GLD Professional Forum: Keeping up with the Evolving DE<>EN T&I Market

Agenda

- **Introduction (5 min.)**

- **Survey results (10 min.)**

- **Breakout groups (30 min.)**

- **Takeaways from breakout groups (10 min.)**

- **Wrap-up and conclusion (5 min.)**

Introduction

GLD Professional Forum:
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Introduction

Machine translation, AI bots, and ever more higher education institutions offering degree programs in English are all impacting the way traditional translation and interpreting (T&I) consumers in the DACH region (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) and abroad are using T&I services. This Professional Forum offers GLD members the opportunity to share their experiences, strategies, and insights into navigating the changing German-English/English-German T&I landscape.

To better understand the latest developments and guide our discussion on navigating the changing landscape, a survey was conducted among members.
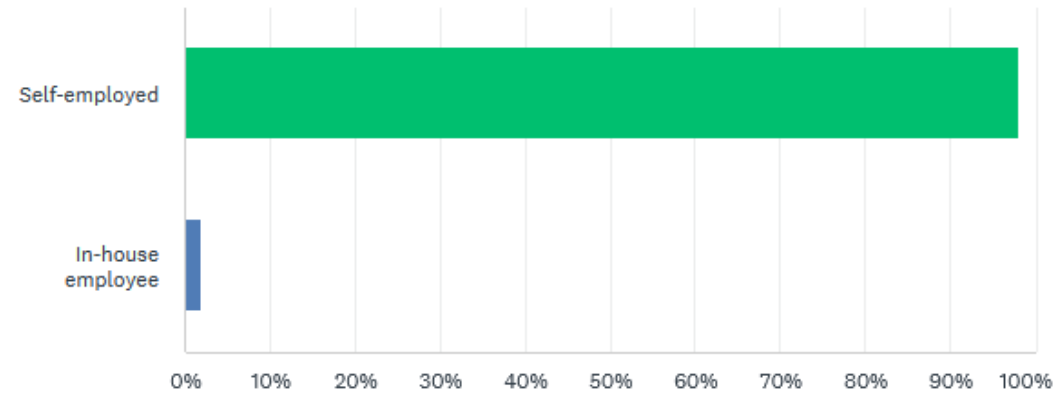
Survey results

Photo by Emily Morter on Unsplash

Q. 1: Employment status

Please describe your employment status:

Beantwortet: 106   Übersprungen: 0

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
Self-employed	98.11%	104
In-house employee	1.89%	2
TOTAL		106

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Q. 2: Service(s) offered

Beantwortet: 105   Übersprungen: 1

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
German-English translation	80.00%	84
German-English interpreting	14.29%	15
German-English translation review	44.76%	47
German-English machine translation post editing (MTPE)	22.86%	24
English copywriting	14.29%	15
English technical writing	3.81%	4
English-English editing/proofreading	25.71%	27
English-German translation	47.62%	50
English-German interpreting	16.19%	17
English-German translation review	33.33%	35
English-German machine translation post editing (MTPE)	16.19%	17
German-German editing/proofreading	26.67%	28
German copywriting	8.57%	9
German technical writing	3.81%	4
Other (please describe):	17.14%	18
Total Respondents: 105		

Other services mentioned: Language instruction, German-Dutch translation, French to English translation, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese into English and into German, German-Spanish translation, Russian-to-English translating and editing, English tutoring

