

A close-up photograph of a person's hands in a dark suit jacket, holding an orange and white marker and writing on a white document. The document is resting on a dark, reflective surface, creating a clear reflection of the hand and the marker. The background is dark and out of focus.

“Professional Linguist Seekign Work”: Tips for Building a Successful Localization Résumé

By Elizabeth M. Taylor

As professional translators, we like to imagine that the quality of our work speaks for itself. However, before we can prove this, we must first get past the ever-crucial step of having projects assigned to us in the first place—hence the need for an effective résumé. Any vendor manager in this industry will have hundreds of examples from so-called professional linguists touting their expertise with phrases such as “I am

Remember that page space is valuable real estate, and each line needs to move you toward your end goal.

a native speaker of Spanish language with a large experience in translations.” We like to believe that an error like this would never happen to us, and that our résumé shines above all

others and makes for enthralling reading.

Although we also like to believe that hiring managers would spend considerable time poring over ➡

our résumé, this is simply not the reality—especially in the world of

mation, we will be better prepared to identify what should and should not

ably do want to send a hard copy of your résumé on nice letterhead—and you definitely want to emphasize your experience working with firms directly as their single-source language provider. However, if you are targeting localization companies, a hard copy is sure to end up at the bottom of a recycle bin. Agencies will want to know that you can work under tight deadlines, with large teams, on multiple components, and in specific, specialized areas. Therefore, you need to find out all you can about your potential employer.

Although your résumé will cover in some detail your experience for potential employers, your cover letter needs to grab their attention and tell them the most essential points.

translation. Project managers tend to coordinate numerous projects simultaneously, and must constantly juggle client communication, respond to linguistic queries, create purchase orders, approve invoices, and deliver files—all with urgent deadlines!

Because their time is in such short supply and high demand, project managers tend to work with a small pool of trusted linguists who they know will deliver the work for their clients on time, for a fair, well-established price, and without errors in meaning. This begs the question: in this hectic work environment, how can you get your résumé noticed when recruiters are receiving tens, even hundreds, of résumés each month? As you read through the following tips, pay attention to the two sample résumés on pages 20 and 21 to see how they compare with your own.

Start with the Basics

Before writing a résumé, you must start by asking the most basic questions about what exactly you are targeting. The end goal needs to be clear to you (and therefore to the recruiter), including whether or not an “objective” section is to be included in the résumé itself. By understanding why we are compiling this important infor-

mation, we will be better prepared to identify what should and should not be included. You can start by asking yourself the five W’s listed here:

Whom am I targeting? If you are targeting a private law firm as a potential direct client, for example, you prob-

What do I want to stand out? We all have unique skills and special knowledge that sets us apart from our competitors and colleagues. Sure, we are

Remember to ask FIVE KEY QUESTIONS when assembling your résumé:

- 1 Whom am I targeting?
- 2 What do I want to stand out?
- 3 When am I available?
- 4 Where will I be working?
- 5 Why am I sending this out?

all excellent linguists, but how many of us have provided voiceover talent for a commercial? Or have a computer programming degree? Perhaps you have specific graphics or desktop publishing expertise, or perhaps you have been a sports announcer for—no joke—bilingual boxing matches? These are all examples of value-added services that will set you apart from your colleagues and may prove useful on unexpected, unusual projects.

When am I available? Some translators prefer working with local agencies so that they can get immediate resolution on potential queries, management questions, and other issues during regular business hours. Others do not mind a one-day delay, and are more open to working with companies outside the U.S. (which also means that your résumé will need to be translated into the language of the hiring company). If you have a regular job and are simply looking for evening or weekend translation work to earn extra cash, this should be made clear so that expectations regarding, for example, delivery times and the scope and size of projects can be taken into consideration when assigning and accepting projects.

