

**Love Your Work, Love Your Life:  
Make it Happen  
as a Freelance Translator**

## Table of Contents

### **Part 1: Bids and Quotes**

- Chapter 1.1: Setting rates
- Chapter 1.2: Which parameters should affect my rates?
- Chapter 1.3: Can I change my rates once I have set them?
- Chapter 1.4: Should I ever work at no charge?
- Chapter 1.5: Should I charge more for rush or “urgent” jobs?
- Chapter 1.6: Should I charge more for work on weekends or holidays?
- Chapter 1.7: Should I charge more for special services?
- Chapter 1.8: Should I charge personal clients a different rate than agencies?
- Chapter 1.9: The wisdom of discount pricing
- Chapter 1.10: Should I offer a discount for early payment?
- Chapter 1.11: Should I offer a reduced rate for repeated words?

### **Part 2: Managing the Work**

- Chapter 2.1: Which job takes priority? Where should I start?
- Chapter 2.2: Setting realistic deadlines.
- Chapter 2.3: How can I keep on task and on time?
- Chapter 2.4: How can I manage my time?

### **Part 3: Managing the Financial End of the Business**

- Chapter 3.1: What payment methods are available to my clients?
- Chapter 3.2: What payment terms should I ask?

### **Part 4: Growing a Translation Business**

- Chapter 4.1: Should I outsource my work?
- Chapter 4.2: Should I start a translation agency of my own?
- Chapter 4.3: Should I teach language classes?
- Chapter 4.4: Should I provide other language services?
- Chapter 4.5: Should I learn additional languages?

### **Part 5: Clients**

- Chapter 5.1: What’s the best way to find new clients?
- Chapter 5.2: How should I negotiate with my clients?
- Chapter 5.3: How should I handle rude clients?
- Chapter 5.4: How should I handle unexpected events?

## Introduction

We decided to write this ebook in response to the many positive feedbacks we received from freelance translators. They told us we made their business so simple yet so different. They said that after implementing our methods, they started enjoying their working hours while doubling their output.

We believe you are already the best at what you do - you have all the skills of translation. Instead, we are going to show you how to make the best of your translation skills.

Be forewarned – at [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), we think differently; some of the translators defined it as thinking outside the box. As you read the following pages, you will see how we are cracking down most of the fundamental assumptions of the translation profession one by one. So open your mind and give us a chance to help you expand your business.

We know your time is extremely valuable so we put this ebook together in a logical order with brief chapters. You can probably finish reading it in an hour.

We are offering this document as a free service to translators everywhere. We want to help translators to make a positive change, so please forward this report, or the download link, to your colleagues. Then, register with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com). It is totally free and takes only a couple of minutes. (It seems that translators can recognize a good product when they see one, because the large number of translators who have registered with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) in our short existence has already outpaced our most optimistic predictions.)

The material in this ebook will help you answer crucial questions that concern many translators:

- Should I ever work at no charge?
- Should I charge more for rush, or urgent, jobs?
- Should I offer a discount for early payment? Should I offer a reduced rate for repeated words?
- How can I set realistic deadlines?
- Should I outsource my work?
- What payment terms should I ask?
- How to handle rude clients?
- And much more...

## Part 1: Bids and Quotes

Working as a translator, you probably know that quoting a price is the most important part of the job, yet it is almost impossible to give the right quote if you have little to no information of the nature of the translation job.

We would solve this problem for you if we could, but at the moment, we don't know of an ultimate solution. We are going to give you some words of advice that may be worth a lot of money to you.

Did you know that only 60 percent of the professional translators work at it as a full-time job? Most of them say their business is a profitable enterprise, but less than half earn enough to make translation their sole occupation. Why? Because they forget they are translators.

The best advice we can give you is to never forget that you are a translator and not a financial expert. Follow your instincts more than you follow fixed rates.

Tammy, a great English to German translator, sent us a question about a state-of-the-art program she bought that calculates a quote for any translation job based on 25 different parameters. She asked us why the quotes she gets using the program are always too high or too low. Our answer was . . . you guessed it - follow your instincts. Tammy had already wasted money on the program but she hasn't stopped thanking us for encouraging her to stop using it. We feel fortunate to work with Tammy, one of the first English to German translators to register with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com)

## Chapter 1.1: Set your rates

The interest rate is not fixed, the currency exchange rate is not fixed and the price of the bread you buy at the grocery store is not fixed, so there is no reason for your rates to be fixed.

No matter what your clients or colleagues say, never commit to a fixed rate, even if you think you cannot get a better one.

