



# THE VOICE

JULY/AUGUST 2009

The Translators and Interpreters Guild  
CWA Local 32-100

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## Call for Volunteers

TTIG has need of a **webmaster** for our new website and a **bookkeeper** to assist our **SecTreas Heike Reagan** in her efforts.

The webmaster's duties are basic at this point – helping to keep the website running and publishing any incoming submissions on our weblog.

The bookkeeper will work with Heike to assure our accounting methods are working O.K. and to verify balances are correct. Essentially it's a second pair of eyes to keep us on the up and up.

Both positions require a minimum of time and effort; anyone with skills that can help with these jobs, please contact Jeff Skinner directly at [red.swede@gmail.com](mailto:red.swede@gmail.com).

Thank you!

## Voices of Experience: Something to Try and Something to Avoid

*"Too soon old; too late smart!"*

**Translators and interpreters have a lot to learn.** However, the isolation so common in our professions, and a relative lack of formal training programs in the United States, make learning what we need to know just that much harder. Even as we wish we knew *now* what we will know later, most of us have already learned at least something about **what really works and what really does not**.

In the interests of helping each other have both a more fruitful and a less painful experience, **guest columnists** will take turns here offering **one thing "to try" and one thing "to avoid."**

Before writing your article, please contact **Chris Marquardt** (this month's guest columnist) with your ideas at [chris@spanishpronto.com](mailto:chris@spanishpronto.com) or 360-951-5755. The opinions expressed here are based solely on the author's personal experience and are in no way meant to represent the opinions of TTIG, its executive committee, or its membership.

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## Message from TTIG's President

**Hello, brothers and sisters!** I'm very pleased to be writing this particular message, as it marks an event that's been a long time coming—the return of the VOICE. Chris Marquardt has very graciously agreed to serve as the Acting Editor until we can find someone more permanent, for which he has both my thanks and the thanks of the executive committee.

The **rebirth of our monthly newsletter** is a real step in bringing back the **communication—between the EC and the members as well as among members themselves**—that TTIG sorely needs. I'm very proud to be a part of it, and I hope that this small effort will only grow as time passes.

That, of course, depends on you all. My favorite saying regarding TTIG at this point is: **"What we want to do for you, we can't do without you."** TTIG needs a newsletter that keeps us up to date on what members think, what they're doing on issues relevant to our profession, and other items of help or interest to translation and interpretation workers. For that, **we need your input: proposals for articles, editorial submissions, dictionary and software reviews**, things of that nature. It's the only way the VOICE can continue to exist!

This issue is, of necessity, short and sweet; we have a report from our Secretary-Treasurer Heike Reagan on income and expenses for Jan-May and a call for volunteers to fill some of the positions we need to function a little more smoothly.

Best wishes to you all for the summer. See you next issue.

In solidarity,

**Jeff Skinner**  
President, TTIG

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### **Something to Try: Listening to Your Potential Client**

**Why did it take me years to learn this one?** I do not know. I used to think that, when a potential client e-mailed me with a possible job and a few questions, the proper response was to e-mail back the answers, maybe even anticipate what the client needed and write about that, too! I could not have been more wrong.

In an attempt to learn how to negotiate better rates, I checked out Bernard Hale Zick's *The Negotiating Paradox: How You Can Get More By Giving More* from the library. Among other things, Zick's book taught me **the importance of listening** to what he calls your "Negotiating Nemesis." This sounds much simpler than it is, and what I appreciated about this book was the way it made me finally understand things that I used to think I already knew.

For years, I had usually heard nothing back from potential clients, even after sending detailed e-mails answering their questions, and taking as much as an hour to write, edit, and proof my message. After reading this book, **suddenly, I was landing work from well over half the potential clients who had contacted me.** The main difference? Rather than e-mail them my responses, I would call them, ask them as many questions as I could think of, and **listen, listen, listen** (and take notes, too, of course).

**I no longer had to assume what the client needed; I knew.** I no longer had to guess what was most important to the client about this project; I knew. I no longer had to figure out what services the client was willing to pay more for, or what services s/he was willing to do without in exchange for a lower price; I knew. I did not even have to wonder about what was going on at the client's company, what the client expected to gain with the translation, or even what the client liked to do for fun. Usually, I knew all that, too.

When it came time for my potential clients to decide between hiring someone who had e-mailed back a response that answered their questions, but did not fully address their needs, or hiring someone they knew, who understood the project inside and out, and was pleasant to work with, they did not have to guess which translator would continue to listen to them and meet their needs.

### **Something to Avoid: Expensive Advertising**

**It is easy to believe that advertising will help you get more clients and grow your business.** Although this is true, it is not true enough. **Most advertising costs far more than you will ever see in return.** When the result of your \$100 ad is a single \$60 birth-certificate translation job, the ad was not worth the cost—unless, of course, your client comes back with more work later, or refers friends to you.

**Most advertising is for an expensive product or for something just about everybody needs.** Five thousand dollars in advertising is no big deal if it brings in thirty thousand dollars in new business, whether that is from 60 new plumbing clients, the sale of 3 SUVs, or winning a single court case. With the exception of some translation agencies who charge their clients high and pay their

translators low, **translation and interpreting are not high profit-margin businesses**, so it can be difficult, to say the least, to find advertising that returns more than it costs.

**Yellow pages ads are not the answer.** I get just as much business now from my free line ad as I ever did when I had a box ad in the local directory, another box ad in a nearby medium-sized market, and a bold line ad in a nearby metropolitan area. Over the course of three tax years, and through \$2,500, these ads proved not to be worth their cost. **As long as you have a business line, you will be listed in the local yellow pages for free.** Most calls you receive from the yellow pages will be from people shopping around.

**Google's AdWords may seem like a good bet**—absolutely customizable in a thousand different ways, targeted to people searching for what you offer, and you choose how much you want to pay per click. My AdWords account has been active at various times from April 2002 to December 2008. I have tried every possible permutation of search terms, excluded search terms, bids, search network vs. content network, local vs. national vs. worldwide, preferred positioning, top positioning, barely-on-page-one positioning (cheaper per click), pay-per-click vs. CPM (cost per 1,000 ad showings)...whatever you may have thought of doing, I have already done it.

Now, **several years and \$2,800 later, I can report that this is not a good option for translators.** For a while there, ads that were supposed to be triggered by the words "Spanish" and "translation" were being shown (and clicked on and charged to me) every time someone used the words "Spanish" and "dictionary" together! The main problem, however, is that **most searches for translators or translation on the internet are, overwhelmingly, by people looking for a way to get it done for free.** They still often click on your ad, but as soon as they realize there is no free translation on your site, they are gone, leaving you only another 25 cents to 2 dollars deeper in debt with Google. For good measure, **I also gave Yahoo and CitySearch a try, with no results to report there, either.**

**The one that does seem to work also happens to be the one that is free: Craigslist.** The one disadvantage there is that the terms of service do not allow you to post your ad in more than one metropolitan area at once. There are unscrupulous people who do it anyway, but you can report them to Craigslist. Some weeks I post my ad locally, other weeks in a different metropolitan area, but only in one area at a time. The response is usually a smallish job every week or two, but that is still a **great return for a no-cost ad.**

### **Treasurer's Report by Category**

#### **Bank account balances 1 January 2009 to 31 May 2009**

Starting Balance Jan 1, 2009	3317.08
Deposits (SunTrust and PayPal)	599.90
Bank fees (SunTrust and PayPal)	0.00
PO Box (to 10/31/09)	0.00
Postage (Ballots)	0.00
Ending balance June 27, 2009	3916.98