

THE LITTLE BOOK OF MARKETING FOR TRANSLATORS

*Branding, offline and online marketing
strategies to boost your business*



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First Published: March 2013

ISBN: 978-1482760422

“The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself.” Peter F. Drucker

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CHAPTER 1: Marketing planning and strategy

What is marketing?

People talk about marketing all the time, but what do they actually mean by it? Marketing, in essence, refers to all the different strategies that a business or an individual can use to attract clients. Marketing differs from sales in that it generates interest in your business among potential clients; once your marketing gets their attention and they decide to buy from you, then you've got a sale. If you are successful in attracting potential buyers to your business but no one ever actually buys anything, then you're either offering an inferior product or attracting the wrong kind of prospects.

You'll notice that I defined marketing as different *strategies* - plural! The concept of using multiple strategies can be likened to having a large number of doors available to you; even if one closes, there will still be many others that may open. Thus, it's very important to devise a number of strategies in different areas when tackling marketing for your translation business.

The four types of marketing

Let's start by taking a look at the four different types of marketing at your disposal. The first three approaches should be avoided, while the last one is your best bet.

1) The scattergun approach

The scattergun approach is by nature very unstructured. Using this approach means that you are getting your brand out there but you have no clear marketing plan. For example, you may hear a PR expert talk about publicity, so you focus on getting your business talked about; someone tells you social media is important, so you create a dozen profiles and publish random posts everywhere with no clear objective; you spot a competitor's ad on Facebook, so you take one out too - after all, it must be working if the competition is doing it!

This approach is sure to suck up your precious time - your greatest asset - while getting you nowhere. If you lack direction and let others influence your marketing behaviour, you will fail to achieve your goal of attracting potential clients while you invest a lot of time for little return.

2) The attention-seeking approach

This "look at me" approach may involve taking out expensive, large-scale ads in magazines, plastering your name all over billboards, placing radio ads, and other attempt to get noticed. This approach may work for larger companies, but it is usually unsustainable for small businesses in the long term, and it is certainly not within the budget of most one-man or one-woman freelance translation businesses.

3) The idle approach

This approach is based entirely on one thing: hope. You set up your website, you sign up with a couple of agencies, you create a number of profiles on social media sites, and then you do... nothing! Simply waiting and hoping that people will find you and run down your door won't achieve anything. You may get lucky and be contacted by a potential client or two, but luck is not a marketing strategy. Although setting up sites and profiles is a good start, you will need to do much more, as explained in the final approach below.

4) The relationship approach

The type of marketing on which small business owners should focus their energy is relationship-based marketing. Small businesses need to be built on strong foundations; to achieve this, it is important for potential clients to be educated about what you have to offer. Developing strong relationships and engaging with existing and potential clients is something all business owners need to do in order to succeed. Thanks to social media and all our modern means of communication, it is easier than ever to interact with your clients and engage in dialogue.

Of the four approaches discussed above, the relationship approach is the only one likely to get long-term results. This approach allows clients to get to know your personality and your business and to start to trust you and your products or services. One could also call this approach educational marketing, as it helps you to convey to potential clients what you are all about.

Your vision

Every business needs to know where it wants to go and why it wants to do what it's doing. Your vision is therefore an important marketing tool. Note, however, that your personal vision is different from your business vision.

Your personal vision may be something like ‘I work because I want to take my kids to Disneyland’. That's great, but your clients don't need to know that. A personal vision is therefore an internal vision that is not marketable; in other words, it is not suitable to mention on your marketing collateral that goes out to clients.

Your business vision, on the other hand, is an external vision that should be presented clearly to clients and prospects. When considering similar service providers, clients tend to choose one over the other based on their values and philosophy - in other words, based on their business vision. Unlike the personal vision that focuses on yourself, your business vision needs to focus on the greater good. It has to motivate people to feel a sense of belonging so they will want to be part of your business.

A business vision needs a purpose; it needs to state clearly the goal of the business. Amazon.com offers a good example of a clear business vision: "Our vision is to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online". In this vision statement, the benefits for the customer are immediately obvious; customers will want to be part of a site that promises them everything they could possibly want to find online.

Once you have defined your vision, you will need to back it up with plans. Without planning, even the best vision is nothing but empty words. There are a number of steps you can take towards achieving the goals set out in your vision. These will be presented in detail in the following chapter.



CHAPTER 2: Know your clients

The time of generalists has long since ended; today, successful solopreneurs are typically specialists who occupy a very specific niche. As a freelance translation business owner, you need to know who your ideal clients are and what sets you apart from all the other translation service providers out there. The last thing you want to do is attract the wrong clients and spend all your time on projects that you don't enjoy or that aren't financially profitable. This unfortunate situation can be prevented with niche marketing.