There are two vital aspects you must understand and act upon when setting your rates:

1. Don't try to re-invent the wheel – translators all over the world use the number of words to determine their basic rate. Don't invent other methods because they will not work. We have spoken with translators who set their rates based on the number of characters, number of lines, or number of words in the target document. They all came back to the old-fashioned way.

2. Experiment with the rate. Once you have set the basic rate for a document based on the number of words, start playing with it. Raise it or give a discount based on any factor you may think of separately.

This is not as easy as it may sound. Most translators are actually afraid of this stage. This is the exact place where you should follow your instincts.

We will try to help you with the process in the next pages.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we encourage you to bid for any job that fits your skills and your availability to do it. The more times you bid, the more you learn to properly quote for translation jobs.

We did not forget the other side of the equation – the clients. Once you understand the needs of the client and the way he thinks, everything gets easier. That will be described in detail in the Clients' chapter. Anyway, always be ready for a negotiation and for a discount in the rate you quote.

If you expected us to give you a fixed rate you should use, sorry to disappoint. Translators ask for anything between 0.03 and 0.15 USD per word. The average is about 0.11 USD.

## Chapter 1.2: Which parameters should have effect on my rate?

Once you decide on the basic rate based on the language combination and the number of words, you will have to start playing with it.

Translators from all over the world keep telling us that this is the best method when setting up a quote for a specific translation job. At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), we try to give as much information as possible to the translator so that he can give his best quote.

This list of the parameters should be used as a checklist. Go over the items one by one, decide which ones are relevant for the specific job and use those items to change the rate in the percentage you believe will be proper. Usually the changes per parameter will not exceed 10%.

Here is the list of parameters you should take into account:

### **Job's Parameters:**

- Size – you may want to give a discount for a long document or raise the rate for a short one.
- Domain – you may want to raise the rate for technical domains.
- Text's complexity – you may want to raise the rate if you will have to use glossaries or other sources.
- Repetitiveness – you may want to lower the rate if you have a high percentage of repetitive phrases so that you can use translation memory tools.
- Technical issues – you may want to raise your rate when having to deal with issues like PDF documents, PPT presentations, tables, or charts.

**Time Parameters:**

- Deadline of the translation job – you may want to raise the rate for a short deadline and discount it for a long one.
- Working hours – you may want to raise the rate if you will have to work on holidays / nights / weekends to complete the job on time.

**Client Parameters:**

- Client's location – you may want to raise the rate if the client is from developed countries or lower it if he is from developing ones.
- Client's business entity – you may want to set different rates for individual clients vs. corporations.
- Client's type – you may want to raise your rate if working directly with the end client or lower it when working with a translation agency.
- Client's history – you may want to set a different rate for new clients than for existing ones.
- Client's profitability – you may want to set a lower rate for clients you assume may be long term and profitable ones.
- Client's negotiation skills – you should add a negotiation margin if you believe the client is intending to negotiate for a better price.

**Money parameters:**

- Payment terms – you may want to raise your rate for future payments and lower it for early payments.
- Payment currency – you may want to raise your rate if you must accept the payment in foreign currency or uncommon currencies.
- Payment method – you may want to raise your rate if you must take payment in an unsecured or high commission payment method.

**Your Own Parameters:**

- Your experience as a translator – you may want to raise your rate if you are an experienced translator with a solid reputation and references from clients.
- Your relevant experience for this specific translation job – you may want to raise your rate if you have worked on similar jobs in the past.
- Your relevant education – you may want to raise the rate if you have completed academic courses which will help you do this job, or if you have official education as a translator.
- Your current workload – you may want to raise the rate if you are loaded with work and this job is not that important for you.

## Chapter 1.3: Can I change my rates once I have set them?

If you read the previous chapters, you probably know that at [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), we do not believe in fixed rates. In fact, we believe that every translation job is different and should have its own rate.

That said, we also know that any rule has its exceptions and so does this one.

1. When working for a client on a regular basis, the client may demand to know your rates for future projects. We suggest you explain to him that every project will have its own rate based on various parameters and that this method of calculating rates will yield more accurate quotes for his translation jobs.

You will be surprised to know that many clients understand this and are ready to work with you without a schedule of fixed rates.

However, some will demand that you make a hard decision, a decision that we cannot help you with. The biggest help we can give you is to register with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), where you will have no commitment whatsoever and will have all the information you need to give the best quote for each job separately.

2. Nothing is more important than your reliability as a translator. You should NEVER change your price for a job after starting to work on it even if you are losing money. You should also remember that the client is always right; if he claims that you promised him a fixed rate for future jobs, you may have to accept it.

