

The MITA

Reader

A newsletter for the DFW-area Metroplex Interpreters and Translators Association



www.dfw-mita.com

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The MITA Reader is published for the benefit of MITA members and friends. Submissions are welcome and should be submitted to the editor, Carol Shaw, at shawtrans@gmail.com. Articles must be of interest to a broad range of translators and/or interpreters and may not be political in nature.

North Lake college has agreed to become MITA's new meeting place; North Lake is located at 5001 N. MacArthur Blvd. in Irving, Texas 75038

March 13, 2010– Preparation session for individuals registered for the ATA certification exam.

March 14, 2010– ATA certification exam hosted by MITA

Making it work — A freelancer's challenge

Part II

By Carol Shaw

Last month we covered three "top tips" for marketing as a freelancer: a business plan, appropriate preparation and customized contact. This month, we're going to take a look at two more: pricing and follow-up.

d) Pricing

As mentioned before, money is always a sticky subject and telling someone else what to charge is always a bad idea. We must also avoid any appearance of price fixing (setting rates industry-wide.) On the other hand, pricing is not just about rates. There is some science involved that is generally more reliable than suggesting a price and crossing our fingers that the client will agree.

Translators and interpreters, teachers, consultants and trainers are all service providers. Service pricing is based on several factors:

First, *what we put into it*, including:

- preparation time (travel, research, meetings)
- costs (taxes, paper, phone, fax, insurance, dictionaries, etc.)
- administration time (invoicing, record-keeping, training)

As you can see, some of these items are specific to a particular job, while others are more general in nature. But they still have to be taken into account. For further guidance in this area, you might check out Small Business Notes' (www.smallbusinessnotes.com) marketing pages on pricing, both cost- and value-based.

Some other items to take into account are:

- ★ Will you charge mileage and/or parking?
- ★ When using memory software, will you provide exact- or fuzzy-match discounts?
- ★ For interpreters, will you offer half-day or full-day discounted rates?
- ★ For translators, will you offer hourly or per-word editing rates?

One comment about minimum charges: understand that minimums are a mutual commitment. Let's say that Charlie is hired for a job with a 2-hour minimum. That means the client is obligated to pay Charlie for two hours, even if the work is finished in 15 minutes. However, if the work is finished early and the client asks him to hang around for the remainder of the two hours, "just in case something comes up," Charlie is not free to leave until the time is up. Thankfully, most clients are not like Charlie's.

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Second, **industry standards**:

- for your geographic area
- for your field of expertise
- for your languages

Industry "standards" will vary widely, but there are surveys that can help (www.atanet.org/docs/compensation_survey_2007.pdf, www.bls.gov/oco/ocos175.htm#earnings, careerplanning.about.com/od/occupations/p/interp_translat.htm, for starters). You can also ask your peers, keeping in mind that some may not feel comfortable sharing that information.

Third, **the profit**:

I *could* charge \$0.01/word for my services, with no minimum billing. That would guarantee me constant work. It would also pretty much guarantee that I never made a profit. And the profit is my net pay - what I get to put in my pocket to live on.

You need to take your profit into account when accepting jobs and considering discounts. Driving 20 minutes to a 4-hour interpreting job is more profitable than driving 40 minutes to a 2-hour job. A 5,000-word translation in a field you are knowledgeable about is more profitable than a 5,000-word project in which you will need to invest 4 or 5 hours of research.

Once you have calculated your time and costs, studied the industry standards, and determined the amount of profit you need, you can set up your basic pricing structure. However, being somewhat challenged in the area of accounting (my checkbook celebrates when I manage to balance it), I would not presume to tell you what that should be!

One more point I'd like to address about pricing: should you discount? Some people say "never". Others have standard discounts. Occasional discounts can generate significant goodwill with a client. If you aren't comfortable with discounts, consider including free services from time to time (for example, an hour of free changes needed to update a website project.) Make sure you know how you will benefit from the discount or freebie: client goodwill, prompt payment, consistent assignments, etc. Only you can decide what (and whether) to discount, but you need to consider the matter long before a client asks for one.

Let's move on to the final tip:

e) follow-through

Service businesses stay alive by forming relationships. Relationships take commitment. Commitment means following through on your services. Unfortunately, it becomes very easy to finish one job, rush to the next, and forget about the client we just served.

Relationships can only be built on patience and realistic expectations: it takes *from two to five years* to build a solid client base. That's a lot of follow-through.

Of course, we don't want to take this to the creepy-stalker level or lose the professional tone of our relationships. However, a simple note of appreciation on your invoices, a call to make sure everything was received, or even just a smile of recognition in your voice when you answer the phone can make the difference between the client seeing you as "a provider" or as "our provider".

And that level of connection is the ultimate goal of marketing.



February 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	Washington's birthday 15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Events.

March 13: MITA Q&A session in preparation of ATA certification exam

March 14: ATA certification exam hosted by MITA

March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	ATA Spanish Division 4	Language 5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	MITA Prep session 13
ATA certifi- cation exam 14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

MITA 2009 Christmas Party

On December 12, 2009, MITAns gathered at the Wilson Carriage House in Dallas to celebrate together. Norma Pace and Carlos Escorcia served as MCs. MITA supplied the meats and drinks, while partygoers brought a dish from their native country to share.



Clockwise:

Marilyn Retta, Lisa Smith, Lyda Baro, Roberto Baro, Hernan Gonzalez, Yovana Zenobya, Rebeccah Fleming, Inna Oslon, Tereza Braga, Anna Shnayder

Clockwise:

Karen Sharp, Bill Myers, Anthony Pace (standing), Angye Strittmatter, Leonard "Buddy" Strittmatter, Jorge Gonzalez, Sharron Pearson, Lennard Pearson, Tiina Fallini, Carol Shaw, Jody Quillian



Christmas
2009
Drawing
Winners!



Front Row: Elena Konkina, Jody Quillian, Anna Shnayder, Angye Strittmatter
Back Row: Lisa Smith, Norma Pace, Roberto Baro, Karen Sharp, Bruce Fallini

Too good to be true?

"Greetings!

My name is Joe Raes. I will be making a trip abroad to attend a conference in the month of January,2010 during which time I will make some paper presentations. 30% of attendees are Spanish hence it is imperative to have copies of my presentations in Spanish Language.Your contact was given to me a friend I met at a conference in China few months ago..."

Sound good? Be careful! This email, received by the ever-alert Norma Pace, is just one of the many scams targeting translators and interpreters that have surfaced over the past few years.

Generally, the scam works by sending the translator (or interpreter) an advance payment against an overseas bank . Immediately afterward, the "client" requests a refund on the payment due to "cancelled plans". The scammer asks the scammer to send the refund by wire transfer or some other immediate means.

Unfortunately, International checks take a while to clear. By the time the translator or interpreter's bank finds that the check was a fraud, the scammer has taken off with the professional's "refund".

For more information on such scams, check out:

<http://www.translatorscafe.com/cafe/MegaBBS/thread-view.asp?threadid=4250>

or

<http://translationtimes.blogspot.com/2009/07/its-scam-update-accused-speaks.html>

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you receive a request for services from an unknown person, do your research!



The last word:

Interesting little website to check out

<http://www.wordfrequency.info/>