

My First Experience with Client Outreach: Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs in the Trenches

By Alina R. Mugford



During the short time that I have had my translation company, I have made quite a few mistakes, but I have had many more successes. My passion for the profession, the clear need for translation services in my community, and my own need to get my business up and running (and profitable!) inspired me to take chances.

After working the market for several months, I made a bold decision to reach out to my local business community through a series of workshops designed to give businesspeople essential information about translation and, most importantly, to correct the “usual misconceptions” about our profession.

Establishing a Credible Presence

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reach effort, I had created a credible business presence. Plunging into an uncertain financial future with one eye open and one half shut was very frightening, but I knew that if I did not invest in my business, I could not achieve my goals. We have to have a sense of adventure, courage, and certainty to succeed. If we do not, we are doomed from the very first day we say, “I am going to have my own translation business.” Here are some

of the steps that helped me get started.

1. I researched the geographical area. I educated myself about local demographics (Was there a sizeable Spanish-speaking market?) and the real and perceived need for translation services in my dominant language pair and area of specialization. I conducted informal interviews with every business I could think of that might need translation or interpreting services—

pharmacies, schools, law firms, supermarkets, hotels, clinics, and many others. When I began this “empirical research,” the overwhelming response was, “We need interpreters! We need translators!” Bingo! I had the basic information I needed about the local market, and it was feasible to start my company.

Figure 1

Manatee CHAMBER of COMMERCE
Enhancing Your Business and Our Community
 National Chamber of the Year
 Three-Time Winner Florida Chamber of the Year

Show Me El Dinero!

A Practical Guide For Marketing To The Latino Community

Despite an economical slowdown, the current spending power of the Latino community is estimated to be over \$700 billion. Is your business enjoying a piece of that pie? No? Nada? Then this seminar is for you!

- **Se Habla What?**
Communicating beyond the baby boomers
- **¡Hola! Me Tarzan-You Jane**
The pros and cons of translation services
- **Beyond Cinco de Mayo**
What to do the other 364 days
- **Marketing es no Problemo**
Discussion of different audiences, segments and cultures

Presented by
Alina Mugford
 The Translation Link
 Member
 American Translators Association
 &
Yonilee Miller
 Moonlight Marketing Group

Show Me El Dinero!
 A Practical Guide To Marketing to the Latino Community
Wednesday, September 10, 2008 ■ 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Cost: \$35.00 Manatee Chamber Members/\$70.00 Non-Members
 To Be Held at Manatee Chamber of Commerce 222 10th Street W., Bradenton

Name _____ Phone _____
 Company _____ E-Mail _____
 Full Address _____

My check is enclosed. Please make checks payable to Manatee Chamber of Commerce.
Mail to: PO Box 321 Bradenton, FL 34206. Please call to pay by credit card.
Reservations must be received by September 8 and are non-refundable after that date.
 Please contact Elba at elbav@manateechamber.com or 748-4842 x122.
Reservations received by August 15 receive \$5 discount (members only)
 Non-profit members receive 20% discount

MBA Manatee Business Association
Arrow **ATA** American Translators Association

This ad for the workshop contained a deliberate typo as an attention-getter. The workshop began with an exercise that challenged participants to find the typo, and the person with the correct answer received a prize. (Copyright 2008. *Show Me El Dinero: A Practical Guide for Marketing to the Latino Community*. All rights reserved.)

The operative words for my outreach effort were preparation and perseverance.

2. I chose a name for the company and registered it with the state. I chose The Translation Link and registered my

business as an LLC (limited liability company) in my home state of Florida. I also asked city officials if I needed a professional permit (I did not) and applied for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service. Having an EIN provides important protection against identity theft—I give clients my EIN instead of my social security number.

3. I created a budget. I included the costs of new hardware and software, office supplies, marketing materials, extras, and the professional services of a lawyer and a certified public accountant.

4. I hired a marketing company. Because I had Microsoft Publisher and a rudimentary knowledge of design, I thought I could save money by designing and printing my own marketing materials and setting up my own website. Big mistake! I should have contacted a marketing company from the beginning. The marketing professionals I ultimately worked with gave me the businesslike image I needed to be perceived as a serious company. Bottom line: I made the same mistake our clients make when they work with amateur translators. In the end, it takes more time and costs more money!

5. I joined the local chamber of commerce. The more chambers you join, the more networking opportunities you have and the more referrals you get—but it pays to choose the right ones. Not all of them will serve your purpose. In the beginning, I ➡

joined four chambers and spent a lot in membership fees. After a year, I realized that one chamber's events were too far away to attend, and another had not provided me with a single referral: no network, no clients, and no membership renewal the following year!

