



Social Media and Translators

Since the use of social media has become increasingly important for my business (and many of yours as well), I thought it would be a good idea to write about what I do on “my” social media platform. I also asked some colleagues to share how they fare on other platforms (more on that below).

In preparation for this, I read an interesting book by Renée Desjardins, a professor from the Université de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg, Canada, called *Translation and Social Media*.¹ It was published in 2017 so it’s a little outdated, but it was helpful to read anyway because Desjardins analyzes the function and role of social media for the translation profession. She also highlights some very interesting facts that most of us may know but have never heard articulated. Here are some examples:

- Social media profiles present an unprecedented opportunity for translators to have their voices heard right next to other professions (and other branches of the translation world), rather than clustered in small discussion forums primarily concerned with topics relevant only to a specific type of translator. (Note: there’s nothing wrong with the cluster, but it clearly serves a different purpose.)
 - Social media platforms present a public space for translators to combine their voices, acting as potential platforms for solidarity and strength.
 - Social media platforms provide individual translators and groups of translators (e.g., associations) space to represent their complete portfolio of services and expertise.
- All this stands in sharp contrast to the presumed invisibility of the translator. (Note that one of the most influential books in translation studies was and

still is Lawrence Venuti’s *The Translator’s Invisibility*.)²

I found it exciting to look at this and realize (again) that our participation on social media not only fulfills our own agenda (e.g., to find jobs, make friends, or be entertained), but that of our profession as well.

As mentioned earlier, I asked some colleagues to share their experiences on different platforms. Clearly there are more platforms than those mentioned here, but Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter seemed the most obvious choices, at least from a U.S.-based perspective. Interestingly, you’ll notice we have two colleagues talking about Instagram. (It was really hard to find translators or interpreters who were using Instagram in a manner that was productive for their business, and then surprisingly two of them agreed to share their experience almost simultaneously!) Here’s what they had to say.

Facebook
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It’s often overlooked that Facebook isn’t just a social media platform, but a search engine that helps people discover local businesses. I’ve learned that firsthand, seeing that at least three to five clients a week approach me and say they found me through Facebook. Some of them find me through my Facebook business page, others through word-of-

mouth referrals from their Facebook friends, and others find me in several local Facebook groups where I'm a member. That last strategy has been particularly helpful, as group members who have already used my services are often the first ones to respond when someone is looking for a translator. Free advertising? Yes, please!

I don't use my personal Facebook page much, but I keep my business page on Facebook updated, respond to inquiries through Facebook Messenger, and regularly check if there are any translation-related questions in any local groups where I'm a member. If there are any, I respond to them and offer advice. By investing about 30 minutes a week, I usually get two to three well-paid translation jobs a week from clients who found me through Facebook. So, despite having issues with Facebook's "content personalization" and targeted advertising, I think it has been a great supplement to my marketing strategy.

I have a lot more to say about finding translation clients through Facebook. Are all the clients there looking for fast and cheap? (No.) Do they all need official document translations? (No.) What groups should I join to find clients? What do I need to have on my business page? How can I get more word-of-mouth referrals? Reach out to me, and I'll be happy to chat!

LinkedIn

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LinkedIn is a social media platform that's meant for those who are there to do business. This platform has been one of the most powerful tools in my marketing toolbox, especially in the past few years. Like many people, I used to simply let my profile collect dust, connecting to new people every now and then but not really using it on a regular basis. Now it's one of the main ways I build relationships with potential clients and build my client base over time.

I use the free version of LinkedIn but take advantage of all the ways it can work for me: optimizing and opening my profile so potential clients can find me more easily, reaching out to potential clients who are likely to need my services and who I know I can serve well for years to come, and using the direct Messenger feature to connect with those who hire and make decisions in their business. For example, after a new client reached out to me last month, we set up a Zoom call to talk about her need for a freelancer, and I'm now working on several projects for her through the first quarter of 2021.

I could go on and on about the power of LinkedIn. Not only is it a robust search engine, but Google recognizes it as a trusted source of information, which means

that most people's LinkedIn profiles rank quite high in search results (often on the first page) when clients are looking for them by name or using other specific keywords. Spending a few minutes every day on this platform is a very small investment for the return I've seen. I would recommend that every freelancer get comfortable using LinkedIn regularly and connecting with their potential clients through using groups, messaging, and creating an optimized profile. Be sure to check out the ATA webinar I gave on using LinkedIn to reach your ideal clients.³

Instagram
Ilduara Escobedo
[instagram.com/translation_expert](https://www.instagram.com/translation_expert)

I started my business account on Instagram in June 2019. My goal was to network and meet colleagues. Recently, I reached a little over 1,600 followers.

