
Writing Wrongs:
Losing it in the translation

Part 3 –
Making money
in the writing
trades

Short title:
Losing It: Introduction

by
David Grossman

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Making money

**This book
is**

A resource for tips, ideas, methods, and knowledge about making money in the writing trades, with an emphasis on translation.

**These
selected
topics**

reflect a personal and Jewish approach.

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Translation and the business world

Introduction

Mieux vaut tard que jamais [French]
Better late than never
(Does *not* apply to translation)

This section deals with business issues.

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Keyword: [Business](#)

David  Grossman

About

This website has four specific, but related sections, covering the areas of business skills¹, survival skills², marketing skills³, and setting rates⁴.

Each of these sections has a different purpose and slant.

The *business* and *surviving* sections represent two sides of the same coin.

Business: The business section discusses technical issues that are faced by translators:

¹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Business

² Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving

³ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Marketing

⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Rates

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- Taxation
- Adjusting to the business world
- Freelance work and the business world
- Other objective issues

Surviving: Dealing with issues that could prevent a good translator from being successful.

- Issues that interfere with the business aspect of the job
- Management and business style
- Other subjective or personal issues

The other two sections deal with two additional marketing issues:

Marketing: The larger issues. Dealing with issues that help a translator attract clients.

- Publicity
- Letting others know that you are available
- Other specific issues

Rates:⁵ Charging for translation work.

- How much to charge
- Dealing with published rate sheets
- Comparisons to other translators
- Adjusting your rates to the local and the world market

⁵ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Rates

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This page was in the beginning of the Marketing section. Move all of the following keywords accordingly

Keywords: [business](#), [marketing](#), [rates](#), [surviving](#), [taxation](#), [translation](#)
[Grossman Translation/Marketing About](#)


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Business

About

This **Business** section discusses *objective* issues related to running a translation business.

It is part of a series of sections that summarize and contrast⁶ a number of related issues.

You may be reading this page because you are new to translating. People with experience translating often have regular jobs. If all goes well, those jobs continue to flow to those people by themselves.

Serious translators often recall difficult initial periods, during which they had to look for jobs, but at a certain point new jobs come to the translator by recommendation.

However, you should not have to spend an inordinate amount of time searching for your next job after you've been in the field for a reasonable amount of time. At a certain point you should be able to concentrate on translation itself, rather than searching for new clients.

If you do spend too much time looking for jobs, then perhaps you should consider the possibility of carrying out an introspection:

- Why aren't you getting more repeat jobs?

⁶ Writing Wrongs | Losing It | Part 3 - Marketing
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- What happens to your clients after you work with them?
- Do they then go on other translators? If so, why?
- Do you live in a region that has too much competition for your type of translating?
 - In other words, is your local market saturated?
 - If so, should you try to expand your work in a larger region?
- Should you be more flexible⁷ in the type of translating that you do?

If you feel that translation is indeed your field, but you are not landing enough jobs, then perhaps you have been suffering a great deal of bad luck. It may be time to consider changes and improvements in your publicity and advertising.

If the publicity and the advertising do not help, then it may be time to look into a different profession. You can still continue translating on an occasional or part time basis.

This does not necessarily imply that you are not a good translator.

However, it does mean that you should not devote your lifetime to an impossible effort.

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Keywords: [About](#), [Fussy](#)

⁷ Losing It | Surviving | Fussy



Contracts

"A verbal contract
isn't worth the paper
it's written on."
- Samuel Goldwyn,
Movie mogul

Translators should prepare a contract or letter of understanding, so that both sides will be aware of their obligations.

A formal contract would involve a lawyer.

A letter of understanding can include the following information:

- Your name, as translator
- The client's name. The client is the person and the organization that will pay for the job
- Contact information
- Details of the job
- The amount to be paid
- The basis for payment, whether per word, per hour, per page or per printing sheet
- Time of payment
- Conditions of payment
 - One lump sum
 - Installments (with information about when each installment is due)
- Penalties for late payment or for non-payment
- Who will arbitrate any disagreements

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- Signatures of both sides

Submit identical copies to both sides

Why do you need a contract?

Both of you agreed on the terms and conditions in advance. However, parts of your agreement may be forgotten as time passes. A written contract, in which both sides have a copy, will eliminate this problem.

Granted, a legal contract, prepared and signed by a lawyer, may be intimidating for both sides. However, it would be more binding in a court or in a *bet din*, if the need arises.

Many people feel that a letter of understanding is sufficient. The fact that the letter *might* be binding in court should be enough for both sides to respect it.

It's hard

It may be difficult to ask the client for a contract. You may feel that it shows a lack of trust. You may be concerned that these feelings will cause ill will - or even cause you to lose the job.

There is some justification to these feelings. You will have to weigh your options.

However, you should certainly consider a written document for a new and unfamiliar client.

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Coverage

Many offices require workers to be at their desks from nine to five. Workers are allowed specific vacation days, sick leave, and holiday leave.

This is not the case with most translation jobs. Clients often expect us to be available whenever something needs to be translated. How can you deal with this situation?

Actually, this is a difficult proposition. You might want coverage for the time during which you are not available. This works well if you have a partner or a team, and if all of you translate in the same way.

In practice, however, this doesn't work either. Different people translate in different ways. The style is different, and your instructions may not be clear to the other translators. This makes it difficult to arrange for coverage.

A reality check

You might have to work until right before Shabbat or a holiday, after which you will be off for about 25 hours. Those religious holidays are not a problem, but you may have to work when you are sick or not feeling well. You would have

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been able to call in sick if you had been working in an office job, but your client may not give you that liberty.

After all, you cannot take off too many times⁸. Any absence from work can be a risk. It might mean that the client will find another translator who is willing to do the work when it is needed. Once the client finds another translator, it is unlikely that he will return to you. You may have lost a client forever.

Of course, some clients may be willing to wait. Their work may not be that urgent. If you are working on a large job, then you can work harder on other days, and take off when you want. On the other hand, a news service that depends on your urgent work may not allow you to postpone work while you are sick.

You can take vacations. If your client knows the dates that you will be unavailable in advance, then you might be able to head for the beach without difficulties. However, in some cases, you may have to work out the vacation dates together with some of your more important clients, so that the date will be convenient for both of you.

Outsourcing makes it easier

There is an upside to these issues. In some ways, work has actually become easier in our generation.

Those who are located in a different city or country can send material back and forth by electronic means, no matter where they are physically located. The client will always receive his

⁸ Writing Wrongs | Losing It | Book 3 - Surviving | Balancing
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work at his convenience. That increases the availability of work, and it makes it easier to receive and deliver the finished product.

Those who are sick or temporarily disabled can dictate⁹ a translation and have somebody transcribe¹⁰ it. The material will require editing from your bedside.

Don't overdo the number of rules about when you cannot translate. Each rule limits your clients, and they do want good service.

However, if you are flexible, and you discuss your sick time or vacations with your clients, then they, in turn, are likely to accommodate your needs.

This is part of the social¹¹ relationship that you develop with your client.

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Customer

The customer may be right more often than you think.