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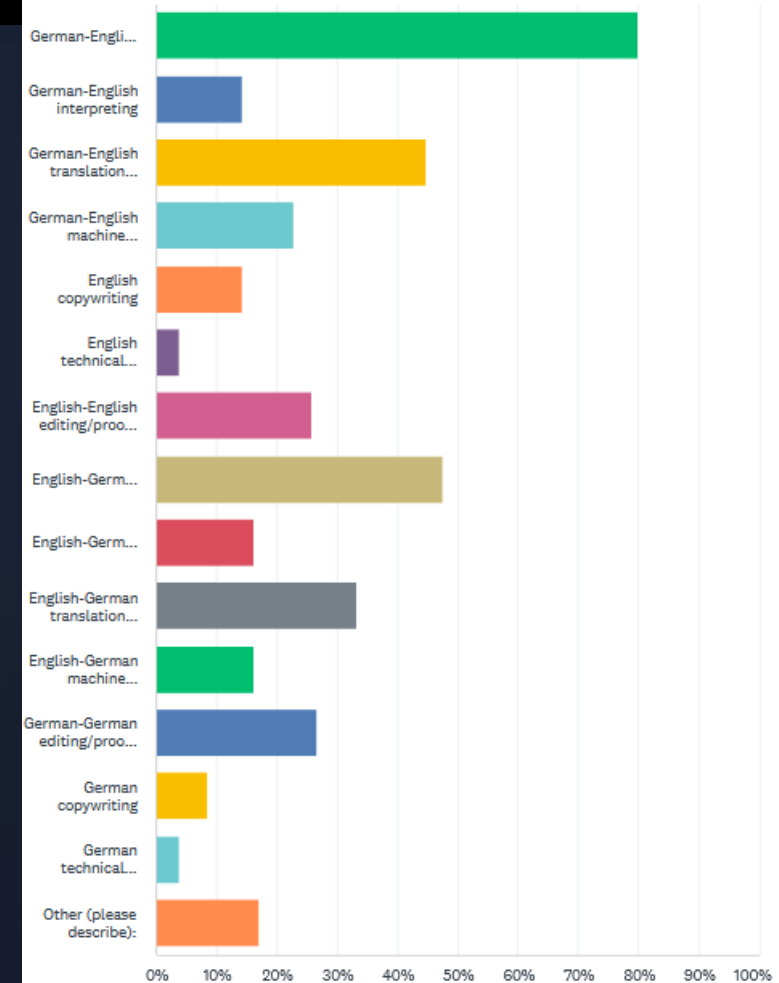
Q. 3: Client locations

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
Germany	72.64%	77
Austria	19.81%	21
Switzerland	22.64%	24
United States	76.42%	81
United Kingdom	26.42%	28
Other (please describe):	28.30%	30
Total Respondents: 106		

Other locations mentioned:
Czech Republic, Spain (4), Ireland, Japan, Korea, Canada (6), Italy (3), Netherlands (2), Singapore, Poland (2), France (6), China (3), Latin America, South Korea, UAE, Estonia, Vietnam, Mexico, Romania, Peru, Luxemburg, India, Dubai, Israel, Greece, Sweden, Europe in general (2), International organization

Please tell us where your clients are based:

Beantwortet: 106   Übersprungen: 0
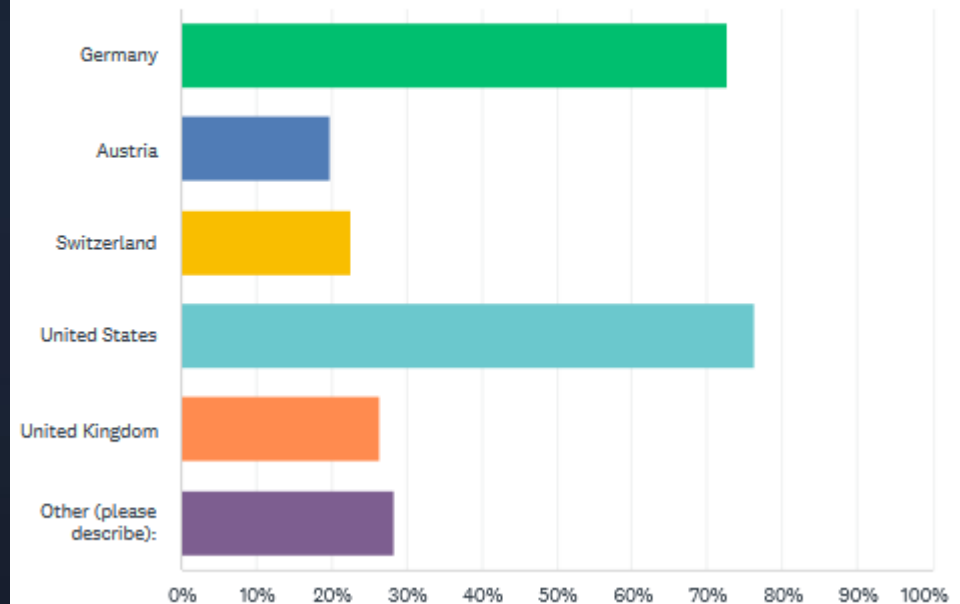
Q. 4: Respondent's field(s) of work