Obviously there is a lot more to starting a business, but these steps gave me the foundation I needed to begin promoting my services. This legwork would also go a long way toward establishing me as a credible professional within the business community I hoped to engage.

Business Workshop 101

The operative words for my outreach effort were preparation and perseverance. It took me half a year to convince a local Chamber of Commerce to hold the workshop. Initially, I focused solely on one purpose: correcting misconceptions associated with the translation profession. The chamber greeted my proposal with smiles and pleasantries, but they did not think that the topic would be of interest to its members.

Did I mention perseverance?

Six months later, I broadened my approach to include three objectives: 1) the demographics of the Latino market; 2) tips on how to market products and services successfully to Latinos; and 3) translation as a profession. This was the magical combination that finally enticed the chamber officials to approve my workshop. I also had a dynamic title—*Show Me El Dinero: A Practical Guide for Marketing to the Latino Community*—and, most importantly, I agreed not to charge the chamber for my workshop. In exchange, the chamber provided me with free advertising and permission to hold the workshop in its facility!

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

Here are the steps I followed to set up and present the workshop:

1. I formed a strategic alliance with the marketing company that had revamped my business image. They were very professional, creative, and willing to share responsibility—and better still, the costs—for the workshop. Though I had worked in national and multinational companies in marketing for many years, my company is a translation company, so I needed a little more tangible credibility.

tion costs. (See Figure 1 on page 19.) ATA's logo appeared prominently under my name in the ad in accordance with the Association's guidelines.

4. I used my own set of services as the basis for the presentation.

5. I prepared relevant, succinct, highly focused audiovisual materials. A combination of PowerPoint, flipcharts, posters, folders, and giveaways was paramount in creating a rich and informative environment. Each participant was given a folder

It was very powerful for the audience to hear a fellow business owner say how upsetting it is to read a brochure in terrible Spanish.

2. I conducted in-depth research on local demographics: Latinos, Latino households, and Latino businesses in the area, as well as their attitudes, habits, and spending power. I spent many hours poring over U.S. Census data, which yielded powerful information.

containing not only the relevant demographic, marketing, and translation information, but also copies of ATA's *Getting it Right* and *Translation: Buying a Non-Commodity* brochures, in addition to pertinent translation articles. I also discussed both ATA brochures with the audience.

3. I made sure the workshop was promoted to the general public. The local chamber of commerce distributed the information, which consisted of two three-quarter page color advertisements placed in its monthly magazine during the two months prior to the workshop, flyers handed out at many networking events, the chamber's e-newsletters, and faxes sent directly to members. The marketing company designed the ads and the chamber absorbed the distribu-

6. I included local examples of the importance of hiring a professional translator. Nothing is more relevant to an audience than examples from their very own community. I used a taped survey conducted during an event attended by Latino business owners and staff. How powerful it was for the audience to see and hear the following from a local business owner:

“It is upsetting to read a ➡

Interested in Client Outreach?

If you are interested in launching your own client outreach effort, the URLs below can help you get started.

National Resources

U.S. Census Bureau

State and County Quick Facts

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd>

Visit this government website for quick, easy access to facts about people, business, and geography.

U.S. Small Business Administration

www.sba.gov

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is an independent federal agency created in 1953 to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small business concerns. The SBA helps start, build, and grow businesses, delivering its services through an extensive network of field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations.

SCORE

www.score.org/index.html

A resource partner with the SBA, SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and to the formation, growth, and success of small business nationwide. With 389 chapters throughout the U.S. and its territories, SCORE has 10,500 volunteers providing free counseling to small business owners. Both working and retired executives and business owners donate their time and expertise as counselors. Once you apply to SCORE, you will be assigned a counselor and receive free counseling sessions.

U.S. Directory of Local Chambers of Commerce and Visitor Bureaus

www.2chambers.com

Find both state and local chambers of commerce, convention centers, visitor bureaus, and tourist boards in the U.S.

State Resources

The URLs below are specific to the state of Florida, but there are similar websites for other states.

Florida Small Business Development Center

www.floridasbdc.org

The Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network provides support and educational programs for Florida-based small businesses. Many other states have corresponding organizations: Virginia's SBDC can be found at www.virginiasbdc.org, and Ohio's is at www.entrepreneuriohio.org. To find the URL for your state's SBDC, simply type this into the search field in your browser: "Name of State+SBDC+small business."

Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations

www.sunbiz.org

This is the site for the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations. To find the corresponding URL for your state, visit its official website and search for the Division of Corporations to register your company.

ATA Resources

Getting It Right

www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php

This URL includes a link to the PDF version of *Getting It Right*, an introductory client outreach brochure that you can use to build your own client portfolio. ATA members can receive 100 free copies upon request. Follow the link to ATA's Membership Services Manager for details.