Research and prepare

Start the research process by researching your market and identifying what your target audience wants and what benefits you can offer them. It is important to distinguish between client wants and client needs. A client need, for our purpose, is a product or service the client *must* purchase (e.g. due to legal requirements). For example, a client need would be the necessity for a company to hire a tax adviser to work on its tax returns, while the client want would determine which tax specialist the company will choose. This decision is influenced to a large extent by the business vision and perceived benefits to the company of each tax adviser.

As another example, consider eye tests, which usually all follow the same principles. If one optician advertises 'free eye tests' (which include a full check-up and a glaucoma exam), while his competitor next door offers 'comprehensive eye MOT including free glaucoma test and consultation', which one would you choose? Both offer the same service, but one appears to offer more benefits for the customer by stating explicitly what the other optician merely implies, thus appealing to the customer's 'wants'. After all, who doesn't want to get the most value for their money?

Three steps for attracting the perfect client

1) Define your niche

To define your niche, begin by deciding exactly whom you want to work with, being as specific as possible. If you specialise in advertising and live in Sydney, for instance, you may want to define your target clients as small advertising agencies with up to 10 employees in the Sydney metropolitan area. If you work in finance and live in Los Angeles, your target clients might be sole trading accountants in Southern California. The more clearly you define your niche, the better and more targeted your marketing efforts will be. You will also be able to establish yourself as an expert in that particular niche, thus boosting your credibility among your target clients.

You can choose your niche based on either a certain demographic (e.g. female lawyers in London) or a specific problem to solve (e.g. editing English copy produced by non-native executives in SMEs who are struggling to get their message across to a native target audience). Whenever someone you've marketed to comes across a poorly written non-native English text, they'll remember you as the go-to 'non-native English editor' and will be likely to recommend you.

The worst mistake freelance translators can make is to market to everyone. None of us are skilled in all subjects and genres, so trying to market to everyone will waste your valuable time and resources. A website proclaiming "Professional French to English Translations - fast and reliable" is unlikely to appeal to anyone, because it is unclear specifically whom is being addressed. Furthermore, every professional service provider offers a 'fast and reliable' service, so this is a redundant rather than a unique selling point. A much more targeted claim addressing your ideal client might be "Creative French/English PR and advertising translations for small to medium-sized PR agencies in France - 10 years in business".

2) Create your ideal client

A very useful exercise for marketing purposes is to create an imaginary perfect client. Give the client a name, and imagine how the client would perceive all your marketing materials as if they were addressed specifically to him or her. This imaginary client can be as specific as you wish (i.e. you can define their age, location, gender, occupation, needs, etc.).

A good way to approach this process is to research and survey your ideal clients. SurveyMonkey.com is a great free tool that lets you create surveys in just a few simple steps. By surveying your existing (ideal) clients and prospects you've contacted, you can identify their desires, problems, and potential solutions for those problems. Customer surveys are a simple tool that can reveal a wealth of information about your ideal clients. You can also use this tool to find out what your target audience disliked about their previous relationships with other language service providers. This will give you valuable information on potential issues and what you can offer to avoid or resolve them.

3) Targeted marketing

Once you've identified your ideal client, you've got a solid foundation on which to build your marketing efforts. However, simply defining who you want to work with isn't going to get you any business; until you reach out and market your services to those clients, they still won't know you exist.

At this stage, because you've narrowed down your target audience, all of your marketing will be highly targeted. We'll look at some offline and online marketing strategies in detail in chapters 4 and 5.



CHAPTER 3: Branding and unique selling propositions

What is branding?

Branding needs to be taken very seriously, even - in fact, especially - by solopreneurs. When branding is successful, clients will pay for the perceived value rather than the actual value of your service. If you brand yourself attractively, clients will be prepared to pay a higher price for your service because they will perceive it as adding value to their own business, or better serve their personal needs if they are individuals.

Branding has two components:

1) Visual

The visual elements of your brand can include images you use, logos, fonts, icons and colours.

2) Psychological

The psychological component refers to what customers perceive when they are in touch with your brand, as well as the brand experience you offer them.

It is important for your branding to be consistent. If your business cards have purple flowers on a yellow background but your website is red with blue text and a completely different design, potential clients are sure to wonder if you will tackle their project with the same inconsistent, haphazard approach. Brand consistency across all your collateral is an absolute must.

The aim of branding is to create familiarity. This in turn will create trust, which eventually converts to sales. Ultimately, business transactions are still made by humans, and people only buy from those they trust.