Where will I be working? Many translators choose the profession because it offers the flexibility to work from home, but keep in mind that there are plenty of opportunities for in-house work, even as a self-employed freelancer. Consider whether you would be open to going onsite for quality assurance, proofreading, or even linguistic or functional software testing jobs in your particular language pair. Although it is nice to be able to work in your pajamas, onsite work can give you great exposure to potential clients,

and often gives you the opportunity to meet and network with other professional linguists. Onsite work also tends to pay better than work that is done from home.

Why am I sending this out? This is the most important of the five W's to consider: specifically, what type of work am I seeking? If you work as both a translator and interpreter, it is fine to mention this on your résumé. However, you should have one résumé for each job description, unless you are just starting out and lack enough concrete examples to fill one page for both. If you have experience as a linguist, but are looking for work as an in-house project manager, hiring agencies probably will not care about your vast experience translating legal and marketing texts. They want to know that you can manage timelines, budgets, and multiple resources seamlessly. If you are seeking work in legal translations only, you will need to emphasize specific legal translation experience, and not dedicate equal amounts of page space to the other areas of expertise in which you work. If you work in a highly specialized field, this needs to be stated very clearly with multiple concrete examples of jobs completed. That way, hiring managers understand that you have specific and detailed job knowledge, and not that you have simply been assigned a few random projects in that particular industry. Remember that page space is valuable real estate, and each line needs to move you toward your end goal.

The Cover Letter

As language professionals, translators are expected to have flawless communication skills. Although your résumé will cover in some detail your experience for potential employers,

your cover letter needs to grab their attention and tell them the most essential points.

Following the ever-present rule that project managers are short on time, you will need to summarize your experience in the cover letter. Use bullet points to their maximum advantage and keep it short. If the agency has an online application, be sure to complete it since this usually means that you will be automatically entered into their database and will be called up in vendor searches. You should also follow up with vendor managers or hiring project managers regularly to stay on their radar, and to make sure that the information has been received rather than automatically filtered to an unmonitored e-mail inbox. After all, you never know when that first project will come in that does fit your profile—you just need to help them to keep you first and foremost in their minds.

An important thing to remember in your introduction is that the single greatest aid in getting hired by a new company—especially as a linguist—is through personal referrals. If you know someone who is already working with the company you are targeting, and that person will attest to the quality of your work, be sure to let both parties know. The rule in translation is: References! References! References! Be sure to use all available references to your best advantage.

If you are short on personal referrals, then try the end-client route and mention names of well-known companies to grab their attention, even if the company was not your end-client. For example, if you are seeking work as a medical translator, you might say: “Through translation companies such as Lionbridge, SDL, and Medialocate, I have completed many key projects relating to medical devices and ➡

Font is difficult to read. Does not match the rest of the résumé.

Unlikely number of languages. Native language not indicated. Recruiters likely to assume all languages are weak.

Too much white space. Too little information.

Useless information. Grammar mistakes. Clearly not proofed by a native English speaker.

General texts are by definition not specialized. Internet articles are not necessarily technical. After 10 years in the industry, concrete examples should be easy to provide.

Confusing. Should concern education only.

Again, unhelpful information. No mention of translation tools.

Large discrepancy between word rate and minimum charge. Rates do not conform to current market rate.

Joe Badexample

Professional Freelance Translator in:
Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, English – Fluent
German, Arabic, Russian - High Level

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

My name is Joe Badexample. I'm interested in working for you. I am a professional translator having over ten years' experience in translating from many languages. I have with a large experience in translations.

Specialized areas: *General Texts, Education, Humanities and Literature.*
During these ten years I have translated:
 - *General texts: newspaper articles, brochures, press releases, social science, music, art texts, etc.*
 - *Technical texts: user's manuals, Internet articles.*
 - *Judicial texts: contracts and other legal documents.*

Personal profile:
University Degree UNIVERSITY OF XXXX (1987)
Degree in English Language Teaching (1991)
I can guarantee experienced, reliable, high-quality translations and interpretations.