⁹ International Transcriptions | Recording

¹⁰ International Transcriptions | Transcription

¹¹ Writing Wrongs | Part 2 - Losing It | Social issues

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After all, you do want your clients to be happy. You want them to come back to you for their next translation, and you want them to recommend your services to others.

However, you do have to decide when to put your foot down. Customers may criticize your translations. They may request things that are not feasible. They may want you to include ideas are not worthy¹² of putting into print.

You, as a good translator, know what you're doing. You are prepared to give the customer a good translation. It is certainly difficult when a client presents problematic ideas from other people about the way the document should be translated.

Is the customer always right? No. Will you accept the customer's ideas? You might do so, in order to maintain good will.

This issue should be taken seriously, especially when your name appears on the document.

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Freelance

I knew
I was going

¹² Writing Wrongs | Losing it, Part 2 – Life as a translator | Offensive or objectionable material

to take
the wrong train
so I left early
- Yogi Berra

Tips for getting clients as a freelancer

You can succeed as a freelancer if you know how to beat your competition. Here are some things to keep in mind. Keep in mind that your competition may be reading this page as well.

- *Submit your work on time*¹³. Many bad translators do well because they submit their work on time. Many excellent translators are hungry because they have great excuses for submitting work after the due date.
- *Network* with your contacts. The more they hear about you, the more jobs you'll get.
- *Create protektzia*. Did you land a job? Ask your new contact for suggestions about others who can use your services – and then follow up on his leads.
- *Nuzzhe*. Make contacts, even while you are busy, so that the work will be available when you need it. Don't overdo the pestering or you will annoy these contacts.
- *Participate in the Hebrew Translating*¹⁴ *and Jewish Editing*¹⁵ *forums*. Jobs are sometimes posted on those groups. If you contribute to those groups, then other translators will get to know you.
- *Build yourself up*. Going to a wedding or a simcha? When strangers ask who you are, say that you are a translator, and discuss your work for a minute or two.

¹³ Writing Wrongs: Losing it | Part 2 – Life as a translator | Time

¹⁴ Jewish Unity Forums | Hebrew Translating forum

¹⁵ Jewish Unity Forums | Jewish Editing forum

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- *Flatter your contacts.* Send them a friendly knick-knack imprinted with your name and phone number after your job. The contact will be more likely to remember you, and your advertisement may land you another job.
- *Be friendly and accommodating.* If people like to work with you, then they will be more likely to work with you.
- *Don't badmouth.* Never say anything negative about a colleague.
- *What do they want?* Find out precisely what they have in mind, so that they will appreciate your work. Ask questions in the beginning, so that you won't make mistakes.
- *Pass it on.* Your colleague or friend will appreciate it, and one day he may return the favor.

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Part time

What is the difference between a second job¹⁶ and a secondary¹⁷ job?

¹⁶ Meaning: another equally important job

¹⁷ Meaning: a less important job

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If you work during the day in your regular job, then a second job is the extra work that you do in your spare time.

Translating is good way to supplement the salary from your main job.

A secondary job implies that you have two jobs, and one has greater importance or a higher priority than the other. If translation is your secondary job, then you will allocate the necessary time to your primary job during the main part of your day. You will not be flexible about allotting job to translation.

Of course, people with a primary job can also translate on the side. The primary job may determine the time of day during which you translate. You might select the best time¹⁸ of day for your primary activity or primary job, and carry out your secondary job – translating – at a time that is less convenient.

Thus, if parenting¹⁹ is your primary job, then you can give your children the time of day in which you feel refreshed and rested, and you can translate when they are sleeping.

In some cases, this offers you the opportunity to benefit from the best of both worlds.

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¹⁸ Writing Wrongs: Losing it | Part 2 - Life | Time | Control

¹⁹ *Jewish Parents Should Be Licensed*

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Private

Le mot juste [French]
The exact word
or
The precise expression

Private translators face advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

- You are likely to earn more per hour for your work
- You stand more of a chance to have your name appear on the work
- You will always have work if you know how to publicize your availability
- You may have greater job satisfaction when you do not work for a boss

Disadvantages

- You will have to find your next job by yourself
- Money, work, and time do not necessarily arrive automatically
- You will have to face less job security
- You will have to spend time on public relations. This may compensate for some of the potential loneliness²⁰ of translating

Which is best for you?

That's a personality²¹ issue.

²⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 2 - Social Issues

²¹ *Your Jewish Personality*

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Sample

Translators are sometimes asked to submit a sample of their work before they are hired.

One translator²² explained the situation as follows:

"I tell my students (graphic design) never to do work on spec. Never do a "logo contest."

"I use the following analogy: I tell them I cannot go to the supermarket and say I'm taking milk. I will try it at home. If I like it I'll come back, get more and pay for it. If I don't like it, trust me, I won't use it."

He made a good point.

So, how do you deal with clients who demand a sample?

You might show them your portfolio. You might ask them to pay for the sample.

And – if you're hungry enough – you might give them a sample, despite your misgivings.

²² Ashi Fachler, on the Hebrew Translating forum

However, don't *offer* to do it!

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Selective

You may be selective²³ about the translation jobs that you accept. You may decide to limit your translations to your specific field of expertise. You may opt to translate only from Hebrew to English or English to Hebrew. You may select only material that you find interesting. You can also select jobs that exclude material that you find to be offensive²⁴. There is no limit to the criteria that you can set before you will accept a translation job.

Of course, by being more selective, you may limit your job offers. In addition, if the client feels that you are desperate to receive a particular kind of work, then you will lessen your ability to bargain for a good rate of pay. Yes, translators who are flexible can charge more.

Price

²³ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Book 3 – Business | Fussy

²⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Book 2 – Life as a translator | Offensive translations

You may want to be select clients by how much they offer to pay, or how soon they will pay you.

In that case, you may be willing to translate anything, as long as you get your price.

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Keyword: [Fussy](#), [Money](#)

Supervisor

There are different kinds of supervisors. As a translator, you may wish that all of them would leave you alone in peace. You just want to do your work. However, you may have to face reality at some point.

A supervisor can fall into one of these categories:

- *Knows nothing* about language or translation. However, this supervisor wants to be involved in your work. Although you may have no choice but to involve him, you may be frustrated when you realize that he is not an expert. You have to be nice and to answer to him, but you feel that he has no justification for getting involved, since he doesn't understand the subject – and you do.
- *Thinks he knows*. This supervisor thinks he knows how to translate better than you. Nu, so why didn't he do the job?

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- *Wannabe*. He is not connected with your project in any possible way. Nonetheless, he gets involved in your work. There are several reasons:
 - Curiosity
 - To let you know that he is a supervisor
 - In order to get attention and respect

Do maintain a positive attitude, despite these interferences. They do not make your job easier or more efficient, but there's not much that can be done about the situation.

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Investments: Throw back

Translators can take various steps in order to develop or increase their tools of the trade.

