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Growing Pains

In June, I was invited to write a [guest post](#) for *Brainfood*. As a rookie to the world of translation and localization, I described my “[Black Swan](#)” experience in the industry and expressed my initial impressions and ideas.

Now, four months later, my outlook has evolved.

Though I am by no means a veteran in the business, I have gained more understanding - understanding that, for better or worse, has quite often emerged from growing pains.

From where have these growing pains arisen? A number of bumps and curves in the road.

Shortly after my June post, the General Manager of the company for which I work - [Win & Winnow Communications](#) - announced a new endeavor. The decision had been made to expand beyond the agency’s initial English-Spanish-Portuguese offering and work in German, French and Italian as well.

Who would be the head of this new project? Me.

In the spirit of “accept now and figure out details later”, I took this new role.

At first sight, the formula seemed quite simple - identify resources, add to database, and start selling. This, of course, was not the case.

Resource identification and qualification proved to be a most daunting task, and I found myself running into barriers I hadn’t foreseen in the slightest. The biggest thorn in my side proved to be reference requests, which I found, to my surprise, to be met with significant hostility from many linguists.

In my personal job-search experiences, I had always seen the provision of references as [protocol for hiring](#) - nothing extraordinary. While searching for resources, however, I found that this was not the case.

Several linguists declined my request for references, citing questions of confidentiality and privacy in their reasoning. Some were very polite in their replies and sought other forms of facilitating a working relationship. Others, however, were extremely rude, even offensive.

What I encountered as a reaction to my request was a cloud of suspicion and protectiveness, translators who were convinced that my aim was not to contract their services but instead to attempt to effectively “steal” their clients. And while at first this notion seemed ridiculous to me (as I had no intention of stealing anyone or anything), after a number of hostile replies, I began to wonder what the source of this sentiment may be.

Is the current translation and localization market so competitive that such unethical actions as attempting to rob clients by way of reference requests commonplace? Or are many freelancers just plain paranoid?

Regardless of the legitimacy of the concerns of these freelancers, they have definitely proven to be a challenge that I am still struggling to comprehend and overcome.

Resource selection, however, has not been the only growing pain I've encountered in these past months.

New knowledge has come with new challenges and expectations, including that of selling translation services - one of my other functions at Win & Winnow.

I have always been much more inclined to the creative. Coming into Win & Winnow, I was much more attracted to the marketing and writing aspects of my position. I did know, however, that sales would be included in my list of responsibilities.

When I began, I was asked to send sales e-mails - easy enough, right?

Not so much.

After weeks of very few replies, if any, I was instructed to move onto the next step - cold calling. In preparation, I attended a few Ace of Sales webinars, did research, wrote scripts, etc. When it came time to bite the bullet, however, I found my sales skills to be lacking.

The product I was selling was solid, as was my knowledge of it. However, at the moment of picking up the phone and making the call, I could help but feel, to be frank, annoying. I had become that annoying salesperson, calling and causing inconveniences by interrupting someone's busy day.

Thanks to the help of a few pep talks from coworkers as well as a lot of [blog-reading](#), I have since gotten over (some) of my cold-calling qualms. The hang-ups and blow-offs can definitely be frustrating, but I can now see at least some light at the end of the tunnel.

In fact, I find it sometimes to be even an enjoyable experience, at times even humorous. Once, I made a call that was apparently forwarded to the cell phone of the translation agency's owner - a man who was, at the time, at the McDonald's drive-through. In the middle of our conversation, he asked me to hold on for a second. In the background, I heard him place his order - two chicken sandwiches.

My experience in translation thus far has been just that - an experience. There are days that I go home from the office amused, as in the case of the hungry agency owner. There are days that I go home confused, as in the case of the suspicious freelancers. And there are days when I go home just fine, having been hung-up on by several receptionists and received angry replies from prospective resources. I always know that the next day is a new day and that, maybe, I'll have a bit more luck.