

## BUILDING A BUDGET WORKSPACE FOR THE TRANSLATOR 2.5

A slow-paced trend in the last decade, the integration of technology into the translator's life has become exponentially impending in the last two years. The explosion of content creation brought by the web 2.0 has also been accompanied by the invasion of TMSs, CMSs, MT, wikis, terminology managers and colourful mobile applications stripping the once-upon-a-time peaceful land of freelancers and agencies alike. They are no longer expected to just read the newspapers and have a fine dictionary collection on the shelf, but they are expected to be masters of Internet search (and research), to have presence on no less than three social networks and to have an opinion on whether machine translation is going to change the world or not. And the funniest thing about it is that they are expected to be happy and thankful for all that fancy innovation that is called to make their life better.

However, the crude truth is that the average translator (or translation SME) does not like change. She has been working in the same way for years, has learnt the tricks to deal and the protocols to follow with a number of clients and feels she already has enough problems. And more important, she must have invested heavily on education, have spent a good money on computer equipment and have been "pushed" to acquire some costly software licenses. Her business is well set up and she wants to exploit it as long as possible, as she does not have the means to research new ways to do it.

With such a clash of perspectives, we can only accept their respective reasoning and try to re-conduct the situation, as reality out there is that translation industry is not only changing, but changing very rapidly. While clients become more demanding, budgets go smaller and competitors spring up from all around the globe. Stepping aside and thinking you will not be affected is no longer an option when you face the necessity of becoming more productive while you are paid the same or less than before. Even those (many) who not long ago were reluctant to even think giving Trados a try, are now realizing that future is around the corner and approaches very fast. If they want to survive the next quarter, translators need to upgrade their attitude and their tools to be ready to operate in a new scenario crowded with immediateness, social networks and all sort of language aids. They need to become translators v2.5.

As a Translator 2.5 you have to:

- Keep a perfect track of active or planned projects, quotes and tasks

Translations tend to come in smaller chunks. In the past, a technical manual 300 pages long might be translated by one to three different translators (depending on timing), so it was pretty easy to keep track of all of it.

Now, the same manual is going to be 80% post-edited and you can be hired to just take care of headlines, captions and small updates, perhaps for three manuals at the same time.

You need to keep track of all of it, of which POs you have got and which ones you don't, any invoices ending payment, etc.

You can run all this info through your customized mighty excel sheet, or you can

use something as powerful as Translator's Office 3000 for as little as €150.

- Understand what you have in your hands

Being so lucky as to only translate Word files is hardly going to last forever. The next age of translation is all about XML, as it is the easiest way to interoperate through different environments. When you get your next awkward set of files for translation, make sure to have a powerful text editor at hand and do not hesitate to just go and open any file with it. In a quick look, you will now about the tool it has been created with, the encoding to be used, intended use of languages, etc. If you are using a PC, you can go with Notepad 2, an advanced improvement of the typical Notepad from Windows. If you are using a Mac, the choice is even easier: grab TextWrangler and check all the available menus to see how powerful a free text editor can be. Both tools can be downloaded from the Web at no cost with just a few clicks.

- Use a translation memory

You might like it or not, but it is more likely that your productivity is going to need a boost. Those who have been using translation memories have quite an advantage over you, but you can make a fancy quick start. Just want to give it an easy try? Try OmegaT. It's free to use, it's available for Windows, Mac and Linux and will give you a good idea about what using a TM feels like. It may look too spartan and some say it is a bit limited when it comes to leverage, but it allows you to deal with many document formats, has a quite straight user help and a very easy learning curve (and includes some machine translation functionality).

Then, if you feel confident enough and like a braver jump ahead, check out Across Personal Edition. Many people know about Across as a server based tool aimed to translation companies or corporate localization departments. However, it must be noted that the Personal Edition is a fully-fledged standalone tool featuring all the expectable functions along with a rock-solid performance. With it, you will be able to carry on as much work as with most other paid CAT alternatives. You can even process Trados proprietary files, translate them with Across and deliver them back as if you would have run them through SDL's tool.

Then, if what you need is mobility, you can also give Wordfast Anywhere a try. It is a free to use browser-based translation memory tool, so it doesn't matter where you are or the computer you are using, just log in to their website, upload your files and memories, translate and get the clean files afterwards.

- Localize and resize easily

There are many localization suites around and they are quite expensive for a reason. However, if what you need is just to localize a small app, you will find that most of it is contained in XML files, which you can probably process easily with your CAT tool of choice. However, if you need to resize a little bit, there are some old friends still kicking around. Exescope and Reshacker allow you to translate different types of resources AND also admit some visual WYSIWYG adjusting. Good enough for the occasional localizer only.

- Manage your terminology

Excel sheets are still pretty common among professionals, so I can't recommend

against their use, as long as you keep them classified and updated. If you know you won't, you have options, though.

First, you can go full pro and use Termwiki or the Across terminology tool. These need some work to maintain, but every minute you spend on them is going to be much more rewarding than dealing with spreadsheets.

However, for the lazy kind, I suggest using Xbench. Xbench is capable of indexing all your spreadsheets, translation memories (after exporting them as TMX files), proprietary project files, glossaries, etc. In just a few minutes, you can pour all your terminology into Xbench, prioritize sources, set which fields to search and which might be updated at a later time (for ongoing translations) and which you should remain untouched (such as client's key terminology to follow). And Xbench is also a powerful QA tool for every kind of user.

#### - Manage your own content

Let's imagine that you work for three end clients and two translation companies that keep you busy most of your time. Each one of them has its own way of working, its own style guide, its own tool requirements and none of them care a thing about you working for different people. To each one of them, you are their 'expert and reliable linguist' and they expect you to not miss a step or make a mistake.

For decades we have been managing all this information with a combination of pen, paper and brain struggling. Now, we have software to help us, and it's all at your very fingertips.

Would like to document the different style guides, particularities, preferences or procedures of your clients? Why not document your own methodology? It could prove useful in the future if you forgot something or just want to share with a colleague. For this purpose, I suggest the use of two interesting platforms; that we all already know: Wikis and Wordpress.

Having a wiki (The very same system the Wikipedia uses) or a Wordpress site would only take half an hour to be up and running and the cost is virtually zero. You will need some server hosting, but the installation is piece of cake, just follow the steps.

Use categories to classify the content by client or tool, for instance, and have the site password-protected if you want to keep your knowledge repository private.

In this way, you will have your information available at all times, wherever you are, accessible from your cell phone and will be able to perform quick searches in order to find right what you are looking for.

#### - Be active in social media

You are running a business and need to get and stay in touch with clients, communicate with peers and prospects and let the world know a bit about yourself and what you do. Although this may sound very time-consuming, you can find some help out there. If you rather like desktop applications, you can use the Twitter app on the Mac, or Tweetdeck on Windows, both for free. However, if you fancy more the no-ties browser-based style, you will love Hootsuite and Klout, two free tools that not only are platform-independent, but also allow you to manage and update all your networks simultaneously.