- Some people take a deep breath and invest a significant amount of money on their new translation business before they begin their work. Their work area is adorned with the latest equipment:
 - Supplies
 - Materials
 - Computer equipment
 - Dictionaries, synonym finders, and specialized texts

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- Others choose to make money before making any investments
- Still others have ideas that include a combination of both concepts.

Which approach is best?

Perhaps the best policy is to begin with the basics. Buy only what you need, and then throw money back into your business as you earn it.

What are the basics? You will need the following:

- At least three good dictionaries
 - Hebrew-English
 - English-Hebrew
 - Monolingual (either Hebrew-Hebrew or English-English)
- A computer – not necessarily new
- A printer
- Business cards
- E-mail facilities
 - Access to the Web is not imperative
 - A broadband connection may be a luxury

What supplies are unnecessary at this stage?

- A place to work
 - You can get set up whenever you get a job
 - It's not convenient
 - Convenience can come later

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- Specialized dictionaries – you can often manage with the online offerings at the Jewish Glossaries²⁵ website.
- A fax machine (many establishments will let you fax out for a small fee)
- A good supply of hard copy reference materials
 - You can use a library now and buy the resources later:
 - Dictionaries
 - Spellers
 - Word finders
 - Synonym finders
 - Style manuals

You can decide how much to buy by throwing back a specified, predetermined amount or percentage of earnings into your business. Up to twenty percent of your after-tax earnings is a reasonable amount to spend, until you are satisfied with your facilities. At that point, you can simply add or replace resources as needed.

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²⁵ Jewish Glossaries

Surviving

Introduction

Getting jobs and surviving with those jobs.

- Learn to love your work²⁶
- I am²⁷

Keeping the translation job

- Excuses²⁸ presented by clients
- Positive outlook²⁹

Surviving with your translation jobs

- About surviving as a translator³⁰
- Customer Service³¹
- Communication³²
- Professionalism³³
- Relationship³⁴
- Managing the stress³⁵
- Balancing the stress³⁶

²⁶ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Loving

²⁷ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | I am a translator

²⁸ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Excuses

²⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Positive

³⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | About

³¹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Customer Service

³² Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Communication

³³ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Professionalism

³⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Relationship

³⁵ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Management

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- Don't be so fussy³⁷
- Multiple³⁸ translators in the same office

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About

This section relates to subjective issues about running a translation business. The Business³⁹ section relates to objective issues.

Some people question whether it is possible to survive as a translator. They ask whether a translator makes enough money to manage.

Surprisingly, the answer is not always limited to the quality of work that the translator can produce. Of course, an egregiously bad translator is not likely to survive without a great deal of marketing, and even then, it is probably not worth it. On the other hand, some mediocre translators do survive, while some better translators fail.

Indeed, the very fact that we need this section on survival should raise eyebrows. After all, not every profession

³⁶ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Balancing

³⁷ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Fussy

³⁸ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Multiple

³⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making money | Business

requires such a discussion, but the issue does arise with translating.

This section will help you survive the task of being a translator.

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Balancing David Grossman

A good translator can certainly do well in his profession. The rates are high enough to make a fine living compared to professions such as teaching.

However, there may be less work than is desirable during certain periods of time. Those times may be very convenient for you to provide your services - but your clients' schedule does not correspond with yours. During a different period of time you may have other pressures in life, such as family *simchas* or busy preparations for Pesach. During those times the phone does not stop ringing. You may not have the luxury of taking off when you would like to do so.

It can be frustrating and stressful when the demand for translating always seems to come at the wrong time.

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As a result, some people may have difficulties managing⁴⁰ the stress⁴¹. Although their translation work itself may not be stressful, the surrounding circumstances may cause them grief.

You don't mind the pressure. You do mind the timing.

This problem can be overcome in various ways.

Start by working together with others. Give them jobs when you are overwhelmed, and they will give you jobs when they are overwhelmed. You will always have work.

Of course this only applies to freelancers. Those who work on books, or those who receive a constant stream of materials from publishers or agents, do not have this issue. On the other hand, their rate per hour or per page is usually lower, to compensate for their relative security.

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: [Stress](#), [Time](#)



Communications

Part of your job as a translator includes regular communication with your clients.

⁴⁰ Yiddische Kop | Surviving | Managing

⁴¹ Yiddische Kop | Stress

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You don't have to give a daily progress report, and you don't have to be a nudnik, but you should stay in touch at reasonable intervals. It shows your clients that you care.

You might want to try some of the following excuses for calling the client:

- Mention something nice or pleasant about the client's material
- Tell your client how his target audience will appreciate his work
- Explain how the document is a contribution to the scientific community
- Show how it presents a new or fresh outlook on a problem

Present your comments in a sincere manner. Your client will be happy to hear these things, and will appreciate your input.

However, don't lavish undeserved praise on a mediocre document, just as you shouldn't offer too much criticism. Most people don't want to hear it.

If you don't have good things to say, then find another excuse to get in touch. You do have a good imagination, don't you?

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:



Customer service

Translators sometimes think that their job is to translate.

That is unquestionably a significant part of the job, but there are many other issues and aspects as well - including customer service.

Your own relationship with customer service probably relates to returning an item to a store, handling a problem with your phone bill, or trying to receive technical assistance on using software.

Translators have similar issues. We deal with the many (and sometimes annoying) changes, clarifications, and differences that affect us in the course of our work.

Our relationship to the client is different from other forms of customer service. In our profession the customer is not always right. As a matter of fact, he is wrong a great deal of the time.

That does not mean that we can ignore the customer. We do need to maintain a positive relationship. The client must feel happy at the end of the job, or he will not offer a repeat job or recommend us to others.

That may mean that you will have to make compromises and judgment calls. You may decide to do what the customer wants, even though it does not make sense to you.

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This is a difficult tradeoff, because your name may be listed on the final document as the translator. Some people may question why you did such a poor job.

In such occasions, you'll need to offer a better explanation than, "The client told me to do it this way."

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David Grossman

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Excuses

Your translation profession will be spotted with clients who do not want to pay for your work. Translators reported the following experiences:

- One client argued that he could not afford the translator's rates⁴². He offered to compensate the translator by replacing the paper that was used for translating in lieu of payment.
- Another client claimed that they no longer needed the translation, so they refused to pay for it. They, too, offered to replace the paper.
- An institution requested the translation of some scientific material. After about 80 pages of the document was completed, they asked to see a sample. "You did a terrible job," they said.
- Another client said that they changed their mind (after the translation was nearing completion) and they no longer needed it. They asked for the translation anyhow, and promised that they would not use it.
- A client complained about the supposedly poor quality of the translation.

"What's the problem?" asked the translator.

"This section," the client said, "was translated from English. You translated it back⁴³ to English. Take a look at it. It's different. If you would have translated it

⁴² Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Rates

⁴³ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Back

back properly, it would have been identical to the original.

There seemed to be no way to convince the institution that they should have indicated that it was a translation before the work began – and that they should have provided the translator with the material in the original language. They refused to understand that the quality of a back translation depends on the quality of the original English, the quality of the first translation, and various other factors.

Ultimately, the translator told them that he refused to continue the translation: "Your advance payment covers the part of the work that has been translated so far. Find another translator for the rest of the job. I will not work for this institution again."