## Chapter 1.4: Should I ever work at no charge?

You would expect it to go without saying that you should never work for free, and in most cases, that's absolutely true. On occasion, however, a client may ask you to complete a trial project at no charge to demonstrate your expertise.

Surprisingly, quite a few translators are willing to submit a brief sample, 200 to 400 words in length, at no cost to the client. However, no other service provider works for free, and there is no reason for you to do so.

Clients may not understand that there are scammers in any market, and if someone wants to cheat them, he will do so. A test project will not stop cheats.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we believe you should never work for free. You will get a payment for every job, even for proofreading a 50-word document!

## Chapter 1.5: Should I charge more for rush, or urgent, jobs?

Somehow, almost all translation jobs are urgent. "Urgent" is one of the first words client use when asked to describe the job, and it is the word translators hate to hear.

But "urgent" is too obscure to build a rate around. This word must be broken into pieces. (At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) you can see the time left for the deadline – simplicity at its best.)

Get more information from your client; ask him when, exactly, he needs the job done. You may be surprised to learn that for some clients, urgent means a couple of weeks.

Next, ask him if you can translate the document in several pieces so that the first ones will be ready for delivery in a short while.

Only then, if you reach the conclusion that this translation job really is urgent, should you consider whether the deadline is feasible at all, assuming that the average translator translates 1,000 to 3,000 words in an average 8-hour day. If it is not feasible, you must help the client understand that no translator will be able to complete the job in the requested time.

If the deadline is feasible, decide whether you can do it. Can you postpone the other jobs you intended to work on at this time? If you can, it is totally legitimate to charge more for an urgent job.

## Chapter 1.6: Should I charge more for a job that involves weekend or holiday work?

One of the benefits of working for yourself is your freedom to set your own schedule. If you prefer to work at night, work at night. If you want to go to the market in the middle of the morning, go.

The other side of this very nice perk is that, when you give yourself a morning off, you sometimes must make up for that time on the weekend. In fact, 90 percent of your colleagues work on Sunday!

The time has a way of balancing itself, so most translation professionals do not charge more for a job that involves weekend or holiday work. Their reasoning is simple: work during the weekend and take Tuesday or Wednesday for yourself.

In today's global market, one's weekend is the other's working day and one's night is the other's day. If you try to charge more, you may find that your client will take another translator from another part of the world.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we do not believe in dates. We will offer you translation jobs and indicate how much time you have to complete them.

The bottom line is that your holidays and weekends are your problems. Don't make them your clients' problems – don't charge more.

## Chapter 1.7: Should I charge more for special services?

Anything special should affect your rate. Martha, an experienced American translator, told us that she thinks of her work as a production line in a factory: a standard product will get the standard rate, and any special product that has different features will cost more.

We do not agree with Martha on this one, because all translation jobs are not created equal and every job is a special one. Still, we realize that some cases require much more work than others and therefore deserve a higher rate.

Nearly 80 percent of source documents are delivered as Microsoft Word documents. Sometimes, though, your client is going to want it delivered in another format. Or perhaps the job is an especially difficult one. For whatever reason, you know this job is going to be more work than your usual .12 USD per word rate will cover.

You will be wise to preview the source documents and get a very clear description of the project before you quote a rate for any job. You want to be fair to your client, yes, but you also want to be fair to yourself.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) you will be able to see a portion of the document before placing a bid; you'll also see the file type and other important parameters.

## Chapter 1.8: Should I charge my personal clients at a different rate than I charge agencies?

Most of the translators we know would say they prefer working with end clients but almost all of them get most of their money from working for translation agencies.

The reason for that is simple. Translators are good at translation, they are not good and do not have time to deal with marketing. On the other hand, translation agencies are good at marketing.

So, if you can't beat them, join them. Try generating the best relationship with translation agencies and online marketplaces like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com).

Remember that translation agencies are just mediators and as such, you will have to propose to them competitive quotes.

If you ask yourself why you should charge agencies less than private clients, the answer is simple – translation agencies usually pay on time, whereas getting the full payment from many end clients may be almost impossible.

The problem with online translation marketplaces is that you get the payments directly from the end clients and you have to negotiate with them. [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) brings a new approach to the process – you will just place a bid and forget about it till you get the email indicating that you had been awarded with the job. No negotiation, no payment terms, no chatting and wasting time - Just pure work.

In addition, as we mentioned before, you should count the jobs you work on and not the clients.

The bottom line is that if you work with private clients, don't feel uncomfortable in charging them more than you charge translation agencies and translation marketplaces like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com).

