

The Prosperous Translator

Ready for some tough love? Not really? Then you might want to turn the page. But if you are interested in being a 'prosperous translator' and improving your freelance business, read on!

I had the privilege of attending a most informative talk presented by Chris Durban, the editor of *The Prosperous Translator*, and was lucky enough to win this book by her and co-author Eugene Seidel. The book is based on the original Fire Ant & Worker Bee (FA&WB) advice column that ran in *Translation Journal* (www.translationjournal.net) for many years. Here they dispensed sage advice to fellow translators, clients and those who think translation is only retyping words in another language.

Although the book was published five years ago and based on advice spanning more than a decade, much of the information still rings true. Following an easy question-and-answer format, the book is perfect for dipping into at leisure across 12 chapters with real-world subtitles such as 'What are you selling? What are they buying?' and, my personal favourite, 'I've done the work, so where's the money?' The chapters deal with all the good, bad and downright weird questions asked on the following broad topics: advice for beginners, doing the actual work, client relations, pricing, marketing and getting paid, specialisation, ethics, quality of life (or more accurately, learning to say no), professional associations and, finally, a chapter appropriately named 'Kitchen sink' due to the miscellaneous nature of the questions.

As a seasoned language practitioner, I still had much to gain from reading FA&WB's well-thought-out responses, especially on difficult topics such as client relations and marketing/pricing. I share their (activist?) view on not joining the 'poverty-cult mentality' and asking what you are worth (as long as you can back it up!). Too many of my fellow translators have become trapped on the hamster wheel of accepting bad rates, and this book will provide an excellent jolt to get them out of their comfort zone and doing something about it.

Many of the suggestions from the duo are concrete steps on how to face your particular challenge regardless of language combination or where you might find yourself in the world. Chapter 6, for example, contains over 40 pages alone on the number one question always bandied about at professional meetings: Where can I find clients? My favourite FA&WB answer: 'Hang around client watering holes' (p. 129). This means attending those trade fairs, chamber of commerce breakfast meetings and, generally,



getting out from behind your computer screen every so often, putting on your big-girl boots and taking on the world of your client to get noticed for what you do.

I am a big fan of the tough love approach when dealing with issues facing our industry and this book clearly does not suffer fools and will be right up your ally if you share this approach. The authors

make it clear in their response to a question about translation agencies being the Devil's foot soldiers: 'If you are still laboring (sic) in agency hell after 18 years, it's clear that you have made a few bad choices over the years' (p. 120). Ouch, but true! This is a point that Chris also made during her talk – there is no such thing as just one translation market, so why be stuck in the one you are not happy with?

Coming from a book publishing background, my only criticism of the book has to do with aesthetics – the cover art. I get the reference to honeycomb/ant colonies (maybe?), but the cover is very typical of a lot of self-published titles. I am still old school in that I prefer reading the hard copy rather than the eBook, so for many readers the cover will not be an issue at all. I am, however, inspired by creative cover art, inviting you to rather read a book than work on those 10 000 words due tomorrow! Maybe the next revised edition (and there should be one!) will take a more creative approach to match the authors' brilliance.

If you are a sensitive soul, you really should not be running your own freelance business, and in all likelihood you would not appreciate this book. But if you are ready for some straight talk about what it takes to be a professional translator delivering a professional service, then there is much to be inspired by in this book, which I strongly recommend to all aspiring and seasoned translators.

The Prosperous Translator: Advice from Fire Ant & Worker Bee

Compiled and edited by Chris Durban

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