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
Academic/Scholarly Publications	18.27%	19
Advertising, Marketing & PR	33.65%	35
Arts & Entertainment	21.15%	22
Certified & Administrative	20.19%	21
Education and E-learning	16.35%	17
Financial	25.96%	27
Health, Medicine and/or Pharmaceutical	40.38%	42
Literary	10.58%	11
Legal	49.04%	51
Technical	45.19%	47
Total Respondents: 104		

Other fields mentioned:
IT (3), Telecommunications, Software Localization, Patents (5), Old German handwriting, Architecture, Military (2), International Development Cooperation, Business: General Business, Business Documents, Corporate Communications, Leadership and Management, HR (5), Personal Documents (2), Magazine Articles, Press Releases, Depositions, Arbitrations, Beauty, Events Organization, (Handwritten Family) Letters (2), Memoires, Religion

Please tell us the field or fields you work in:
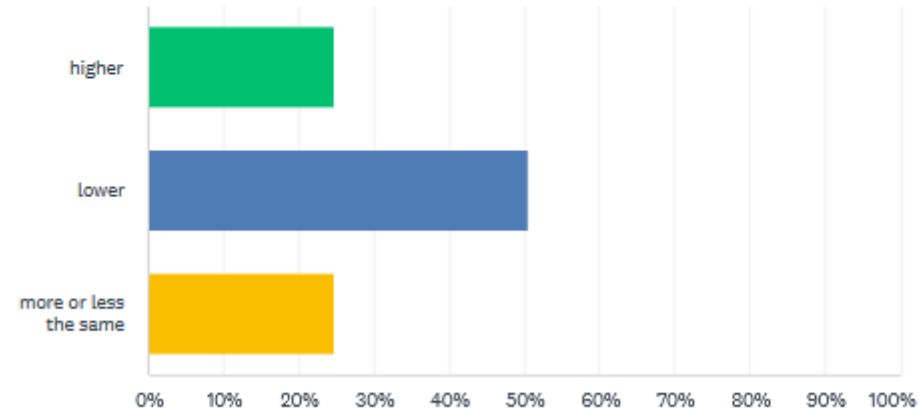
Beantwortet: 104   Übersprungen: 2

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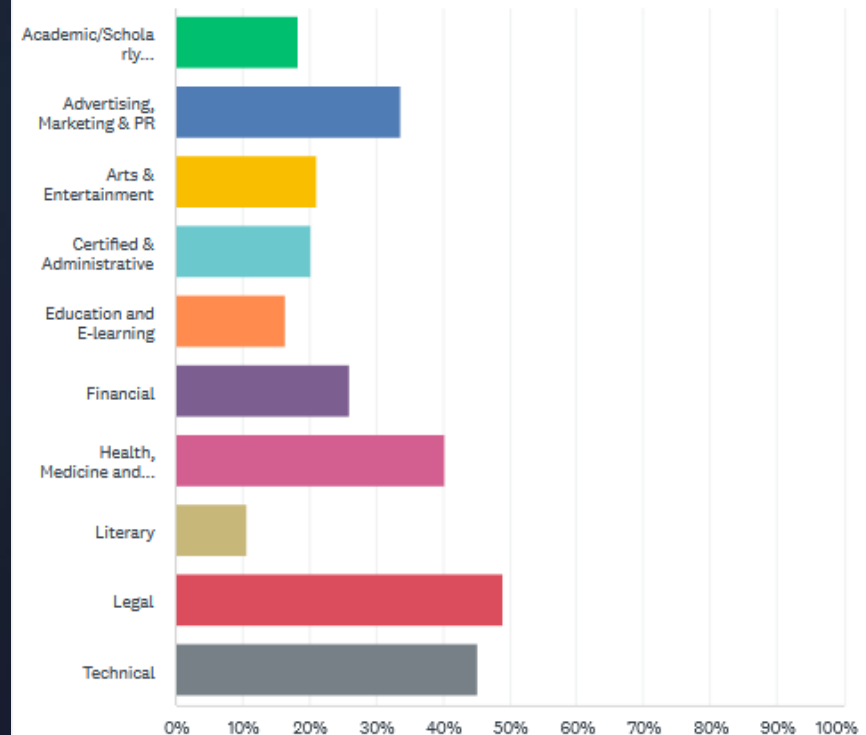
Q. 5: Change in income