## Chapter 1.9: The Wisdom of Discount Pricing

You can offer several different types of discounts, including quantity discounts for clients who bring you huge jobs; seasonal discounts for those times of the year when business slows; promotional discounts to promote your business; and cash discounts to reward your clients who settle their account before it's due.

The best and easiest way to make your client satisfied is to give him a discount. The problem starts when you have existing clients that keep asking for higher discounts.

The discounted rate becomes the standard rate and you end up losing money.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution for this problem. Any direct contact between a client and a provider is a potential conflict. Many translators we have met take it personally and are frustrated by the never-ending conflicts with clients.

That is exactly the reason we believe translation agencies had been a good business model for clients and for translators. But not anymore; today, translation agencies are taking high commissions that make the reduced payment you receive look ridiculous.

The best model today could be found in [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) where there is no contact between client and translator. No one will ask you for a discount or exhaust you in an endless negotiation. [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) will take care of all the contacts with the clients.

## Chapter 1.10: Should I offer a discount for early payment?

Eighty percent of freelance translators do not offer a cash discount for early payment and we believe they are doing the right thing. The problem with any kind of discount is that your client will expect a discount from now on, and he will expect it to get higher and higher.

We at [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) believe that you should do what you are good at – translation. The less you waste your time on other things - like negotiating payment terms - the better. Try to simplify all financial issues, as they are pretty complicated as they are. Focus on translation, and if you don't have enough jobs, focus on getting more jobs (that's jobs, and not clients).

## Chapter 1.11: Should I offer a reduced rate for repeated words?

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we are strong believers in an ultimate combination of man and machine. We believe that any routine work can be replaced or aided by computers or machines.

If you are not using any TM (translation memory) program, we strongly suggest you start using one. We are not going to promote any program, although we have our favorite. TM programs will not replace you – they will just help you in translating more words in the same amount of time.

However, we do not support the current trend of translation clients demanding translators to use TM tools. We believe that every translator has methods that work the best for him.

A high percentage of repeated words or phrases can definitely make your translation work easier and shorter in duration. If that is the case, you should take it into consideration when calculating a quote. Our advice would be not to present it as a discount because one discount leads to the other and the client learns to expect discounts.

## Part 2: Managing the work

It sounds so simple: you make a bid on a translation job, you are awarded the project, and [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) handles much of the paperwork. That part is simple; the complicated part is in getting that job, and all the others you have on your calendar, finished in a timely manner to your clients' satisfaction.

Freelance translators frequently work on more than one job at once. And it's not uncommon for those jobs to have a 24-hour turnaround. You can handle the workload in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, you can wing it, go without rest and food, and finish your tasks as best you can in an unstructured environment. Or, you can get a planner, establish regular hours for work, set up office space, and manage your time and your work efficiently.

Clearly, the second option is the better option. It's up to you to decide how many projects you can juggle, given your own personal time constraints. There are a few translators who say they have never missed a deadline, but it happens more than you may think. And it's not good. So be honest with yourself and your clients about your ability to deliver.

## Chapter 2.1: Which job takes priority? Where should I start?

Most of the translators accept different jobs from more than one client, all with the same deadline. It takes time to learn how best to manage this scenario and decide which of your jobs takes priority. You will undoubtedly make a mistake or two along the way; as long as you develop a system in the process, you'll be okay.

Two important insights we keep getting from translators we meet:

1. There is no good trouble – If you have trouble with too many translation jobs today and you do not handle it properly, you might find yourself with no translation jobs tomorrow.
2. Failing to plan is planning to fail – You must plan your tasks if you do not want to fail.

We believe that each translator should develop his own planning methods so we will not recommend any planning tool. Writing notes might be as good as using Microsoft Calendar or a Gantt chart (a type of bar chart that you can use to illustrate your schedule) to plan your tasks.

Prioritizing translation jobs is not an easy task. We are going to present you 3 common methods. They all have their pros and cons; we tend to think the third one is the best one for most translators.

### **1. FIFO – first in first out-**

According to this method, the order you work on translation jobs will be based on the time you received them from the client; it is not dependent on the due date.

You will first work on the first job you get, then on the second one and so forth.

Translators that work with this method claim that it is the simplest method and if they work around the clock, they never miss a deadline.

## **2. LIFO – last in first out-**

According to this method, the order you work on translation jobs will also be based on the time you received them from the client, only in this case, you will first work on the last translation job you received.

Very few translators that we know work with this method which requires many resources but might be efficient.

## **3. Early due date**

According to this method, the order your work on translation jobs will be based only their due dates.

You will work first on the translation job you must deliver first (the one with the earliest due date).