And he didn't.

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Fussy

"I only translate Hebrew to English material."

"I only translate literature. That's my field and that's what I know."

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Add these requests to your legitimate refusal of objectionable⁴⁴ materials, and you will be a very fussy translator.

The system doesn't work like that. Translators don't get jobs like that.

You will not survive as a translator if you stipulate too many rules and guidelines for the people who want to give you work. These rules are not merely limiting them. They are your way of telling the clients to go away.

There's more. Not only won't you get many jobs, but your ongoing work will be rather routine and boring when you finally do land a job in your fussy subject area.

You are limiting your learning, your growth, and your pleasure in the translating profession by stipulating what you're willing to do and what you won't do.

Let's face it. All translation involves work with several areas. It's rare to find a serious translation job that does not involve a need for or knowledge of other disciplines as well. Every discipline today is connected with every other discipline. Any writer is likely to relate his specific topic to other subjects.

For example, an article about astronomy may relate to the light that's given off by the stars. Well, that light is not astronomy. It's a different subject area. That writer may even contrast it with an advanced topic in Judaic thought, such as

⁴⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing it | Part 2 – Life as a translator | Objectionable materials

Ancient Jews were less fussy

Translators can learn a great deal from the Jews who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai.

They were able to accept the Torah because they were not as fussy as other nations. The winning comment was *נעשה ונשמע* - *Naaseh venishmah* - we will do [what is written in the Torah] and then we'll listen to how to go about it.

That's the attitude for being a successful Jew.

It's also the lesson that we should learn in order to be successful translators.

Being fussy limits your repeat business as well. If your client is prepared to come back, then try to say "yes" to his next request. If you say "no" because his request doesn't fit into your subject area, then your client will locate another translator. When a third job comes along, that client will not return to the fussy translator (that's you!). He will go to the translator who said...

Yes.

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Keyword: [Fussy](#)



I am a translator

Many students of translation hesitate to announce the fact that they are translators.

There are many wrong ways to announce your profession. You may say,

- "I am studying to be a translator"
- "I would like to be a translator"
- "I want to be a translator"
- "I have done some / a bit of translating"

Why are translators afraid to assert themselves? Why don't they act like medical interns? A medical intern or resident is not yet a full-fledged doctor, but he's called *Dr.* So-and-So. He doesn't say, "I'm studying to be a doctor" or "I want to be a doctor." He says, "I am a doctor."

Teachers should not walk into class on their first day and say, "I want to teach you," "I would like to be a teacher." They say, "I am your teacher." Even teachers in the preliminary stages of their studies should say, "I am a teacher."

Those who make the mistake of saying, "I am a student teacher" will not be able to control the class for long.

Why, then, do translators or editors seem to exhibit low self-esteem?

Drop your hesitation. Tell everybody that you are a translator, and clients will respect you more. That is the way to get work – and to survive as a translator.

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David Grossman

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I'm lovin' it
- turn of the millenium
expression,
used in
McDonald's
advertisements

You translate because you love to work with relationships among languages. If you also love writing, then you should be successful.

However, after some time you may find that the pleasure of translating may seem to diminish. You are facing the beginning of burnout.

Don't allow that to happen.

Get *involved* in translating. That will maintain the pleasure and excitement. Some possibilities are as follows:

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- Join a forum such as Hebrew Translating⁴⁵, Jewish Editing⁴⁶, Jewish Writing⁴⁷, or various other related groups⁴⁸
- Join a translators', writers', or editors' group near you.
- Go to lectures and conferences in a large metropolitan area close to home, or in a college or university where translation or other writing skills are taught
- Tell people some interesting stories about your translation as part of your light conversation. Be sure that the information will not embarrass your clients
 - Others should be made to understand how exciting translation is for you
 - These conversations can reinforce how exciting our work can be

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keyword: [Love](#)



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⁴⁵ <http://www.geocities.com/ourjewishgroups/1HTr>

⁴⁶ <http://www.geocities.com/OurJewishGroups/1JEditing>

⁴⁷ <http://www.geocities.com/OurJewishGroups/1JWriting>

⁴⁸ <http://www.geocities.com/ourjewishgroups/1HTr/Related>

Management

Let's summarize the main points in this Surviving⁴⁹ section.

Translation itself need not be stressful. True, the initial "throwing⁵⁰" of the material onto your screen or paper presents pressure –but that's not stress. Pressure can be positive and pleasurable.

However, clients can sometimes cause stress⁵¹.

- Some do not pay⁵² properly
- Some do not pay on time
- Some reserve a day and don't show up
- Sometimes too many clients need work at the same time
- Sometimes you do not have an acceptable balance⁵³ of clients

These human issues are no less important than the translation process itself.

However, they can arise in *any* business. That is why a good translator needs to be a good people person⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving

⁵⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | How to translate | Throw It

⁵¹ Yiddishe Kop | Stress

⁵² Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Excuses

⁵³ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Surviving | Balance

⁵⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Social

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Multiple translators

Most of the other articles in this series assume that you are a freelance translator. Let's consider the other option: that you are working in a large office, together with other translators.

Will several people in your office translate parts of the same document? That may well cause problems. Although each translation may be acceptable, it will reflect the individual translator's skill, style, mood, and abilities, as well as the amount of sleep he was able to get the night before.

The combined job will reflect a strange jumble of different styles. It will not be acceptable unless it is edited.

Are you part of that team? If so, *your* style will be jarring, since it is not likely to match that of others on your team. Your translation may be better than that of others on the team, but it will look and seem worse. As a result, the differences in style become *your* problem.

This problem can be minimized by setting standards in your office. If all of the translators can achieve a uniform style, then the overall job will appear to be successful.

Offices that work with rush jobs will continue to use multiple translators. Despite all of the standardizing of styles, it is important to assure that the entire project is edited carefully – by *one* editor.

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A positive attitude David Grossman

It is important to maintain a positive attitude in your work.

This may seem like a strange recommendation. After all, you never had any reason to feel negative, so there shouldn't be any reason to reinforce the need for a positive attitude.

However, this issue is important. It is indeed necessary and it does bear saying it. After translating for an extended period of time, you may feel drained, and you are no longer able to invest the same energy and time as before. You may act spaced out, and people will see you at your worst. They will see you when you come up for air after an extensive amount of translating.

Don't let that happen.

Show your clients your best self. Let them see your positive and happy attitude.

Positive attitude and translation

It is probably easier to maintain a positive attitude with translation than with most other professions.

As a translator you will stay in touch⁵⁵ with your clients. They're almost always among the upper echelons in their fields. They have something important to say. It's so important that they feel that it is worthy of translation. These professionals prefer working with upbeat translators and other professionals. So do you.

Maintain a positive attitude, and they will be more likely to work with you.

Public relations

Translation involves a great deal of public relations activities. This effort may be more important than your ability to translate well. When you meet with people – even those who are not yet clients – you will need to be on stage. Keep this in mind, because you never know where your next translation job will come from.