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
higher	24.76%	26
lower	50.48%	53
more or less the same	24.76%	26
TOTAL		105

Compared to the period from January 2022 to September 2022, has your income from the services offered above in the period from January 2023 to September 2023 been...
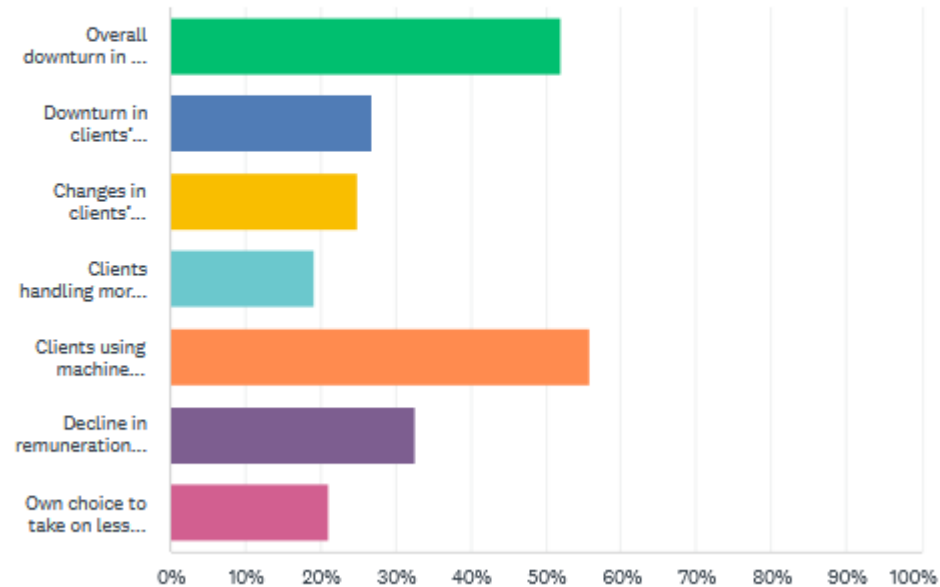
Beantwortet: 105   Übersprungen: 1

If you answered "lower", to what do you attribute the decrease?

Beantwortet: 52   Übersprungen: 54

ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
Overall downturn in the economy	51.92%	27
Downturn in clients' specific business(subject area)	26.92%	14
Changes in clients' circumstances (e.g. vendor management, tendering procedures)	25.00%	13
Clients handling more of their translation/interpreting internally	19.23%	10
Clients using machine translation/ChatGPT (AI) themselves rather than assigning translation/interpreting to external providers	55.77%	29
Decline in remuneration. making that fewer jobs "worthwhile"	32.69%	17
Own choice to take on less work/personal circumstances (e.g. illness, family issues, pending retirement)	21.15%	11
Total Respondents: 52		