This method is the most efficient one in today's dynamic world. It will ensure you finish all your translation jobs in time.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we believe that the early due date is the best method. The minute we offer you the job, we will make sure you know the time left to deliver it.

## Chapter 2.2: How can I set realistic deadlines?

Deadline – the very word has an ominous ring to it. Actually, deadlines can be your friends if they are realistic and achievable. Your challenge is to set deadlines that you can meet and that meet your clients' needs.

Before you get started, distinguish between "hard" deadlines, those that you absolutely must meet, and "soft" deadlines that will motivate you to keep to a schedule without carrying dire consequences if you miss one.

Here are a few tips to help you set good deadlines:

- Pick deadlines for tasks that need them, but don't get so excited about due dates that you create unnecessary stress for yourself. And setting a bunch of frivolous deadlines won't help you manage your time on task.
- Be totally honest with yourself: if you know for a fact that a project will take you at least two days, don't give yourself a deadline of tomorrow. On the other hand, if your client wants the job completed tomorrow, that must be your deciding factor; it's a hard deadline.
- Set due dates that will come up in the near future. A deadline of two days from now will light a fire under you in a way that one next month just can't do. If you're working on a project that really is due in a month, break it into smaller parts and establish a series of deadlines that start as soon as tomorrow.
- Write your deadlines down in your planner. It's fine to have them in your head, but you'll find they have much more of a driving force when

they're looking back at you from a page in your calendar.

Many of your clients are going to specify a drop-dead date for the completion of their project, and that will help you map your time. If someone is vague on dates, don't be shy about asking; it will save misunderstanding in the future.

## Chapter 2.3: How can I keep on task and on time?

It is relatively easy to stay focused on your job when you go to someone else's workplace every day. When you work for yourself, especially if your office is in your home, you may find it more difficult to spend time on task. Your business cannot flourish if you don't devote yourself to it when you're supposed to. One very simple way to stay focused on your work is to remove outside distractions. Cell phones, instant messages and personal email are interruptions that you don't need during your working hours. Discipline yourself to read your email at the end of the day; don't log on to your IM server while you're working; turn off the cell phone and do your text messaging after-hours. Make an appointment with clients who want to use IM to discuss business during the day.

Begin each day by going over the tasks planned for the day. Keep them in your mind as you work through your day.

Schedule time in your day for personal tasks. Resist the urge to bake cookies or scrub the floor during working hours, especially if you work from an office in your home. Write those tasks in your planner, assign a priority to them and handle them as you do the rest of your projects.

You can avoid fatigue and "translator's block" when working on a lengthy project if you look for good stopping places and set it aside every now and again throughout the day. Use the time to work on something else. Better yet, do some yoga or take a walk. You'll return to work refreshed and reinvigorated.

Stay on top of your clients' deadlines, but don't panic if one is looming. Panic isn't productive; relax, catch your breath, get a glass of water.

## Chapter 2.4: How can I manage my time?

Unfortunately, most freelance translators don't know how to manage their time.

The majority of freelance translators have a steady flow of work, yet only a small percentage work a regular schedule. The majority work at least five or six days every week, juggling up to three projects at a time. When you register as a provider with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) and manage your time wisely, you may quickly find yourself with a happy assortment of translation jobs.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we believe that you, as a translator should focus only on translation and not on other issues like managing negotiations and conversations with clients. We want to help you manage your time more efficiently.

Start keeping a planner; prioritize your projects; reduce distractions and you will have done much of what time management experts recommend. The trick now is to follow through.

Don't let yourself be sidetracked by bells and whistles from tasks that are important. Use the tools you have put in place to manage your time, and be serious about it.

## Part 3: Managing the Financial End of the Business

It's a lucky person who has an opportunity to work at what he/she loves. Love won't pay the bills, though, so you need to develop a business mentality and manage your finances in a businesslike way.

[www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) will give you a secure source for payment, but it's up to you to handle things after that.

Two pieces of advice regarding finances can go some way toward helping you keep the business on solid footing.

First, keep a separate invoice for each client. Make a note at the top of the fees you and your client agreed on for the job (for example, \$.12 per word). Make a separate entry for every task you complete, along with its associated charges. And indicate payments you receive from the client.

And develop a bookkeeping system that will allow you to track your income and expenses. There are a number of good electronic systems, or you can get a ledger and keep your books by hand. The numbers work the same, either way.

At [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we want to help you focus on translation and not on bureaucratic issues. You will get a single secure payment for all the jobs done in the same month. No payment delays, no partial payment and no need to chase after unreliable clients.

### Chapter 3.1: What payment methods are available to my clients and which are best?

Any payment method would be applicable as long as you are compensated for commissions, late deliveries and so forth.