True, all people have ups and downs. Sometimes you don't feel like being on stage. Sometimes you don't feel like showing a positive attitude. You can get by once or twice, but as a rule, you should try to leave your moods at home.

Of course, that means that you may be moody at home. If that is the case, then your family may have to be very patient with

⁵⁵ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Social issues

you. On the other hand, you do owe your family a positive attitude as well.

However, if you can limit your bad moods at home, then your family should accept them.

It is useful to have an understanding spouse and family, and to explain to them that they should be kind to you when you need to display a bad mood. It may also be useful to drop a gentle hint when you wake up on the wrong side of the bed.

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Professionalism

If you work from home, then it would be wise to set up your work area in a professional manner. You will want to impress a visiting client by your devotion to translation as a lifetime skill. A computer area, replete with dictionaries and other tools, on the side of your living room, office, or workroom, may present a silent message that you are capable of doing the job.

On the other hand, a translator who places a laptop on the kitchen table when it's needed for an occasional job may be able to produce excellent work, but he will have a more

difficult PR⁵⁶ job. That PR is no less important than the translation itself.

This fact is of great significance for those who live in cramped quarters, where there is no way to set aside a translation area. Indeed, some apartments have no solution to this problem.

You will have to determine the best ways to overcome your space limitations, so that you will be able to improve your professional image.

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Jobs

Introduction

There are successful ways to get a translation job:

- About⁵⁷ getting a job as a translator
- Vocational Dreams⁵⁸
- Speak to the secretary⁵⁹
- Suburban⁶⁰ life: Getting a job outside of metropolitan areas
- Supervisor⁶¹: Dealing with a superior

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Keywords: [Employment](#), [Translation](#)



About

No one
ever listened themselves
out of a job.
- Calvin Coolidge

⁵⁷ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | About

⁵⁸ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Vocation

⁵⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Secretary

⁶⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Suburban

⁶¹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Supervisor

Translators are sometimes so happy to find a "good" job that they may not look out for some potential issues.

Potential clients will want information about you. They may ask for references.

You, in turn, may want to find out about the stability of the company. You, too, can ask the person in charge for references.

This may seem strange. After all, you are more familiar with the situation in which the person seeking a job is asked to present references.

Well, it works both ways!

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Talk to the secretary

You should be sure to meet the basic requirements before looking for a job:

- You should already know how to translate
- You should feel confident in your abilities
- You should be able to use the computer to provide the services you need

Nonetheless,

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- You may be waiting for jobs to appear
- And... they're not coming

What is the procedure?

How can you break into the translation field? How can you get more jobs as a translator? How can you find jobs and get started in a new location?

Let's analyze some possibilities.

Visit your nearest metropolitan⁶² area. Ask local business, college, university, or government offices whether they need translators.

Tip: Don't go to the top official in any organization or office. Go to the secretary. No, don't approach just any secretary. Go to the lowest level secretary⁶³ that you can find. Get her name, direct phone number, and email address. She, for her part, will be flattered that you consulted with her. Most of the others in her office may not care about her, since she has a lower status than theirs. As a result, she may do everything possible to justify your confidence in her.

There's another reason as well. The bureaucrats in the office will probably see translating as a secretarial function, so they may not discuss the issue with their senior assistants.

Bring along your business cards. If you don't have professionally printed cards, then print up a simple business card on a laser printer, possibly using the template on your

⁶² Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Suburban

⁶³ DOOT | Memoirs | Ramot Bus

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word processing program. When you have time, you can print up cards at an office supply store. If you're in a rush, you might find a business card printing machine near your home.

Carry around copies of your resume, in case the secretary asks for one. Don't offer her the resume at this stage if she doesn't ask for it. She's likely to lose it.

After two weeks elapse, go back to the secretary. She probably won't remember you, but you can cheerfully ask how she's doing. Be sure to speak to her by name.

Remind her that you gave her the business card a few weeks ago. She is likely to offer you a lame excuse for not having given you jobs. Be very pleasant and understanding.

After the third time that you come back, she will either remember you for life, or you can forget about her and go on to another secretary.

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Keywords: [Employment](#), [Offices](#), [Secretary](#), [Translation](#)



Suburban life

You may be able to handle most jobs electronically, although some employers may want to make their first contact in person.

If you live in a suburban area, then you may have to travel to a large city for some jobs. Don't worry – once you are established as a translator, many of those jobs will be sent and returned by fax or email.

What are your options?

The Internet will help you find multinational translation pools that are looking for freelancers. They may ask for a sample, and their rates might not be as attractive as local rates. Your decision about whether to go that route may depend on how serious you are about getting your foot in the door at this time.

Register with your local office services bureau. You can find one in your phone book under Office Services, or under Translators and Translating. Since they give out jobs on demand, their translators may work at home.

Register with the local typist or transcriptionist⁶⁴ pool. That office offers the public computer-based word processing for a fee. Since they may not provide translation services, you may have to convince them that you can help them expand their services while they get a cut of your translation fee. They may appreciate somebody who can think out of the box.

Expand your options

- Don't offer just translating. Can you do computer graphics? Editing? Proofreading? Typing? Transcribing? Any other allied or related profession? If so, these additional skills can keep you busy during

⁶⁴ Writing Wrongs: Transcribing

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slack translation periods. They will also help you get a wider range of clients. Today's typing job may turn into tomorrow's translation job.

- Get in touch with secretaries⁶⁵ and middle management people in local publishing houses. Convince them that some of their best books should be translated.

Granted, this creative method is unlikely to lead to a job. However, publishers have contacts. They may know of an office that needs a translator.

Use the publisher contact to your advantage:

- After the publisher tells you that he has nothing to offer, ask him to refer you to *another* office that needs translators. You will have more of a chance of getting your foot in the second door with a referral from this publisher.
- Sprinkle some translation jokes⁶⁶ into your conversation. It will help people realize that you are a real translator.
- Self-effacing jokes may be a cultural issue. Use them only if you won't suffer from a backlash.

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⁶⁵ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Jobs | Secretary

⁶⁶ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Humor

Dealing with a supervisor

A translator may have to deal with a supervisor in one of two ways:

- When the translator works for a company that assigns a supervisor to be in charge of a particular translation, or to be in charge of all translations.
- When there is a need to place blame from something - not necessarily related to the translator's work.

In both cases, the translator has to deal with a person who has a position of authority, even though that person was not on the scene when he negotiated the translation job. The situation will result in additional demands that may affect the translator's time and payment.

That supervisor is as unwelcome as any other third party⁶⁷. The potential issues that may arise can be yet another good reason to sign a written contract⁶⁸ in advance. Granted, the supervisor may argue that the contract is void, because it had not been approved at a senior administrative level. Things may get difficult with a contract - but they could be even more difficult without one.

Let's backtrack. Before beginning any job, it is wise to understand who is in charge, who will pay your invoice, who will sign the check, who will make decisions relating to money or to the translation itself, and who will make the final, binding, or overriding decisions.

⁶⁷ Topical index | Intermediaries

⁶⁸ Writing Wrongs | Making money – Part 3 | Business | Contracts

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You are not likely to want to deal with these things in advance, but it is worse having to cope with them later.

