

Working with Direct Clients

September 20, 2012

an ATA Webinar with
Chris Durban & Corinne McKay



ata

American Translators Association

**Who is on this call
and why have you paid money
to be here?**

Poll 1: Who is on this call?

Poll 2: Are you currently working with direct clients?

Before seeking direct clients...

- Get some experience under your belt— translating, revising and working with peers.
- Invest in specialization—and be/get passionate about your subject(s).
- Speak your clients' language fluently (and write it well, too).
- Be prepared to invest some time & budget; this is a long-term project.
- If you are not prepared to sign your work, maybe you're not ready for this (= maybe working through an intermediary is the best option for you).

Where do direct clients hang out?

- Lots of places. But remember: you want **good** potential clients—clients with real budgets. If there's no money, move on.
- If you live and work far from civilization/potential client watering holes, you may have to travel. That's life. Identify key industry events and attend. Face time is good.
- Good clients are excited about what they do. To work with them, you should be excited, too.



**PTERIS
CRETICA
MAYII**

*Fougère aux frondes persistante d'une vert lustré,
traversée et portée par un pétiole brillant bien teinté
blanc et avec extrémités terminent en divisions
corymbiformes. Rusticité -15 C
H 60cm. L. 60cm. Mi-ombre. Persistant.*

Allyrium Ghost
Persistant H 80cm L 50cm

Do your homework

- The reading and research you do to specialize will identify likely candidates—businesses or entities that need you and your language combination. Deals getting done. Deals shaping up.
- Get a clear idea of company structures and who does what. Ideally you will know people's names (and job titles) before meeting them.

Get out of the house

- Go to client watering holes/conferences/events. Dress appropriately. Have an elevator speech & real business cards.
- Listen carefully to how potential clients talk.
- Don't pitch right away; mingle with your prey to establish your expertise, brand & personality. (Latter should be friendly & upbeat if possible; if you are shy, aim for thoughtful and thorough.)
- Practice makes perfect.

Get off on the right foot

- Say something nice (to organizers/speakers/other attendees).
- Don't wear out your welcome; show proper respect for their time (and yours).
- Don't get pushy (arrogance, like desperation, is a huge turn-off) but don't hide behind a potted palm either.
- Never ever complain about translators not gittin' no respect.

Don't get twitchy about...

- Money. This sends out entirely the wrong message. The hard-eyed, no-nonsense habits that have served you well with some translation intermediaries may come across as too adversarial (or insecure) with passionate direct clients.
- Being small. Small is beautiful (as long as it is skilled and specialized).

[A word about signing]

See paragraph in red below. This is one of six bullet points in a one-page summary of “how we work” that my new and prospective clients receive.

“Note that if translations are poured into new layouts or re-entered in any way, we check/revise proofs and sign off before printing, failing which a 150% surcharge is due (since the translator’s name appears in the credits for most of our texts).”

- *... nous prévenir suffisamment à l'avance si ... nous confier. Nous vous ferons parvenir un devis détaillé dès réception de votre texte (chris.durban@gmail.com)*
- *En cas de photocomposition ou de ressaisie, nous effectuons obligatoirement une relecture des épreuves avant tirage, faute de quoi nous appliquons une surcharge de 150 % (les noms des traducteurs figurant dans l'ours pour la plupart de nos textes).*
- *Tarifs : Nous préférons vous fournir un devis par document, notre tarification dépend de la complexité d'un texte donné. Vous pouvez néanmoins ... pour 2012 est de 0,45 euro le :*

Read what your target group is reading

- At least one daily business newspaper
- Specialized press in the fields you are targeting
- Books of all sorts (often these will be reviewed in business newspapers & specialized press)

Read what your peers are reading

- Thoughtful bloggers in the language industry, starting with thoughtsontranslation.com*
- Sales & business gurus**
- Books on building your translation business***

* NB: for the rationale behind signing your work, see interview at: <http://www.catherinetranslates.com/to-sign-or-not-to-sign-chris-durban-strikes-again/>)

** E.g., Seth Godin's insightful posts at <http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>; Walt Kania's excellent advice at www.thefreelancery.com, etc.

*** www.lulu.com

- "The Prosperous Translator" (ed. Chris Durban)
- "How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator" (C. McKay)
- "The Entrepreneurial Linguist" (D. & J. Jenner)

+ forthcoming: "Found in Translation" (J. Zetsche & Nataly Kelly, Penguin)

Still hungry?

- Chris and Corinne are presenting at the upcoming ATA Annual Conference in San Diego, California.
- Chris is speaking for SENSE in Utrecht on Sept. 22; at BDÜ's Interpreting the Future in Berlin, Sept. 28-30; and at TM-Europe 2012 in Warsaw, October 4-5.
- Both Chris and Corinne write regular blogs/columns and are always interested in readers' comments and questions.

chris.durban@gmail.com

corinne@translatewrite.com

Thanks for listening. Questions?

chris.durban@gmail.com

corinne@translatewrite.com