It's very difficult to identify one best payment method. If you can wait for the post, your clients can mail you a check. They can wire money through Western Union. Or they can send payment to your PayPal or Moneybookers account.

There are some unscrupulous characters out there who will cancel payment on a check or a credit card transaction, even at PayPal. It's nearly impossible to protect yourself from these types, although [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) can help. Fortunately, the bad ones are vastly outnumbered by your good clients, who want to treat you fairly.

In today's online business environment, most of the freelance translators prefer getting their payments through Paypal or Moneybookers. They have little or no commission at all and are consider secure (both are supported at [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com)).

## Chapter 3.2: What payment terms should I ask?

It is a sad fact that there are people out there who are less than honest. There is always a risk that you won't be paid for your work if you deliver copy before receiving payment, although registration with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) reduces that risk dramatically.

You can protect yourself to a certain extent by asking for a retainer before you begin any job, coupled with a payment schedule tagged to your deliverables. It is not unreasonable to ask for 25 percent of the final fee at the project's outset; 50 percent upon completion of a first draft; and 25 percent when you deliver a final, revised draft.

We believe that you should never reject a translation job because of payment terms. The standard in the translation market is full payment done after the job is completed and approved by the client. The chances are you will not find clients that will pay you before the job is completed. Many professional translators we meet report that their clients expect them to deliver revised copy without compensation; overcome this challenge by figuring the cost of revisions into your original bid/quote.

Remember, if you do a thorough proofread on your work before you deliver it, your client is less likely to ask for revisions. Most often, when there is an error in a translated document, it is a typo; look for typing mistakes, grammatical gaffes, and incorrectly translated text.

## Part 4: Growing your translation business

Success is a wonderful thing and quite often you'll find that your successes breed more success. Of course, when you register with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), you can use their tools to streamline your business processes, giving you more time to handle the translation end, which will make it even easier for you to grow.

Once you get up and running, you may see your business growing whether you want it to or not. Start planning for growth early so you can stay on top of things as your workload increases.

Go through some what-if scenarios (What if I'm sick? What if my computer crashes? What if I take a holiday? What if I'm overloaded with jobs?), and start to plan so you're ready to handle most anything that arises.

Eventually, you may start looking to add revenue streams to your little enterprise. If so, read on.

## Chapter 4.1: Should I outsource my work?

You may have heard the word “outsource” before. It refers to a process through which you contract with another translation service provider for assistance with the jobs your clients have asked you to complete.

One day soon, you may find yourself completely overwhelmed with work, or a client may ask you to work in a language you don’t use. You hate to turn away jobs, yet you know you can’t handle these new requests.

You should not feel uncomfortable to outsource jobs. You might be surprised to find out that more than half of the freelance translators turn to outsourcing as a way to handle the work. Your client wants the job to be completed as early as possible and as long as you follow his guidelines and provide a high quality service, he may not care who actually translated each word in his document. Yes, an outside contractor will do the job for you, but you may face issues with quality control, especially if the job is in a language you are not familiar with.

Actually, many translators registered to Tomedes have also registered as buyers to outsource jobs through [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com). The quality assurance mechanism and the vast number of language pairs make [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) the first choice for outsourcing translation jobs by most translators.

If you do decide to outsource a project, establish guidelines up front:

- What amount will you pay for the work?
- When is it due?
- Who will be responsible to proof the work?
- Who will make revisions, if needed?
- Who will have rights to the translated document?

When you outsource a project to another person, you remain responsible for the project's completion, so make sure you're comfortable in that role.

If you're squeamish about outsourced jobs, you can always tell your client, "No." Almost every translator does it on occasion, and many of them say it hasn't damaged their relationship with the client.

## Chapter 4.2: Should I start a translation agency of my own?

No matter what made you consider starting your own translation agency, many of the reasons you list may lead to a wrong decision.

Most of the translation agencies are earning little if no revenue at all. Translation agencies are just another element in the translation food chain and in today's globalized market; they have trouble finding their place. Online marketplaces like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) are getting their portion.

There are two possible reasons why you think of starting your own translation agency:

1. You are tired of translating documents on your own all day – if that is the case, you will get tired of managing translators very soon. You can't run a translation agency without having a passion for translation.
2. You receive more translation jobs than you can handle – if that is the case, the magic word is “outsource.” Outsource jobs and maximize your revenues. Use online marketplaces like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) that will ensure you get a high quality job, as if you did it yourself.

Before you consider bringing more people into your small business, think about what that move means: you will become a personnel manager. If translation is your first love, you may not want to wrestle with bigger business issues.