Translation: Buying a Non-Commodity

www.atanet.org/docs/translation_buying_guide.pdf

This URL allows you to download a PDF version of *Translation: Buying a Non-Commodity*, a more detailed buying guide for translation consumers.

Coming Soon!

ATA's new Client Outreach initiative will soon have its own webpage. Watch ATA's website and *The ATA Chronicle* for more information.

brochure or any communication piece written in terrible Spanish. If a company goes through all the trouble of publishing it [in Spanish] to reach the Latino community, why don't they do it with a professional translator?"

Suffice it to say that this was a very persuasive section of the workshop.

7. I followed up. A few days after the workshop, I sent every participant a personalized thank-you note, making sure that I mentioned his or her name

and company, as well as any comments he or she made during the workshop. The recipients were delighted, and this simple and inexpensive gesture will keep my company in their minds for future needs and/or referrals. In fact, several days later, I signed on with some very good clients who had attended the workshop.

I Know You Said Online Translation Programs Are Not Reliable, but...

This event was clearly a success, but there is still so much outreach work for us to do. After the workshop, I heard

from a local government official who had attended. "I know you said that online translation programs aren't reliable," she began, "but could you please recommend one? I don't need a professional translator to translate these little letters on mosquito bites and better hygiene that we send to the Hispanics that don't know English." Unbelievable but true. But we should not be discouraged. For every businessperson like her, there are multitudes of others who will hear us out and understand that professional translators provide a much-needed service.

Do-It-Yourself Public Relations

If you remember Alina Mugford as the enterprising winner of the 2007 ATA School Outreach Contest, her successful foray into client outreach will come as no surprise.

A relative newcomer to translation, Alina has many years of experience in sales, marketing, and public relations, and she was quick to put her business expertise to work when she won the 2007 School Outreach Contest. With the help of a friend, she drafted a press release and uploaded it to the website of Florida's Manatee County Chamber of Commerce. Through the chamber's media service, Alina scored four mentions in three local publications last fall. In late October, Florida Governor Charlie Crist wrote to congratulate her on winning the contest.

"It is important that Florida schools accommodate foreign language programs to meet the needs of our diverse culture," wrote Crist. "Your steadfast commitment to advancing foreign language in schools has helped to shape the future of education. Congratulations and best wishes on all your future endeavors!"

Win-Win-Win

It was a win-win-win, bringing public attention to Alina and her business, to ATA, and to the profession at large. Alina's success in using the School Outreach Award to raise her public profile also inspired ATA's Public Relations Committee to replicate her efforts for subsequent winners by distributing press releases to the media and sending announcements to officials in their state and local governments.

New Client Outreach Initiative

The PR Committee is already working on the next Do-It-Yourself PR kit for members: a Client Outreach initiative modeled after the School Outreach Program. The Client Outreach kit will be geared around a PowerPoint presentation that ATA members can use in speaking to their local business communities. Other components of the initiative will include tips on making an effective presentation, ideas for handling questions skillfully, examples of poor translation, tips on getting invited to speak, and more. The PR Committee will draw on Alina's successful experience as we continue to develop the Client Outreach toolkit, which could debut as early as ATA's 50th Annual Conference in New York, New York, October 28-31, 2009.

Your ideas on client outreach would be very welcome. To contribute, please contact me at Lillian@LingualLegal.com. And keep your eye on Alina.

*Lillian Clementi
ATA PR Committee*

Before I ever launched my outreach effort, I had created a credible business presence.

Client outreach pays off. Since I presented my workshop, I have added new clients and received invitations

from other chambers of commerce to deliver workshops throughout the community. I have also been asked to

speak to organizations like the Small Business Administration. The lesson here is that if you want to grow your business, if you want a sizable clientele that will help you maintain and grow your income, then do not be afraid to reach out. Prepare and be determined. You will succeed. I did, and I cannot wait to see where my next adventure in the trenches will take me.

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Don't get hung out to dry Tips for cleaning up your online profile

A listing in ATA's online *Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services* or the *Directory of Language Services Companies* can be one of your most valuable member benefits. With more than two-million plus hits in 2007, consumers and businesses have clearly learned to look to ATA's directories first when shopping for professional translation and interpreting services.

Six Tips to Help You Make Contact

1. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
2. Update your contact information, especially your e-mail address and phone numbers.
3. Use the "Additional Information" field, noting education and career experiences, unusual specialties, and any dialects you can handle. By using a "keyword" search, clients can find your services based on a set of very specific skills and experience.
4. List your areas of specialization.
5. Review your listing monthly to experiment with different wording or add new information that may set you apart from others.
6. List non-English-to-non-English language combinations, such as Portuguese into Spanish and French into Italian.

Make those updates online at www.atanet.org/onlinedirectories/update_profile.php.