- One of my major clients has cashflow problems. If I include his overdue payments, my income would be more or less the same rather than lower.
- Payment delays
- Preference for Europe-based translators due to economic reasons
- No more English speakers in 2 Supervisory Boards; 1 Management Board
- Business downturn due to Covid pandemic, therefore more translations done in-house.
- Best clients bought by TP, Lionbridge, etc. and no longer reach out
- Acquisitions of LSPs by large companies that don't pay professional rates, new colleagues that work for ridiculously low rates
- 1. Acquisitions and mergers: Small, quality-oriented translation agencies being bought up by profit-only corporations, which pay less than 1/2 of the per-work price we were making 30 years ago (no exaggeration). This A&M craze has been going on for many years in many industries, constantly decreasing pay and benefits for workers. 2. More freelance workers vs. in-house translators. Freelancers' strength usually isn't marketing - if it were, they could make much more money in marketing.
- Use of remote interpreting with lower fees
- The "decrease" had already occurred prior to January 2022. My income has remained at that alarmingly low level ever since.
- Consolidation in language industry
- Income dropped dramatically in 2019 with the rise in MT, has remained steady but MUCH lower than before that year
- Already large agencies being acquired by mega agencies

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ANTWORTOPTIONEN	BEANTWORTUNGEN	
Stepped up marketing efforts	27.27%	6
Increase in productivity due to use of machine translation/ChatGPT (AI)	31.82%	7
Increase in work related to your usual specialty	63.64%	14
Additional skills acquired through recent continuing professional development	22.73%	5
Work reassigned from colleagues who have left the T&I sector	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 22		

- Acquiring quality-oriented, direct clients and subcontracting
- Courts were busier this year
- Not sure!
- Acquiring a few new clients through "Ausschreibungen" (I don't think that's considered marketing...)
- Income stream from one client from whom I had gotten most of my jobs dropped by 50% in 2022. I stepped up my marketing efforts in late 2022 and by chance Several "old" clients reappeared in 2023.
- Invested more time
- Started earning extra income as a technical writer
- Changing location (US to Europe) resulted in much more work
- 2022 was disastrous, so the baseline is very low. I already billed more in the first seven months of 2023 than in the whole of 2022.
- Branching out from my standard fields, accepted somewhat lower rates
- Overall increase in productivity with a particular client and particular workflow
- We moved internationally, so I could not accept work for a while
- Raised rates; cleaving of bulk and premium markets
- In-house salary

If you answered "higher", to what do you attribute the increase?

Beantwortet: 22   Übersprungen: 84

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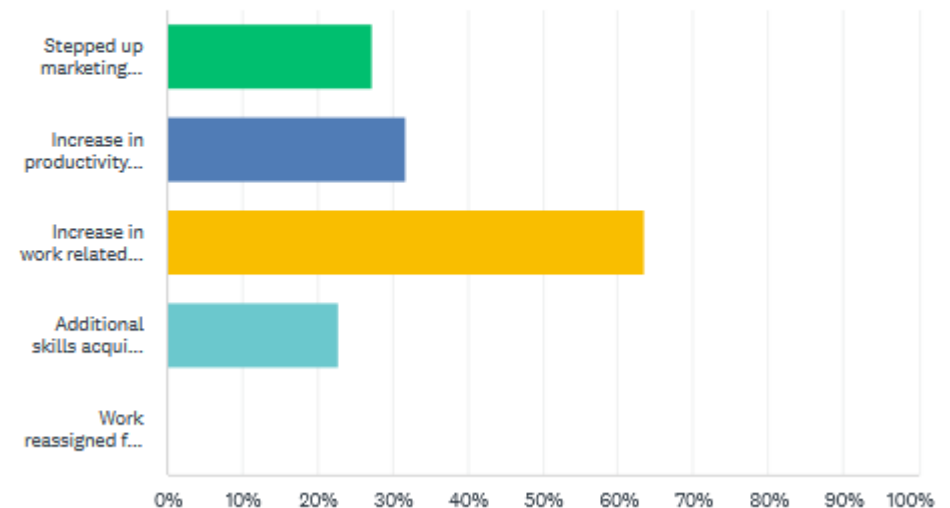
Anything you would like to share as a basis for the
Professional Forum discussion?