If you do decide to start your own translation agency, begin with a solid foundation of research to make certain you are familiar with all the implications. You'll need to know about

- Employment tax laws
- Human resources issues
- Budgeting
- Finance
- Accounting

Put together a detailed, written business plan that lays out all the essential information in an organized manner. Provide a description of your business, a marketing plan, an analysis of the competition, proposals for operations and personnel, financial data – everything an investor or client will want to know about this new enterprise.

You can find many examples of business plans online; follow them and create a strong plan to get started down the path to success.

### Chapter 4.3: Should I teach language classes?

Most translators recognize that the ability to work with languages is special – it's a gift, an art, a craft. It's not surprising that many of them also teach language skills to others.

Teaching languages can add a new dimension to your business life that involves only independent work today.

Working with language is your life's work, and there is no reason you cannot teach others to work with a second language. If you think you'd like to teach, go for it. For best results, prepare your course in a professional manner. First, you must choose if you will teach conversational language or help others to become literate in your language, as well as conversational. Either way, you're going to need instructional materials – a course outline, a workbook, and language tapes.

Start in a friendly setting, perhaps a community recreation center or youth center. If you have completed college coursework in a second language, think about teaching in a community college.

Sign on for a single course; you'll know soon enough if teaching is for you. If you love the experience, keep going and share your gift.

Before you start, you must make sure you are doing for the right reasons. If you want to add another dimension to your business life, that's makes sense. But, if you are looking for more revenue because you don't generate enough translating, teaching may be a wrong decision. If that is the case, you must focus on one business and make the most out of it.

Try to find out why you do not make enough income from translation.  
Learn how working for a marketplace like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) can improve your financial status.

## Chapter 4.4: Should I provide other language services?

Do some research, and you'll discover that translators provide a variety of language services.

- Certified translation
- Notarized translation
- Audio and/or video translation
- Interpretation
- Proofreading and editing
- Research
- Consulting

If any of these tasks sound interesting to you, take some time to learn how you can get started.

You might consider focusing on doing what you love and what you are good at. You are good at translation and you probably love translating, so why should you add more services to your portfolio?

Analyze the reasons for that – Is it because you don't get enough income, is it because you're getting bored? Have you considered working with a translation marketplace like [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) where you will get a vast number of translation jobs on different domains?

## Chapter 4.5: Should I learn additional languages?

Researchers believe that language acquisition is a natural phenomenon. That is, our brains pick up language without being asked to. Infants and toddlers provide perhaps the best example of language learning. They make it look easy.

You know from experience that it takes hard work and years of dedication to learn a second and a third language. Most people find it nearly impossible to get past the very early stages. So when you ask if you should learn another language, you must know that you're really the only person who can answer that question. To do so, break the large question down into a series of simpler questions.

- What language should I learn?
- Why that one? What's in it for me?
- Is it similar in any respect to a language I already know?
- If not, do I have time in my day to spend learning another language?

To be useful in your translation business, you need to develop a high level of comprehension and literacy in your new language. It will require quite a bit of serious study. We at [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) suggest you make sure you are making the most out of your current knowledge before acquiring more of the same.

Of course, you might want to learn a new language because it's sweets for your brain. If that's the case, get going!

## Part 5: Your Clients

Clients are the lifeblood of your translation service. The fact is, without clients, you have no business. One of the most important aspects of your freelance translation service is to find clients and then to develop and maintain good relationships with them so they return to you again and again with projects.

It is always a pleasure to work with good clients, to establish a professional relationship built on mutual respect and trust. It is worth your time to market yourself and your translation services to attract the best. A first step in establishing trust is to reassure your clients that you have the skills and expertise to finish their job in a timely and professional manner.

Unfortunately, more clients do not necessarily mean more income. More translation jobs do!

More clients do mean more negotiations, more financial paper work and more headaches for most translators.

Too many translators spend too many resources getting new clients that will not bring them more jobs. We believe that translators should focus on translating and not marketing because that's what they are good at.

Try looking for a minimal number of clients that will bring you tons of new translation jobs each. Take [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) for example – one client (a single and secure payment source) that will let you work on many translation jobs at your time and your rates.

## Chapter 5.1: What is the best way to get new clients?

When getting new clients you must set a goal. The best goal as we in [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) see it is getting the most profitable clients for the least resources spent.

There are many ways freelance translators get new clients. We will focus on the most common ones.