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Keywords: [Employment](#), [Intermediary](#), [Offices](#), [Translation](#)

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Vocational needs

You may have any or all of the following professional needs, depending on your personality or status:

- Job security
- Moving up to a more respectable position
- Moving up to a senior position
- The possibility of increasing your responsibilities over the course of time
- A greater income
- A good retirement plan

Salaried employees or those who are employed by others can often negotiate these benefits.

Some self-employed translators may be able to work towards these positions as well. After working for a number of years in a business establishment, they may be entitled to certain social benefits.

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However, they are the exceptional translators. Their situation does not necessarily apply to the rest of us. The many benefits to translating do not necessarily include our supplementary vocational dreams.

Independent translators can generally enjoy *different* advantages:

- They can be more selective about the jobs that they accept
- They can be more selective about the type of employer that they prefer
- To some degree, they can determine when their pay will rise
 - Those who work in free trades such as translating can determine their fortune.
 - However, no translator can afford to price himself out of the market
 - The free market also means that the earnings do have a ceiling.

You will have to choose between job security and higher earnings. It's a tradeoff, and you can rarely have both.

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In the Curriculum

Translation Teacher forum, March 28, 2007

I have been following the thread you started about your job as teachers and what your classes should include to help the students to be prepared after the college:- the practical aspects of going out and getting a translation job. You received replies from teachers who explained to you how they teach their classes, but no students explained to you how hard it is to find a job as a translator freelance or in-house.

The definition of a translator is a person who translates written messages from one language to another.

Unfortunately, when you study to become one, you do not learn the business side of it. It is not part of the college courses, which is very unfortunate in my opinion.

A few years ago, I earned a Certificate of translation along with my college degree and I am working as a "freelance" project manager from home. I really thought being a French native speaker and translator would help me to find jobs easily. I was disappointed, not everybody can be a translator. And finding the jobs is not an easy task.

In my case, I started late; I am married and a mother of two young children, which means that I can only work from home⁶⁹. Richmond (VA) does not have any "translation agencies" per se. I am also working on how to become an English > French translator by setting up a business as I have no experience in the field except what I have done in college. For now, working from home is my only option.

⁶⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing it | Part 2 - Life as a translator | Working at home

Anyway, the translation classes in college taught me about web localization, revising, translation... but did not prepare me about how to write a cover letter and resume, how to start and grow a business as a freelance translator, how to set up rates, contracts, and terms of services... or even how even to become a project manager.... I am still learning on that field too. Another important fact is that the students should be well aware about the CAT tools.

However, your young students can start acquire experience by doing some volunteer work, networking – by being members of translators associations such as ATA (American Translators Association), or any local association in their own countries... Before deciding if they want to become an in-house or a freelance translator, they have to weight the options. There are pros and cons for each position.

As a teacher, you could also invite special guests to talk about their jobs, have small fairs related to the business part of the translation field. The theory is taking care of during the classroom; you need the business part of it.

Here are my answers to your questions:

>How do you recommend that your students go about getting their first jobs in translation?

The same rules apply for any jobs. Marketing yourself by applying to jobs, sending resumes to agencies.... subscribe to translation websites.

> Should they use the services of translation agencies?

Yes, this is the first step in marketing themselves. Most agencies have a translator application form on their websites; the "Contact Us" or "Opportunities" sections of agency websites are good places to look for these. Do not send a

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paper résumé if the agency requests an electronic one, and don't send the agency an e-mail if they want you to fill out their online form.

They should send resumes locally, regionally, then nationwide.

> How should they prepare for their first job interview?

Like for any job interview.

> How should they convince people to hire them as a translator?

Like for any job, why should they hire them? What make them different from the next translators? I am from France, but I live in the States now. I receive resumes from all over the world, and what I forgot is that in Europe we detailed too much personal information. In the States, we do not detail as much. Your students will have to make sure to have different sets of resumes/ CV for each continent.

Personally, European translators should be careful when they send these personal information. They may offend somebody. Recently, I posted an ad for a job and I received 80 resumes. I took 60 seconds to read each. I discarded the ones that didn't answer my questions right away. Why? I want a cover letter with answers to my questions in it, then I go check their resumes. Not everybody does it that way. I dislike people who do not take time to send me a proper cover letter, resume and answer my questions. What does it tell me about the way they work? It tells me that they don't read my instructions carefully, that they rush to finish, and that they don't care about the quality of their work.

> How can they present a portfolio, when they are new translators?

For most beginning translators, it will be hard to find well-paid jobs, but you can always volunteer to work for humanitarian organizations, you can find internships with the help of your school, and you can find a mentor with translation associations. This is where you, as a teacher, can step in.

I think a lot of people are afraid of networking and offering help to new translators. Why? The "most experienced" translators started somewhere too, and we could all use a mentor. I do.

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Marketing

Introduction

You may be a great translator, but you won't get many jobs unless people know that you are there – and available.

- About⁷⁰ marketing yourself
- Tips⁷¹

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Tips

You should always go
to other people's funerals
Otherwise,
they won't come to yours
- Yogi Berra

This website offers many suggestions to promote your own translation business. Each idea was covered in a separate page.

This page summarizes some additional ways to market yourself:

⁷⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Marketing | About

⁷¹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Marketing | Tips

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- Speak to other translators. Established translators sometimes want to give away jobs to others - either because of the low pay, or because of personality issues. You won't always get a top-level job this way, but you will get started, and you'll be able to get your name out in the field.
- Carry business cards with you at all times. When you meet somebody new, ask what he does. In many cases, you'll be able to show him how he needs a translator. At that point, don't say that you are looking for work as a translator. Say that you *are* a translator⁷².
- Post small, colorful notices on college and university bulletin boards. They will probably be taken down by your competitors, so locate a student who will replace the notices at least once a day, for a small fee. Your notice must be visible when someone needs a translating job in order to get the job.
- Give a lecture to a local organization about translation humor or another topic of interest.
- Be sure to exude confidence when speaking to others. "Sell" yourself as a translator, even if you have only minimal experience.
- Tell your contacts that you are available for work as a translator. Don't be afraid to network among your friends.
- Be prepared to translate subject areas that are *not* familiar to you. It's the only way to learn new fields. You can either purchase a special dictionary, or locate one on-line⁷³).

⁷² Writing Wrongs – Losing it | Part 3 – Making money | Surviving | I am a translator

⁷³ Jewish Glossaries

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- Be pro-active. Don't wait for people to call you. This does not mean that you have to be a nudnik, but you do need to remind people that you are available.
- Insist on getting the rates⁷⁴ that you deserve. If you are not firm about your rates, then others will decide them for you.
- If you would like to get into a large office, offer to do a free sample translation. They may feel that they "owe you one" when they have to give out the next translation.
- Was somebody else offered the job instead of you? Call the office to determine the reason. You have nothing to lose, and you can find out what to correct before applying for your next job.
However, be careful how to speak to them.
 - You want to learn from this experience.
 - Don't whine. You do not want the company to blacklist you for being a pain in the neck.
- Did you go to an interview? Lots of luck. Now, forget it. It won't do any good to rehash it in your mind. Go about the rest of your life - especially if another translation job is waiting for your attention.

