

Doing good work

A path to success as an independent translator

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PURPOSE

To help independent translators (and interpreters) define and achieve success

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WHY SHOULD YOU LISTEN TO ME?

Full-time freelancer since 1984

Approaching comfortable semi-retirement on my own earnings

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WHAT IS "SUCCESS"?

Control
Satisfaction
Revenue
Exit

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ASPECTS OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATOR

WHO YOU ARE
WHAT YOU LEARN
HOW YOU BEHAVE

DOING GOOD WORK

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ASPECTS OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATOR

WHO YOU ARE

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WHO YOU ARE

YOURSELF

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WHO YOU ARE

γνώθι σεαυτόν
(Know thyself)

**Know your capabilities and
always work within them**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Know thyself

collaborative or solitary?
capable of editing?

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WHO YOU ARE

Yourself

Can you handle uncertainty?
Are you a control freak?
Do you have the skills?

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WHO YOU ARE

OTHER PEOPLE

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WHO YOU ARE

Other people

L'enfer, c'est les autres
(Hell is other people)

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WHO YOU ARE Other people

Can you deal with other people?

Self-respect vs compliance

Self-promotion à votre manière

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WHO YOU ARE

COURAGE

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WHO YOU ARE Courage

Take risks

Fail constructively

Take the consequences

Know when to bail out

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WHO YOU ARE

DISCIPLINE

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WHO YOU ARE Discipline

Career-scale thinking

Work when you don't want to

Tolerate tedium

Always be productive

Delay gratification

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WHO YOU ARE

AVARICE

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WHO YOU ARE

Avarice

= “intellectual acquisitiveness”

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WHO YOU ARE

TALENT

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WHO YOU ARE

Talent

“A special natural ability or aptitude”

Know how good you are (or aren't)

Listen to the reward center

Positive feedback loop

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WHO YOU ARE

Talent
for language

Being bilingual isn't enough

A “passion for language”
definitely isn't enough

“Translation” = tedious, repetitive
multilingual word puzzles

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WHO YOU ARE

Talent
for impersonation

Theatricality (even for translators)

“I'm not an engineer but I do know
how to talk like one”

Meeting the audience's expectations

Sensitivity and adaptability

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**ASPECTS OF THE
SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATOR**

WHO YOU ARE
WHAT YOU LEARN

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WHAT YOU LEARN

LANGUAGE

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Language

Source language

**Study
Practice
Immerse**

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Language

Target language

**Always and without exception
YOUR language**

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Language

Target language

**Read, read, and read some more
Emulate styles that you admire
Understand registers
Know what you can get away with**

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WHAT YOU LEARN

SUBJECT MATTER

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Subject matter

**Reading
is necessary but not sufficient**

Look at the real world

Breathe the same air

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WHAT YOU LEARN

TERMINOLOGY

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Terminology

“The beginning of wisdom is to call a thing by its right name”

BUT...

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Terminology

**The “right name” is
CONTINGENT...**

IT DEPENDS

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Terminology

The “right name” can depend on:

client preference

**other right names in a
terminological space,
which can be**

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Terminological space

industry
product category
dialect / jargon
group of documents
single document

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Terminology



**“When I use a word it means just
what I choose it to mean—neither
more nor less.”**

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WHAT YOU LEARN

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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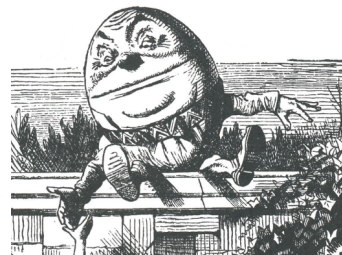
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WHAT YOU LEARN

Information technology



“The question is which is to be master”

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Information technology

Information technology = servant

You = MASTER

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WHAT YOU LEARN

Information technology

Secure your data:

Back up the backups of your backups

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ASPECTS OF THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSLATOR

WHO YOU ARE

WHAT YOU LEARN

HOW YOU BEHAVE

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

PROFESSIONALISM

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

Passion
PERFORMANCE

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

Keep good records
Hire an accountant
Compile a glossary
Communicate appropriately

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

Sign your work
Think about the witness stand
Manage your time

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

**3 PRINCIPLES OF TIME
MANAGEMENT**

Always meet your deadlines
Always meet your deadlines
ALWAYS meet your deadlines!!

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

Know your capabilities:
source and target language
subject matter
response to pressure
work capacity

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Professionalism

Beware the
**VICIOUS CIRCLE OF
OVERWORK**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE Professionalism

OVERWORK ->

fatigue ->

inattention ->

poor quality ->

loss of client confidence ->

NOT ENOUGH WORK

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

SPECIALIZE

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HOW YOU BEHAVE Specialize

**Specialization turns competitors
into colleagues**

Become the go-to person in your field

Expand your specialties when you can

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

**ACCEPT
RESPONSIBILITY**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE Responsibility

the text and its author

your clients (and vice versa)

the profession

the public

our families

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HOW YOU BEHAVE Responsibility

The text

Understand (SL) and render (TL)

Grammar and syntax

Register and context

Specialized vocabulary

Idiolect (“house style”)

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

You owe your client:

(1) A translation that is complete, accurate, and reads as if it had been written by a native English-speaking professional in the relevant field

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

You owe your client:

(2) Adherence to the client's requirements in terms of format, consultation and review, and preferred terminology

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

You owe your client:

(3) Delivery on time

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

Your client owes you:

(1) Reasonable deadlines

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

Your client owes you:

(2) Understanding of the good / cheap / fast triangle

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

Your client owes you:

(3) Terminology support

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

Your client owes you:

(4) Commensurate compensation

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The client

Your client owes you:

(5) Prompt payment

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**A working definition of
“success” is the confidence to
fire a client who does not meet
your expectations.**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The profession

**We have a moral obligation
to help our colleagues learn
and advance
to take pride in what we do
to let the rest of the world know about it**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
The public

**What we do affects our clients
which affects their clients
which affects
employees stockholders
investors the world**

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HOW YOU BEHAVE

Responsibility
Our families

**No amount of “success,” however
defined, is worth damaging your
relationships or your physical and
mental health.**

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EXIT STRATEGY

**“Count no career successful until the end
is known”**

Know when to hang ‘em up

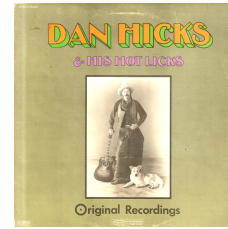
Have the financial resources

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**“How Can I Miss You When
You Won’t Go Away?”**

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**“The beginning of wisdom is
to call a thing
by its right name”**

... but it is only the beginning

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**Doing good work is the
foundation of success**

... but it is only the foundation

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nicholas@hartmantranslation.com

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