Alan Richter plays the dulcimer. 6. Susan Hoffman sings. 7. Jeff Schell recites original poetry.



9. Cecelia Davila and Vanesa Roimicher dance Flamenco. 10. Jim Stillman plays the accordion while Spring Stillman, Susan Hoffman and Hilder Garrison sing. Photos on pages four and six submitted by Sayuri Anderson.



CHICATA's 2010-2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 1, 2010:** CHICATA's twenty first annual conference.
- August 7, 2010:** Summer potluck social gathering.
- September 11, 2010:** Developing a business plan.
- October 9, 2010:** Speech recognition tools.
- November 6, 2010:** CHICATA Interpreters Institute.
- December 4, 2010:** International holiday pot-luck party.
- January 15, 2011:** Shoptalk.
- February 12, 2011:** Translation environment tools.
- March 5, 2011:** Translating a Christian self help book.
- May 7, 2011:** Annual conference.

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