Now you are ready to use your skills and talents to get that translation job!

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Keywords: [business](#), [employment](#), [marketing](#), [tips](#), [translation](#)

⁷⁴ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 - Rates



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Rates

Introduction

You do want to get paid for translating and editing, don't you? Here's what you need to know.

- How to charge⁷⁵
- Preparing a Quotation⁷⁶
- Rates - 2001 part 1⁷⁷
- Rates - 2001 part 2⁷⁸
- Rates - 2001 part 3⁷⁹
- Rates - 2001 part 4⁸⁰
- Charging for rush⁸¹ work

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Keywords: [money](#), rates



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How to charge

Those in the writing trades
get paid
in one of three ways:
Per hour,

⁷⁵ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | How To charge

⁷⁶ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Quotation

⁷⁷ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Rates2001a

⁷⁸ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Rates2001b

⁷⁹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Rates2001c

⁸⁰ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Rates2001d

⁸¹ Writing Wrongs: Losing It | Part 3 – Making it | Rates | Rush

That unattributed quotation may be less of a joke than some translators realize.

It is sometimes difficult to collect for services that are provided in any trade, including translation. Be prepared to deal with some jobs for which you won't get paid, and be prepared to lower your charge for other jobs. True, we recommended that you know what to charge⁸² and that you maintain your rates. However, you will have occasions in which a reality check is in order. You don't have to work with that client again in the future, but he does exist.

Beginning translators charge less than those with more experience. This is justified, for various reasons:

1. *Time.* It will probably take longer for a beginner to do a good job than an experienced translator, so it is wrong to charge per hour
2. *Quality counts.* The work may not be of the same quality or caliber as an experienced translator
3. *Reputation counts.* A translator who has developed a reputation is entitled to charge more than a neophyte.
4. *Education.* Your competition may have taken courses in translation. This does not always affect the amount that can be charged, but it should not be ruled out.

This is a reasonable situation. In any other job, you would expect to receive a raise over the course of time. In

translating, as you fulfill more and more of these steps, you can raise your rates.

There are other considerations as well.

Some people like to present themselves as expensive translators so that their work will be perceived to have a higher quality. They will not want to charge too little, even as a beginner, since they do not want others to perceive them as cheap or insecure.

This can backfire for translators who cannot stand behind their high rates. Expensive translators who present poor-quality work will soon discover that their translation career will nosedive.

You can take some of the following steps in order to find out the prevailing translating rates in your area:

- Check the local classified telephone directory for translation agencies. Make a few phone calls, and ask how much they would charge to translate a double-spaced, 10 page article of a scientific nature in, say, biology. You will then have an idea about the prevailing *institutional* rates in your area
- Develop some contacts among those in the writing trade
 - Casually ask how much they charge
 - Compare their background, their quality, experience and education with your own
 - Decide whether to add or to subtract a reasonable amount from their rates in order to determine your own

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Ask enough people, and you will be able to determine *individual* rates in your area

- Find out how much other professionals charge for other services in your area – not necessarily for translating. Those who are more open will give you an hourly rate. That will help you determine the typical hourly rate for professional work in your area. You will have the basis for deciding how much you should or can charge per hour

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Making a quotation

There is a great discovery
still to be made in literature,
that of paying literary men
by the quantity
they do not write.
- Thomas Carlyle

Various elements go into a price quotation:

- Making money as a result of your work
- Protecting your own interests.

You will need to know several things before you decide how much to charge:

- The ideal charge per hour
- How much others charge per hour for their translations

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You will then be able to adjust your own rates in order to fit this general picture. You can adjust your rates to allow for various factors:

- Location
- Your own skills, talent, abilities, and knowledge
- Your equipment
- Specialized knowledge that is not available to your competition.

Calculate how much you translate per hour. You can then determine the price you want to charge per page. This, too, can be adjusted, based upon the amount that is charged by your local competition.

You can then come to various conclusions:

- Whether translating is sufficiently lucrative for you
- Whether you should give it a try, and possibly develop it
- Whether you should try a different field
- Whether it pays to translate in your area
 - Perhaps the competition charges too little
 - Perhaps there is too much competition
 - Perhaps you want to consider other factors, such as the availability of work in your area

Consider the work that you can accomplish per hour, as well as any hidden costs. The client should pay his share of your expenses:

- Your computer equipment
- Your taxes
- Your billing time

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- Your costs in getting paid, the delays, and their share of clients who do not pay
 - Yes, everybody gets punished for the few clients who do not pay
- The time that you spend consulting with experts may involve a cost
- Time spent online getting answers with resources such as the Hebrew Translating⁸³ forum
- Time spent in developing contacts
- Time in meeting with contacts
- Time spent learning new skills, including computer programs
- Cost of text-based materials
- Your costs for typing and transcriptions
- The time and cost involved in preparing a legally acceptable quotation
- The expenses that you may have for last minute changes by the client
- The time that you will spend with meetings before, during, and after submitting your translation.

Of course, some of these individual items do not have to be factored in, if you charge by the hour

In this way, you can determine the *ideal* amount that you should charge per hour.

Make sure that you charge enough. Many translators are all too ready to give the client the benefit of the doubt, and they neglect their own charges and expenses. Be as fair to yourself as you are to your client.

⁸³ Jewish Unity Forums | Hebrew Translating

Remember: Bending over backwards to be sure that your client does not pay too much is no more honest than overcharging the client.

On the other hand, keep in mind that it may take some time before you recoup your initial expenses.

You may want to set your rates in United States dollars, so that there will be minimal fluctuation, even if you live in a country that uses a different currency. This may work against you as well, since the dollar also suffers from a great deal of fluctuation.

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Rates 2001, Part 1

A poll of subscribers to the Hebrew Translating⁸⁴ and the Jewish Editing⁸⁵ forums in early 2001 revealed some interesting statistics about our rates. When reading these statistics, please bear in mind that the rate of exchange of the shekel to the US\$ was about 4.15 at the time of the survey.

Israeli translators:

⁸⁴ Jewish Unity Forums | Hebrew Translating

⁸⁵ Jewish Unity Forums | Jewish Editing

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1. The high rate was \$60/hour. The translator claims to work quickly, but it still comes out to be just a bit higher than standard *Agudat Hasofrim* rates). This method covers those annoying clients who want to sit with the translator after the completion of the job. 20% of this translator's income came from translating. No memorandum of understanding was signed with clients.
2. NIS 30 for a 250-word English-Hebrew page and NIS 60 for a similar Hebrew-English page, with a 50% reduction for students. Rush work was charged extra. 40% of the income was from translating. No memo of understanding.
3. \$.08 per SL word or \$.11 per TL word. This translator considered *Agudat Hasofrim* rates to be too low. No preferential rates or freebies. Rush work, technical work, or special formatting assignments were charged at a higher rate. 60% from translating. No memo of understanding.
4. NIS 0.24 (about 6¢; roughly equivalent to *Agudat Hasofrim*) per word, but sometimes by the page at an unspecified rate. Hourly rate was used when working at the client's home or business. Charitable institutions and certain special case people received favorable rates; friends got a great deal of free work. Rush, scientific, and special formatting jobs were charged extra. Clients were asked to sign an order form, which was the equivalent of a memo. This translator wanted to know whether anybody takes a deposit up front, and was concerned about the fact that those living outside of the major cities are expected to charge less.
5. Variable rate, based on the job. Charges were determined by 250-word page. Subtitling was charged

by cassette. No clients were offered preferential rates or freebies. Rush jobs and technical material were charged higher rates. No memo of understanding; 100% of income came from freelance translating.