I posted daily for over a year but, starting this year, changed that to three posts per week. So far, the change has not affected my statistics. I probably spend about three to five hours per week planning the content I'll publish the following week. In the platform itself, I try to spend at least an hour per day, mainly engaging with other users and answering direct messages and comments.

I believe Instagram has helped establish my brand and I'm proud to belong to an amazing community of translators, interpreters,

linguists, and freelancers. I've made great contacts there. Every day I learn something new or refresh my knowledge!

Thanks to my Instagram account, I'm now a member of an Instagram affiliate marketing program and a brand ambassador. I've also promoted other accounts, for which I'm compensated.

Chloe Stout
[instagram.com/chloestouttranslations](https://www.instagram.com/chloestouttranslations)

I first set up my "professional" Instagram account in 2019 to share my experience of working as a translation trainee at the Council of the European Union. When I decided to go full-time freelance last May, I began using the account to document my journey as a freelance translator and subtitler and share tips about freelancing and languages in general.

The time I put into Instagram varies each week. I try to post on my account a few times a week to keep my followers engaged, but there are some weeks where I'm too busy to plan posts or feel as though I don't have anything interesting to say. I try to spend some time every day scrolling through my feed and engaging with other people's posts and creating or planning my own posts. Sometimes I have a good idea of what I want to say and what image I want to accompany the post, but other times I spend more time researching, planning, and taking photographs for potential use.

I also use the Instagram Stories feature to share inspirational posts I've seen. I'm also trying to use this function more to share things about myself, my business, and the "bigger picture." For example, just last week I hosted my first Q&A session on my Stories where my followers could ask me anything about translation, freelancing, or my professional journey. It got really good feedback, so it's definitely something I'll do again.

Most of my current followers are fellow freelance translators or language professionals. I also like to follow accounts that provide marketing tips and support freelancers. At some point, I would really like to transition my account to attract more potential clients, especially since I specialize in marketing and digital services. At the moment, however, I enjoy connecting with other freelancers and sharing experiences. While my Instagram account hasn't yet directly attracted clients in the same way my LinkedIn page has, it has led to referrals from other freelancers who have seen what I do and allowed me to make meaningful connections with other people in the translation industry.

Twitter

Jost Zetzsche

twitter.com/Jeromobot

I only use LinkedIn and Twitter. I'm happy with that limitation because it allows me a much more focused use of my efforts,

particularly on Twitter. I use LinkedIn more passively, primarily to announce new books and projects.

Most of what I tweet are links to articles or resources. If I really like them, I tend to spend quite a bit of time preparing those tweets, including researching the Twitter handles of the authors or other people who might be mentioned in the article or resource in question. My hope is to start conversations with journalists or other stakeholders, which happens rather frequently. (This might be because I have a reasonably high number of followers, which I think helps get you noticed when you reach out to others.) I see my function as a cheerleader to communicate a better way of thinking and writing about translation than how it's typically perceived by the outside world.

I actively shy away from discussions that get too heated because, in my opinion, their outcome is not very productive. The jobs I get through my Twitter presence are based on potential clients' perception of me as someone with industry knowledge. While some of those offers have been translation jobs, more are in the area of consulting, speaking engagements, and collaboration.

I would guess I spend about 30 to 40 minutes per day on Twitter, which includes perusing news items I might or might not tweet about.

Oh, and while we're talking about Twitter: Alex

Drechsel and I have passed our administrative duties for the TranslationTalk Twitter account into the enthusiastic and capable hands of Andie Ho, Deepti Limaye, and Nadine Edwards. On the off chance you don't know about that Twitter account, you

should definitely open twitter.com/translationtalk and start following—regardless of whether you have a Twitter account. (Hint: it's hands-down one of the best Twitter accounts for translators and interpreters out there!)

NOTES

- 1 Desjardins, Renée. *Translation and Social Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), <http://bit.ly/Desjardins-Palgrave>.
- 2 Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility* (Routledge, 2008), <http://bit.ly/Venuti>.
- 3 ATA Webinar Series: "How to Utilize LinkedIn Strategically to Reach Your Ideal Clients," <http://bit.ly/LinkedIn-clients>.



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