Computer:
 PC with Ram
 Laser printer with scanner
 Dictionaries
 Database and glossaries in Internet
 Software: Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other softwares.

Rates: per word 0.05 US Dollars, minimum charge 50 US Dollars

Figure 1: Example of poorly written résumé

Jane Goodexample

Certified Translator: English > Canadian French

address

email

phone

Summary

Key Services: Translation, Editing, Proofreading, Linguistic/Functional Testing, QA
PC/Mac with some DTP capabilities (Illustrator, Quark, InDesign)
Proficient in TM Tools: Trados, SDLX, SDL TMS, Idiom, Déjà Vu
Rates (in USD): .13/word (includes edit), \$30.00/hour

Accreditations & Certifications

Certified English to Canadian French Translator from both the CTTIC and ATA.
Also an active member of LISA, GALA, proz.com, translatorscafe.com.

Education

2004 D.E.S.S. (Diploma of Specialized Superior Studies, graduate level) - University of Montreal
Translation, English-French, focus on High-Tech and Life Sciences
2000 Bachelor's Degree - University of California at Berkeley
Business Administration
Minor in the Language and Literature of France and Quebec

Translation Experience & Specializations (references available upon request)

General:

Translation, Editing, QA and DTP of general texts for translation agencies and direct clients: Print and Online Articles, Press Releases, Corporate Policies, Procedural Documents, etc.

IT and High-Tech:

Translation, Editing, QA and Testing for software and hardware products: Strings, Installation Manuals, User's Guides, Quick Start Guides, Datasheets, White Papers, Product Manuals, Packaging, etc.
(APPLE, CANON, COMPAC, HP, MICROSOFT, NOKIA, SEAGATE)

Biomedical and Life Sciences:

Translation, Editing and DTP for medical and pharmaceutical products: Medical Device Inserts, Instructions For Use, X-Ray Equipment, Hospital Equipment Guides, Pharmacology Reports, FDA Filings, etc.
(ABBOTT LABS, BIOMET, PFIZER, TELEFLEX, ZURN)

Administration and Finance:

Translation, Editing, and QA for administrative and financial documents: Insurance Guides, Coverage Guides, Financial Reports, Auditing and Asset Evaluation Reports, Services and Incorporation Contracts, etc.
(BLOOMBERG, FARMERS, PRUDENTIAL, VISA)

*see interpretation resume for interpretation experience

Other

- Team in Training (marathons)
- Women's soccer league
- Swim coach
- Classical guitar
- Flute
- First Aid certified
- Language tutor
- Transcription
- Copywriting

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Language pair
clear and realistic

Services offered clear.
Value-added services
included. Tool Current.

Legitimate sources.
Shows the applicant is
active in the industry.

Pertinent education.

Easy to read.
Organized. Grouped
appropriately.

Specifically points to
other résumé.

Interesting,
Memorable.
Possibly helpful for
unusual projects.

Shows résumé is
up-to-date.

Figure 2: Example of well written résumé

pharmacology reports for clients such as Abbott Labs, BD, and GlaxoSmithKline.” This will let potential employers know that not only do you have the technical knowledge to handle this type of project for their key accounts, but that you know how to work effectively with translation agencies themselves and are familiar with their expectations. In effect, it reassures potential employers that other agencies have felt confident enough to hire you, so they should too.

Last but not least, before hitting the “send” button, you must make sure that every word has been checked and double-checked, and that the message you are trying to convey is clear, concise, and error-free. Many times I have seen competent linguists damage their chances of being hired simply because they failed to proofread their résumé or cover letter—when that is the key to getting work in the first place! The hiring manager is left wondering if the mistake was an honest oversight, a glitch in the linguist’s automatic spell-checker, or a simple case of laziness. Either way, first impressions count.