6. Either NIS 0.28625 (about 7¢; based on *Agudat Hasofrim* rates) per word, or a comparable flat rate based on market fluctuations. No preferential rates; family and friends received freebies; literary work was charged more, no memorandum of understanding; 5-10% of the income came from translating.

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

Analyze the rates charged by Israeli translators. What are your conclusions?

World Rights

Rates 2001, Part 2

Rates charged by Israeli translators, continued:

1. NIS 80 for a 1500-character page without spaces or for 1 hour; special rates for students, neighbors, and specified, preferred organizations; extra for work on weekends or after midnight; signed confidentiality agreements; 100% of the income came from translating
2. \$25 per 1.5 spaced page; passes on work that is not desirable; volunteer translations for specified preferred organizations; extra charges for rush and special formatting; no scientific work; no memorandum of understanding, but the translator

- admits that it's bad for business; does very little freelance work
3. NIS 50 for 1.5-spaced page, which comes out close to *Agudat Hasofrim*. Freebies for families and friends. Rarely charges extra. No memorandum of understanding. Translates at work (title is secretary) and freelance
 4. NIS 50-60/hour for private work. Accepts *Agudat Hasofrim* if the client insists. Works in a salaried position that includes 75% translating
 5. Charges casual clients NIS 50 plus tax for a 250-word page. Regular clients who offer 15 hours/week: NIS 70/hour plus expenses. Had never been asked to accept *Agudat Hasofrim* rates. Charges less for intriguing projects or for more than 20 hours/week for more than 3 months. No freebies. Charges extra for boring work. No memorandum of understanding, but selective about customers. Uses social pressure in cases of late payment. 50% of work based on translations; 30% based on overseeing two other translators
 6. *Agudat Hasofrim* rate, plus 25% surcharge. Calculates 24,000 characters including spaces in the original language. Long-term customers with familiar work and style receive a minimum rate. Family receives freebies. Rush jobs, poorly-written material, or lack of time incurs a surcharge. Signs a memorandum of understanding signed with unfamiliar clients. 90% of livelihood is from translations. Planning to raise rates soon; considering a word-based rate instead of the printing sheet-based rate.

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How much does the typical Israeli translator serve for his service? What is the high charge? What is the low charge?

Analyze the rates charged by Israeli translators. What are your conclusions?


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Rates 2001, Part 3

Following is a summary of rates charged by non-Israeli Hebrew translators:

United States

1. Charge based on assignment; very preferential or free rates for non-profits; surcharge for rush, scientific, special formatting jobs; no memos of understanding.
2. \$.12-.16/word (En-He is more than He-En) and by the hour for proofreading or editing; surcharge for technical information, illegible material, heavy formatting, and shorter documents. Semi *pro-bono* or free for preferred clients or for some small jobs. Always signs a memorandum of understanding. 85% of work is translating; 15% is proofreading and editing

Great Britain

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- GBP90.00 per 1,000 words if possible, with a minimum charge. Certificates for agencies GBP 25.00. No freebies. Surcharge for special formatting. Asks for a written order. 80% of work is translating; 20% is interpreting

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Your exercise for this article is as follows:

How much does the typical non-Israeli translator serve for his service?
What is the high charge? What is the low charge?

David Grossman

Rates 2001, Part 4

The responses to a poll about editing rates on the Jewish Editing⁸⁶ group are summarized below.

Israel

1. NIS 50-60/hour; accepts *Agudat Hasofrim* if the client insists. No preferential rates: “my rates are low enough”. Family receives freebies. No memorandum of understanding, but he regrets it. 0% of total income is from editing – all of income is from a salaried job. This information is therefore theoretical.
2. A publisher pays NIS 30-40/hour for copy editing/proofreading, based on experience; complains about the low level of professionalism.

⁸⁶ Jewish Unity Forums | Jewish Editing

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3. Histadrut rate +30% for scholarly articles; Long term customers receive a slightly better rate, since they have a familiar style and requirements; freebies for family; surcharge for rush jobs, poorly written work, and work at night. No memorandum of understanding. 10% of income is based on editing.
4. High rate of \$60/hour for editing.

United States and Canada

1. \$15/job = 1 hour per issue, copy-editing. Considered a "mitzvah rate". Freebies for some students or friends. Surcharges may apply in the future. No memorandum of understanding. 1% of income from editing.
2. \$50/hour. Preferential rates for the editor's synagogue. Rush work extra. Does sign a memorandum of understanding.
3. Canada: \$35/hour. Preferential rates for the translator's Rabbi and for Ph.D. candidates. No freebies. Surcharge for rush work, for checking facts, or for doing research. No memorandum of understanding. 100% of income based on editing.

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What are the typical rates for editing? What is the high charge? What is the low charge?



Rush work

Clients often forget about the need to translate their material until the last minute, and then rush over with a request to have their material completed perfectly, saying that their deadline was yesterday. "Drop everything," they say, "This is more important."

If this would happen once or twice, you might think that you had the misfortune of dealing with a weird client. When it happens more frequently, you begin to think of the best rejoinder for this circumstance.

Semantics to the rescue

Avoid using the term "rush rate." Clients get defensive when they hear it, and they begin to argue. Try using the term "premium rate." You might say, "It's Sunday, so if you need it by Thursday, we'll have to charge you our premium rate."

That's right, first person plural is better than first person singular. You have a family, right? You're not just working for yourself. That issue has greater significance than mere semantics. It makes the work sound more professional.

Your negotiations should also be peppered with the word "overtime" so that the client realizes that you'll be working after your usual business hours in order to complete their "premium" work.

What is your premium rate? Add a surcharge of 25% to 50%, depending on the job and the client.

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Writing Wrongs: Losing it in the translation.

Other books in this series

We include writing, translating, editing, proofreading, lexicography, and transcribing in our definition of the writing trades.

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- Translation humor
- Truth
- Who can translate
- Forums

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- Working at Home
- Social issues
- Translating offensive or objectionable material
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Part 3: Making money as a translator

- What are the differences among the Business, Surviving, Marketing, and Rates sections?
- Business

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- Surviving
- Getting jobs
- Marketing yourself
- Rates
- Directory of translators, to or from Hebrew – canceled.

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- How to teach the writing trades
- Teaching Translation Skills
- How to translate
- Assignments for teaching Translation Skills
- The first day
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Part 5: Lesson plans

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