1. Good old advertising – Many translators' still use old-fashioned ways, like newspapers ads and postal flyers. These methods are relatively expensive and their return on investment is usually negative. We would advise you to focus your efforts on online marketing.
2. Online classified ads – this is a basic online method many translators use. Looking for job on websites like [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) and [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com) or local jobs sites usually requires a lot of time without making a real advantage of the global nature of the translation.
3. Online advertising – This method is one of the most popular ones, particularly using Google AdSense or a similar tool. Advertising your services to people who looked for the exact same services using Google or other search engines is a great idea. The problem is, all the translation tycoons have already been doing it for a number of years. You will need a lot of money to compete with them and to get reasonable leads using this method.
4. Join a translation agency – joining a translation agency was a good

option a few years ago but not anymore. Agencies spend a lot of money on marketing due to growing competition, and the freelance translator ends up paying their advertising expenses through high commissions.

5. Translation marketplaces – this is definitely the best option today and more and more freelance translators realize that. Working from home or a small office at your own time and your own rates is a privilege translators did not have just 5 years ago.

But even among the translation marketplaces, you have a few different options.

You should look for one that delivers you a single secure payment as opposed to many small transactions from clients from all around the world.

You should look for one that will handle the negotiations with the client for you. This will save you a lot of time and money.

There is only one marketplace that fits all the above –

[www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com)

## Chapter 5.2: How should I negotiate with my clients?

Many translators ask us for negotiation guidelines. The best advice we give them is not to negotiate. One should do anything he can do avoid negotiation.

Your client is probably more experienced than you in negotiation and negotiation often leads to unbridgeable conflicts between a translator and a client.

Working with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) you will never have to negotiate with the client. [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) will manage the marketplace for you.

If you are still interested in negotiation guidelines, here are a few tips that may be worth a fortune:

1. Decide on the thresholds you are not going to cross. For each negotiation parameter – money, time, revisions - define your limit. Then, decide on your starting point for each. You must leave a bargaining margin for each parameter
2. Put yourself in the place of the client – try to think as the client thinks. Analyze which parameters are more and less important to him and when talking to him, say what he wants to hear.
3. Don't make the first move – a basic negotiation guideline is always let the other side make the first offer. That also works for your case. Ask the client about his budget and his timetable - when he needs the translation job to be completed. You might be surprised by his answers, so don't sell yourself short.

### Chapter 5.3: How should I handle rude clients?

The best way to handle rude clients would be to avoid them.

Unfortunately, we cannot always identify a rude client when we meet one, so here is a list of proper reactions for rude behaviors by clients:

1. Action – The client does not value my work. He does not appreciate the time, effort and thinking I devoted to translating his document.  
Reaction – No action will compensate you for your feeling. Any reaction on your part will probably elicit a negative response from the client, and this chain of reactions will do no good for you or for your business. The best action would be to move on to working for a better client.
2. Action – The client expects me to work for free – he wants me to proofread, translate or fix revisions for free.  
Reaction – In this case, you might ask a colleague if the task the client is asking you to do for free is reasonable. You cannot be objective at this point and free revisions and even free translations in some cases may be acceptable.
3. Action – The client requests endless revisions.  
Reaction – You must always define the number of free revisions before starting the translation job. When you consider his revision requests, be honest. Does the client exaggerate or are these revisions essential due to your mistakes or misunderstanding. If you believe the client is exaggerating, talk to him and try to explain it to him with examples from the

domain of his occupation.

4. Action – Payment issues – The client is willing to pay you only a partial amount, not willing to pay at all or wishes to postpone the payment.

Reaction – These cases are unfortunately more common than one would expect. You should explain to the client in a polite manner the importance of this payment for you before threatening him with legal issues (most of the time, he knows your threats have no actual meaning).

Every business has lost debts and in some cases it will be better to go on and work on other translation jobs instead of hiring a collection agency.

The best method to deal with rude clients is to avoid them in the first place. By working with as few clients as you can, you will be able to develop long-lasting relationships with your clients. When you work with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com) we will handle the client relationship for you - a great idea to avoid these difficult issues.

## Chapter 5.4: How should I handle unexpected events

You probably have experienced some unexpected events that affected the quality of your work or made you miss a deadline for a translation job. Try managing your risks in advance – think of any event that may happen and incorporate it in the quote you give the client. For example, if you know you will be unable to work one day, add this day to your quote.

The best advice we can give you is to be honest with your client. The moment you learn of something that might affect your work, contact your clients and let them know. You may be pleasantly surprised to learn that usually they understand completely and will not ask for any compensation.

Anastasia, A Russian translator registered with [www.Tomedes.com](http://www.Tomedes.com), told us about a time when she accidentally sent a translated document to the wrong client. She immediately contacted both clients and surprisingly both understood her honest mistake and appreciated her being frank with them.