

# On-Site Translation Work

A few months ago, I was asked to be part of an extensive on-site translation and review project. The catch was that the job was not located in my adopted hometown of Las Vegas, but across the country.

I've worked as an in-house translator, but had not done an on-site project as a small business owner. I really enjoy new experiences, so I made a few phone calls, picked a colleague's brain and recruited her to the project, scheduled my husband's visit to come see me, packed, and signed up for up to four weeks. The client, a legal services firm, agreed to my terms, so I was all set. I didn't really know what to expect, but I was up for the challenge.

I can't reveal the project details, but I can provide some general information so you know what an on-site project might entail.

- **Limited Information:** Before arriving at the job site, I had essentially no information about the project. It was so highly confidential that I had to commit to the job without knowing what it entailed. Naturally, this made me uncomfortable. I wasn't sure I'd be the right linguist, but the client assured me that my background was well suited for the assignment.
- **Long Hours:** I had committed to working at least 50 hours a week. Since I usually work that much anyway, the amount of time wasn't a problem. However, I had to dedicate 50 hours to just that one client, which meant that I put in at least another 25 hours at night and on weekends to keep up with my other clients. I have a great team that works with me, and my twin sister and business partner managed a lot of projects for me, but I still had unusually long workdays and was pretty exhausted.
- **Limited Resources:** As the nature of this particular project was confidential (and it's my understanding that most on-site projects are), we weren't allowed

## *Unexpected changes can be par for the course for on-site projects.*

to bring in outside laptops. Most of my best and favorite dictionaries are on my hard drive, so I felt a bit lost without them. While we were encouraged to use whichever online resources were available, there's only so much you can do without top-notch dictionaries. I found myself wishing for better resources. When working on a project like this you have to be prepared to work without your usual resources, including CAT tools.

- **Different Working Relationships:** I had the opportunity to work with some highly talented ATA colleagues on this project. Others were not translators, but rather bilingual professionals (the client wasn't looking for translators exclusively for this project). There was definitely a skill differential in terms of translation abilities, but we all worked independently of each other, so my colleagues' performance did not affect my own. This might not always be the situation for on-site assignments, depending on the performance metrics the client has established.
- **Different Work Space:** I'm used to working from a home office or from a shared office that's open and light. For this assignment, we were in a room with long tables and computer terminals and no windows. That was a bit difficult to get used to.
- **Autonomy:** We did have quite a bit of autonomy during this project, so I

didn't feel micromanaged, but we did have frequent check-ins with a project manager who provided us with as much information as possible. It was a bit of a shift for me to have check-ins, and not everyone who has had their own business might like this aspect.

- **Things Change:** The project ended sooner than originally planned, and that can be par for the course for these on-site projects as something changes along the chain of command. Any changes trickle down to everyone, including the translators.

To sum it up, I'm glad I took this assignment and had this experience. While certain things were challenging (the lack of resources, the windowless room, etc.), it was an interesting assignment. Most importantly, I deepened my relationships with linguists I already knew and I met some fantastic new colleagues as well. 🌟



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