Four steps to branding success

Bear in mind the following four principles of successful branding:

1) Brand identity

This is your brand personality. How do you want to be perceived by clients, potential clients and peers? It's important to realise that you it's ok to structure your brand around your personality. As a freelancer, there's no need for you to try to become someone else. Staying true to yourself and being who you are will help to make your brand more credible.

2) Brand consistency

As already mentioned, brand consistency is essential. To avoid confusing and driving away potential clients, ensure that all elements of your brand - website, brochures, business cards, Facebook page, personal appearance, the way you present yourself, and so on - are homogenous and consistent.

3) Brand recognition

To establish brand recognition, you need to get your brand seen and be everywhere your target audience is. Once you've identified and researched your ideal client, start getting your name out there using a targeted approach. Your target audience will think you are everywhere, which will boost your credibility.

4) Brand engagement

Unlike just a few years ago, marketing today is all about brand engagement. Any small business owner should be active in social media, participate in forum discussions, keep a blog or video blog (or at least comment on other blogs) and so forth. Maintaining an online presence is good for SEO purposes and will drive traffic to your website. It is also crucial to engage with your followers or 'fans' to make them feel like they are part of your business and to enhance their brand experience.



Your USP

The translation market is certainly very crowded. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of translators in many different language pairs and specialisations, so it is very important for you to stand out from the crowd. You need to offer something that sets you apart from your direct competitors and gets you noticed. This 'something' is referred to as your unique selling proposition (USP).

When determining your USP, don't try to compete on factors you cannot influence, such as location or, to some extent, price. You can't change where other translators are located or what they choose to charge. Instead, define your very own point of difference. What makes your business unique?

Here are some examples as food for thought:

- *Money-back guarantee:* Offer a \$5 refund for every spelling mistake the client finds in your work.
- *Define and work in a very specific niche:* Offer translations only in the field of motorsports from English to French and own that niche. Become *the* go-to translator for this type of text.
- *Build your business around your personality:* Are you particularly meticulous, reliable or cheerful? Inject your unique personal traits into your brand. After all, there's no one like you!
- *Offer a better service:* Clearly state what extras are included in your service; for example, if every text is proofread by a second translator, say so. You may be offering the same as your competitors, but they may not explicitly itemise everything their service includes. If you state everything that's included in the price, even if it's obvious, the client will perceive greater value and choose you. (Remember the free glaucoma test mentioned in chapter 2?)

CHAPTER 4: Offline marketing

The ideal approach is to combine selected online and offline marketing activities. Let's look at some strategies you can apply in both areas, starting with offline marketing.

Networking

Networking is often underestimated, but it's actually one of the most effective marketing tools. You can network both within and outside the translation industry to build strong relationships with a variety of people and to get referrals that will generate business through your professional network. Good networking strategies include joining and attending meetings with local business associations, joining and getting involved in your national translators' association, joining special interest groups in your ideal client's industry, and attending fundraisers and other charity or political events to get your name out there and make connections. And of course you should never leave home without your business cards - you never know where you'll meet your next perfect client!

For more tips on networking for freelance translation professionals, take a look at *The Little Book of Networking for Translators* in this series.

Strategic alliances

Another interesting strategy is forming strategic alliances, which could also be called setting up joint ventures. To follow this strategy, start by identifying successful small businesses who share your target market but are not in competition with you.

Be as creative as you wish and try to think outside the box. For example, if you are targeting fellow freelancers, you could make a deal with a graphic designer whose clients are freelance professionals. He could refer his clients to you for a personal consultation on multilingual communication for small businesses, and in return you could offer his clients a 10% discount on any translation orders placed. This will make him look like the "good guy" in his clients' eyes because he's getting them a free consultation, and it will drive traffic and potentially generate new business for you at the same time.

Direct mail

Although we live in the digital age, direct mail should not be disregarded. Perhaps you've noticed that your email inbox is getting fuller each day, while your mailbox outside is gathering dust. Fewer and fewer people send physical mail these days, so this is a real opportunity to get yourself noticed with a classy, appealing letter or postcard sent to a very targeted audience (e.g. tax accountants in London). Even Google, the world's biggest online company, still sends out AdWords vouchers in the post!

It is vitally important for your direct mail campaign to be very targeted. There's no point in sending out mass mailings to people who will never buy from you. Check out companies such as ImpactLists for options to purchase highly targeted business or consumer lists to ensure that you contact only your ideal clients and avoid wasting any resources.

When choosing the design for your direct mail campaign, go for a colourful branded envelope or a striking design that will make your letter stand out and get opened. You can also choose to send so-called 'lumpy mail', enclosing a small gift for the recipient. If you use this approach, try to make the gift relevant to your services so that it ties in with your overall marketing message.