Beantwortet: 31   Übersprungen: 75

- <u>Advice</u>:
Control client relationships/send wake-up mails to clients you haven't heard from/be careful in dealing with cheap agencies/translators need to maximize both specialized subject-matter knowledge and high-level language skills and be willing to shift to where the work is

- <u>MTPE-related comments</u>:
Impact of MT and mindset of companies thinking it has sufficient quality resulting in translator job losses/clients unwilling to pay undiscounted MT(PE) rates/clients not open to improving their MT(PE) materials/translations increasingly done by MT/AI resulting in lower proofreading rates/DeepL used for article translation with translator review/outward facing communication needed to convince public human touch is necessary/German clients use MT & AI and overestimate own English language proficiency in checking it/income dropping for years presumably because of refusal to do MTPE/still work conventionally with CAT tool & not yet asked to use MT or MTPE but anticipate change/work has shifted post-pandemic to include more post-editing

- <u>Shifts in available work/diversification</u>:
Increase observed in direct PDF > Word document translation and job offers in subtitling or transcription + translation/increased income by working as a technical writer/shifted post-pandemic to patent translation/resigned when US Gov't no longer allowed remote work – now English-English legal transcription and some translation

- <u>Niche work/specific clients</u>:
Only work with language dept. of contract research organizations/work in a very small niche requiring a high degree of subject-matter knowledge, excellent work, and excellent writing skills

- (Soon) retiring/left/leaving translation industry:
  (Semi-)retirement decision coincides with market downturn as law firms use MT and only request certified translations–tremendous effect with many losing substantial business volume/not currently translating but want to maintain membership & credentials/planning to leave the industry due to barely any translation income for three months/enjoying the occasional short and non-urgent translation in old age/plan to get full-time job as translation declined due to lower rates (TM match rate schemes changing drastically/tricky settings) and abysmal DeepL-sourced TM quality (unpaid time spent fixing it)

- Comments and musings on the state of the industry:
  Decrease in demand for German/profession has run its course (EU presumably using AI)/English is used as a business language in German-speaking countries/ feast-famine cycle has become extreme/huge drop in translation work since Covid/shoddy work & clients unable to recognize it have ruined a vibrant industry/work is not very steady and definitely not enough to support a family/almost had to close shop

- Comment on questionnaire:
  Option missing to select both self-employed AND employed

Breakout groups

Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

- Break into groups of no more than 4

- Assign one notetaker per group

Discuss the current state of your business. How have you adapted to changing circumstances?

Breaking into groups (2)

- Reorganize into new groups of no more than 4.
- Notetakers please save your group's notes for the final discussion
- Assign a notetaker for each new group

How can ATA support you in future-proofing your business?

Takeaways from breakout groups

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Photo by FORTYTWO on Unsplash

Discuss the current state of your business. How have you adapted to changing circumstances?

- *Falling off in minor aspects for some people, still seeing opportunity for growth*

- *Diversity of marketing - translation associations in Germany, website, re-contacting clients who have not sent work for a while*

- *Better, because intentionally sought out more clients (agencies) in field of post-editing*

- *From an LSP perspective, general trend in market. Decline in into German translations. Consolidation and developments in the market impacting demand for into German translations. Also fewer opportunities for companies who aren't leveraging technology*

*one person

Discuss the current state of your business. How have you adapted to changing circumstances?

- *Expanded range of services to include post-editing*

- *Answered better in survey because 2022 was horrible*

- *All group participants had a better 2022 than 2023 but for different reasons*

- *Difficulty getting direct clients*

- *Down 50%, recovered to 2021 levels, getting direct clients: visited DACH region, favoring agencies, moving on to MTPE, leadership – keep humans in the loop, new area alongside financial reporting: sustainable reporting, invest in knowledge, AI/MT are there, annual reports are slimming down, companies stop sending them to externals (30% of business), "we eat what we kill" and can't kill/eat if we don't get out there (regardless of age)*

*one person

Discuss the current state of your business. How have you adapted to changing circumstances?

