



Bleeding Hearts(ome)

On the website of Heartsome (www.heartsome.net), a translation environment tool company located in Hong Kong, the following announcement was made last week:

We regret to inform you that we have made a tough decision in view of our financial situation at Heartsome: Heartsome will cease operations on July 31, 2014. On that day, Heartsome will shut down its website and stop all development, sales, and technical support work. We hereby sincerely apologize for any inconvenience and trouble. In the past few years, we have failed to achieve our mission despite putting in tremendous effort. We hope to make our last contribution to the industry by making Heartsome products open-source to allow capable individuals to continue developing and improving these products to benefit more people in the industry.

Here are some arrangements we have made for our closing down:

- *We will provide technical support until July 31, 2014, to help you migrate from Heartsome products to other products.*
- *Heartsome 8.x products will be made open-source. The source codes will be hosted at GitHub using GPL v3 before May 31, 2014. You may use them at no cost and modify them freely.*
- *To allow all existing users of the official version of Heartsome Translation Studio 8.0 and TMX Editor 8.0 to continue using the*

product(s) you have purchased, we will soon provide a free version that does not require license verification.

Heartsome is not the first product that has given up in this very competitive market. Tools like TSS/Joust, Amptan, Quintillian, Clear-CAT, Trans Suite 2000, Aliado, and NoBabel have taken the same step, and plenty of others are officially still around, but really have long since given up.

What is clearly different about Heartsome is the decision to make the product into an open-source product, though it is not without precedent. In 2001, Lionbridge released its ForeignDesk product to the open-source community. Well, let me correct that. Lionbridge released it with an open-source license, but a community was never found, so the product died a quiet death amidst good intentions.

To avoid the same thing happening to Heartsome, which is a very complete and capable product, folks have to want to take it forward and be proactive. I know of at least one very capable person who is interested, so we will see how that goes.

One of the problems at Heartsome during the past few years was that they were never particularly communicative, and it was no different this time when I asked for more comment. Since they chose not to answer, I asked the owners of two other companies that are (or were) closely connected with the Heartsome company in Hong Kong.

Heartsome was originally founded by Klemens Waldhör, an employee of Alpnet, who co-founded Heartsome Singapore and Heartsome Europe with Alpnetian Geraldine Lim. This lasted until 2004, when the companies split into two independent entities. Heartsome Singapore started to market the Heartsome tool suite, and Heartsome Europe's product was called Araya (www.heartsome.de).

The main developer of Heartsome Singapore, Rodolfo Raya, left the company in 2007, took the code he developed, moved to his native Uruguay, and called his product Swordfish (www.maxprograms.com). Heartsome and Swordfish looked very similar at first, but they slowly diverged into clearly distinguishable programs. This was mainly because Rodolfo kept on developing his

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Information and Contacts

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

nice to pick her brain a bit. I thought that asking her a question would be the best way to open up a conversation, so I asked “What advice would you give to an introvert who finds professional networking a challenge?” Albeit not a particularly incisive question, it was all I could come up with at the moment. I was expecting her to suggest that I practice in front of a mirror or join Toastmasters. Her response? “You just have to suck it up and do it.” End of conversation. She immediately turned to speak to someone else.

That night in my hotel, I realized I was completely bombing my first non-translation conference. I thought about all of the other things I had failed at over the past two years of freelancing, and how I had picked myself up and learned negotiating skills, marketing techniques, business management, organization, and more. All of those fumbles had not ended my career. I had learned from my mistakes and used those lessons to improve. I went for a run that evening and decided to relax for the rest of the conference and just soak up information.

Fast forward about two months. A local friend and colleague (Steven Marzuola) got a handful of free passes to the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC), an annual trade show for the oil and gas industry held every spring in Houston. It draws hundreds of companies, from

the biggest international oil majors like ExxonMobil and Shell to tiny family-owned companies that make rubber seals and gaskets. I thought I might attend some of the technical sessions, but it turned out that the free guest pass only got me into the exhibit hall. Most of the people manning the exhibits are there to sell their products. They are not the people in the company who would handle translation or make contracting decisions. So, I decided to take a completely different tack.

Most of the exhibits, especially for the big companies, were displaying models or full-scale prototypes of their equipment. So, I would walk up to a big shiny thing and look at it, walk around it, lean in close, turn handwheels, touch surfaces, etc. When a company representative introduced himself, I would just point at something and say “What’s that?” or “What kind of valve is that?” The representative would give a brief explanation, and if he seemed friendly and open to further conversation, I would say something like: “I’m a translator. I translate design documentation and specs for equipment, but sometimes I’ve never even seen it. I came out today to look at equipment and learn all I can.” If the representative got quiet after that, I would thank him for the information and move on. I also tried to be aware of other visitors to the booth. For the small companies

especially, exhibiting at the OTC is a significant expense and they want to talk to as many potential buyers as possible. Their time is valuable, so I would only linger if there were no other takers lurking behind me.

If he asked what languages I translate, he would often be surprised and quite interested. He would usually offer to answer more questions or show me more equipment. In this way, I got to see the inside of ball valves, gate valves, and butterfly valves. I saw frac stacks with ball launchers. I touched intumescent coatings, and alloys. I felt drill bits. I learned about drilling mud and changed a screen in a mud shaker. I picked up a poster showing various offshore drilling and production platforms with all the parts labeled. I got to put on a hardhat and climb up to the operator’s cabin on a top drive platform.

A few exhibitors even asked for my card, saying they might need translation services. Most were just happy to show me their products and answer my questions. I would always end by shaking hands and saying “Thank you so much for your time!”

Although I only gave out about a dozen business cards, I left feeling much more positive about my experience, and I cannot wait to do it again. ■

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product, whereas Heartsome went into a sort of beauty sleep until it was revived a few years later under new ownership with a new place of business in Hong Kong.

That is why I contacted Klemens Waldhör and Rodolfo Raya about their take on the recent events.

Klemens responded in a rather laid-back fashion by pointing out that while he has suspicions that not all of the code went to where it was supposed to go after the separation, he is not particularly worried. This is

because with his Araya solution, he “has specialized in XML and server-based installations, and therefore corporate clients” for which he customizes his tool. So, his tool does not compete with other readily available tools.

When I asked Rodolfo about Heartsome HK’s demise, he said: “I was not expecting today’s announcement, but it didn’t surprise me.” And: “Heartsome’s departure does not affect me, my companies, or my clients. I’m still fully dedicated to developing translation tools, providing support

for my customers, and designing new versions of my programs.” Oh, yes, and then he also mentioned this: “The new company [Heartsome HK] took the products I developed for the old company and sold them after updating all of the icons and buttons.”

So, anyone who wants to dig deeper into the code that is to be open-sourced should probably clarify these issues of ownership. ■