A week after the direct mail campaign, start calling the recipients to follow up on your letter. If you've sent lumpy mail, the small gift is a great conversation starter. This follow-up phone call gives you the opportunity to evaluate whether the recipient is or someday will be interested in your service. If so, start building that all-important relationship!

CHAPTER 5: Online marketing

In this day and age, online marketing is indispensable, and businesses' websites have become their shop fronts. As a freelance translation professional, you must have your own business website to showcase your services and yourself. Online marketing can be seen as a three-step process:

1) From traffic to leads

As discussed earlier, getting lots of traffic to your website alone isn't enough to get you business; the traffic must be converted to leads. By the same token, you can have the best website in the universe, but if nobody finds it, it's pretty useless. So the first step is to drive relevant traffic to your website. This can be done for free with social media marketing strategies, blogs, joint ventures, and similar methods, or you can use paid services such as SEO optimisation or paid ads (e.g. Facebook ads, Google AdWords, etc.). Once a user sees your ad or reads about you in social media and chooses to visit your website to learn more about your services, you've got a lead.

2) From leads to conversions

It's crucial to capture your visitors' attention as soon as they land on your website. If they don't like what they see or are not sure what you are all

about and what services you offer, they are likely to click away within just a few seconds. They come to your website looking for the service you offer, but if the website isn't appealing or attention-grabbing enough, they will turn away and look elsewhere. So how can you turn leads into conversions?

There are a number of options to achieve this:

- Freebies (e.g. a free report or e-book for visitors to download)
- Special offers to click on
- Option to sign up for your newsletter
- Opt-in form to receive marketing emails from you
- Anything else that will engage your audience

3) Relationship building

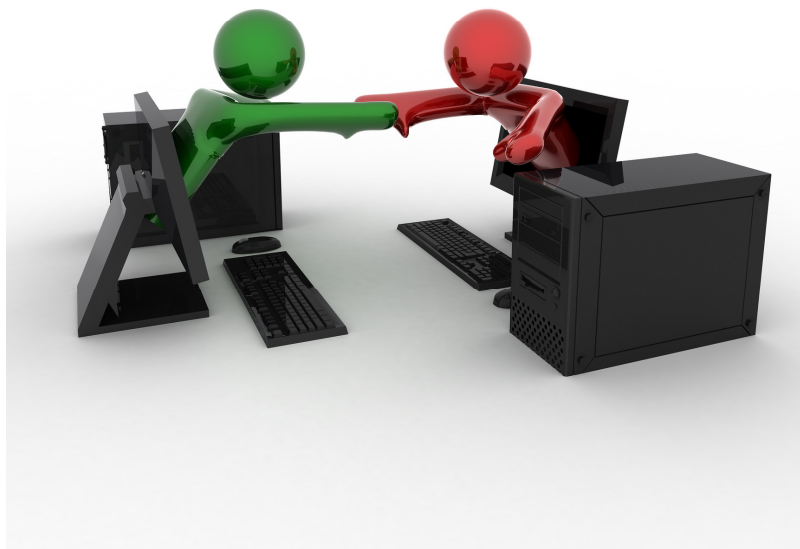
Once a visitor has chosen to opt in or engage with you, you have got a relationship with this prospective client. The next important step is to make them 'fall in love' with you and stay in contact. This is important whether or not they have already bought from you. Send them periodic emails or an occasional postcard to remind them you're there if they need your services.

Whenever you make contact by email or direct mail, make sure you provide value. If your prospects and clients feel you are simply pestering them to make a sale, they may unsubscribe or stop engaging. For example, you could send them a free e-book or an interesting article that may be relevant to them or recommend a book you've read. The key is to maintain the relationship over the long term.



CHAPTER 6: Get started!

Now that you've reached the end of *The Little Book of Marketing for Translators*, I hope you are excited about creating a unique and irresistible brand that will attract your ideal clients. Remember that marketing is an ongoing effort that must not be neglected, even in busy periods. If you have any questions or other feedback, please email me at info@nyacomcommunications.com. Good luck with your marketing efforts!



Links:

Internet Marketing for Translators:

<https://www.facebook.com/SocialMedia4Translators>

A Facebook page for language professionals that is dedicated to Internet marketing for business.

Marketing for Freelance Translators: <http://linkd.in/15K9d1d>

A LinkedIn group dedicated to all things marketing for freelance translators.

Flying Solo: <http://www.flyingsolo.com.au/>

An Australian micro business community with a wealth of information about marketing for small businesses.

Vision Statements: <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples/best-examples-of-a-vision-statement.html>

Examples of short and long business vision statements.

SurveyMonkey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

A free online survey tool.

ImpactLists: <http://www.impactlists.com.au/>

A company selling highly targeted lists with business and consumer contact details.

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