- *More productive – don't pass on savings to clients, so it's profitable*

- *Working more for less money*

- *Forced to go into new specializations*

- *Lack of quality going on (living in Canada), "get the gist" mentality, social media influence is killing the good in language, got a new agency client, currently changing portfolio and getting out of tourism (disappeared during pandemic, no longer have the funding)*

- *Diversified ten years ago into lucrative field of productivity consulting (including for non-T&I clients), which proved to be wise. Translation business has declined somewhat. One client shut its in-house office of language services and outsourced it to Lionbridge.*

*one person

Discuss the current state of your business. How have you adapted to changing circumstances?

- *Recently diversified into lucrative field of copywriting, responding to the strong demand among German clients for English copywriting. Translation business has been unaffected by MT/AI revolution: Tech industry clients understand MT/AI quite well, so they know that it has nothing to do with the kind of work I do for them.*

- *Recent graduate from MIIS Monterey, so no trend lines yet. T&I project management job as a stable base, translation business mostly in field of patents for WIPO in Geneva: steady work, good pay from institutional client. Certified in both FR>EN and DE>EN, but ATA database inquiries for DE>EN much stronger. Also do English copywriting from German source materials for Supertext (CH).*

- *Recent graduate from University of Vienna, so no trend lines yet. Interested in diversifying more into interpreting. Translation business mostly in field of patents for WIPO in Geneva: steady work, good pay from institutional client. New to profession, but already aware that the bulk agency market holds no potential for a high-quality translator with an MA.*

*one person

How can ATA support you in future-proofing your business?

- *More active role in responsible AI*

- *Have more interaction with toolmakers*

- *Have more ATA interaction with big LSPs and translation buyers*

- *Lernen, wie man mit Copywriting arbeiten kann*

- *Mehr Vorträge +über das Einsetzen von AI (ChatGPT, …)*

- *Technology education*

- *Cooperation with tech providers*

- *More in-depth (not 45 min. overview; 2 hrs./wk. for 10 weeks on different aspects of using ChatGPT for translators)*

- *Active job boards*

How can ATA support you in future-proofing your business?

- *Translators often members of multiple orgs – look at what other orgs are doing, maybe a member survey asking what members' other orgs are doing that they wish ATA would do)*

- *Networking (like the GLD online social events and GLD in Europe annual workshop)*

- *Better networking – help newcomers*

- *Get members on ATA site with profiles*

- *Continue sessions on MT/AI*

- *Take advantage of new trends – climate change*

- *Reexamine ATA's role in baseline prices and pricing strategies, as much for clients as for translators*

How can ATA support you in future-proofing your business?

- *More active role in responsible AI*

- *ATA needs to be at the forefront of the trends, following them and disseminating that information to members.*

- *More tech-related sessions at conference - including specific tools*

- *Keep holding in-person conferences*

- *Try to get special rates for ATA members at other conferences*

- *More how-tos/classes*
  - *How to diversify*
  - *Not just "you need to" but more "how"*

- *Help with dealing with change and fear of change*

How can ATA support you in future-proofing your business?

- *More sessions information that address this issue. That address the trends and how to future-proof your business.*

- *Help us apply and use new MT/AI tools, similar to how ATA responded to the fever pitch around CAT tools in the past 25 years. Perhaps OpenAI would send a speaker to our virtual conference? Perhaps RWS Trados can talk more about MT plug-ins.*

- *Help us professionalize the profession. The minority of ATA members who attend the conference are likely those who are more engaged, proactive, and successful. They are destined for better things than cleaning up robot droppings! So focus conference sessions more on helping us penetrate the (still quite enormous) premium market, which deals in texts that will actually be read and for which intelligent, engaged, creative, skilled human translators are desperately needed. Also: Continue to elevate the image of the industry through public relations and continue to promote the value and visibility of ATA Certification.*

- *Spur conference exhibitors into conducting more active outreach and hosting interactive forums in the exhibit hall.*

Wrap-up and conclusion

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Be sure to check out the latest *interaktiv* issue for more ideas on diversifying your services!

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Thanks & good-bye!

THANK YOU

Auf Wiedersehen

You GoT THiS

Danke

GOODBYE FRIENDS

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