A Few Do’s and Don’ts

Make your résumé attractive, professional, and easy to read: Translators are expected to be proficient in word processing applications, and your résumé must reflect this. A clerk might get away with typos or misaligned columns, but a translator will not! MS Word has résumé templates that make it easy to create an attractive résumé. Use bullet points, bolding, or italics to make specific expertise or key words stand out. Group your related experience together: for example, separate medical experience from marketing experience. Most importantly, make sure that someone who has not helped you write the content proofreads the final copy.

Quick Tips

- Make your résumé attractive, professional, and easy to read.
- Express what positions you are interested in and tailor the content accordingly.
- List concrete experience.
- List technical skills.
- Include value-added services.
- Have your résumé proofread by a native speaker.

This is the best way to check for obvious errors and cohesiveness because they will be looking at it with fresh eyes.

Express what positions you are interested in and tailor the content accordingly: You need to indicate if you are a translator who is also open to non-translation projects (quality assurance, testing, etc.). If you are an interpreter interested in consecutive or escort jobs, but not booth work, you need to clarify this. If you want a job as a translator or proofreader, do not include a full page of interpreting

experience and vice versa. While you might want to list that you provide both interpreting and translation services, each résumé should be tailored to the task at hand (you might want to include a note such as “see interpreting résumé”). The more your information is geared toward a specific job, the more likely you are to get hired for that job.

List concrete experience: Besides your education at home and abroad, you will want to list specific examples

of projects you have worked on. This should include the scope of work (translation, editing, proofing, quality assurance) as well as the field (patent, financial report) and end-client (Abbott Labs, Zimmer). If you need to bolster this section, consider taking on small pro bono projects. The bottom line is that recruiters need to be reassured that their clients will be happy with your work, so they want to know that you have concrete, relevant experience, and not just that you have “studied French for 15 years.” Again, be sure to group pertinent experience together so that translation agencies can recognize right away which types of projects fit your particular profile. Every translator can handle “general” texts, but not everyone can understand a toxicity report.

List technical skills: More and more companies require that their transla-

Useful Links

Résumé Help
<http://content.monster.com/resume>

Translator and Interpreter Job Listings
www.traduguide.com
www.translatorsbase.com
www.localizationworks.com

ATA Job Bank
www.atanet.org/jobban

get your foot in the door. Perhaps you work on PCs and Macs, or perhaps you can handle translation and desktop publishing? Since handling multiple stages in the localization process can save hours of project management time, if you mention how you can help your project manager, you will be more likely to be assigned new work. Another point to consider is that it is often our hobbies that make the

the cardinal sin of translation, and recruiters are certain to question your understanding of the industry’s standard practices if they see awkward or incomprehensible information in your résumé. Professional translators usually have a network of linguists whom they trust and work with on a regular basis. These friends and colleagues should be called upon for assistance, especially when putting together something as critical as a résumé. The good news is that whoever provides you assistance is certain to need your help at some point.

The more your information is geared toward a specific job, the more likely you are to get hired for that job.

tors own and be proficient in the latest translation memory tools. Indicate which programs you own (including the version), which programs you have been trained in, and any online management systems you are familiar with (Idiom, SDL TMS). The more you know, the greater the chances of getting hired for large projects requiring more than just language skills.

Include value-added services: With hundreds of résumés passing through an office every month, it is often a particular value-added service that will

difference: avid cooks will be assigned the culinary translations; gardeners will be sent the botanical jobs. By including your special interests and unique areas of expertise, not only will your chances of getting unusual projects increase, your résumé will stand out from the others, thus increasing your chances of being remembered when those particular projects do come in.

Have your résumé proofread by a native speaker: Failure to have your work proofread by a native speaker is

So What Should I Take Home with Me?

There is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to writing a résumé, and if you ask 10 people what must and must not be included, you are sure to get 10 different answers. Forget the general rules (an “objective” must be stated, never exceed one page, etc.), and instead focus on your personal experience and goals in sending your résumé out. Remember that although not all good résumés have exactly the same content, they are all concise, easy to follow, and attractive. Keep it simple but thorough, and you are sure to have a greater impact.

Happy hunting!

