

# Supporting roles

**Isabel Hurtado de Mendoza** found she gleaned invaluable advice for taking her career on to the next stage on ITI's Peer Support Group



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**W**hen I joined the Peer Support Group in March 2005, I held my MSc in Translation and Conference interpreting and had already been working regularly as a freelance translator for five years and as a seasonal translator for the City of Edinburgh Council for four years. However, I felt that the course would boost my continuing professional development and help me network with other translators.

The formal part of the programme ran from 1 March to 30 May and was divided into the following modules: producing a CV; quantifying and pricing; negotiating jobs; invoicing; getting paid; planning software and hardware; producing a marketing plan.

Cate Avery – co-coordinator of the PSG with Lanna Castellano – was the mentor for the first module. This module dealt with producing an effective CV, and we managed to improve our old CVs with useful feedback from Cate and Marc Prior.

Marc, Gillian Hargreaves and Sue Young were course contributors. Marc advised us in areas such as computing and international business, and he was especially adamant that mentees should produce a business profile rather than a traditional CV. Gillian participated actively in the discussion and, as manager of a translation company, she was able to provide an invaluable point of view. Sue contributed mostly to our discussion when we talked about specialisations, because she could offer expert advice on legal translation.

The module on counting and pricing was led by Lanna, who shared with us the tricks of estimating and quoting for a job. Afterwards, we had to produce a sample invoice, and Lanna gave us individual feedback on our invoices and letterheads.

Anne Hulme ran the module on job negotiation. She gave us some practical assignments, which included an unexpected phone call from a 'fake' translation manager. It was good practice for a real-life scenario, and we got good tips on how to deal with agencies.

Jenet Peers gave us a helpful article on how to get paid – which I have consulted a couple of times again after the course. In this module, we learned how to deal with bad payers.

## Technology

In our technology module and all through the course, we made very good use of Michael Benis's computer-related expertise. We provided him with a business plan outlining the equipment we had and that we intended to buy, including dictionaries, chairs and other office supplies. He then commented on our plans and made insightful suggestions.

Nick Rosenthal, who ran the marketing module, asked us to produce a marketing plan for our business. It was a difficult exercise, but I believe it was essential for taking the next steps in our careers.

Apart from completing the exercises and discussing related issues, we also used the online forum for other queries or thoughts regarding the profession, and we had some very fruitful discussions. The format of the scheme meant we could organise our time according to our needs and participate as much as we wanted to. In fact, some mentees were quite inactive or had to drop out, so the mentee-tutor ratio was very favourable.

During this part of the course, we learned a lot from our tutors and contributors, who encouraged discussion and drew on their expertise to give invaluable advice, as well as

from peer mentees and ex-mentees.

From June, we had one-to-one support from ITI members outside the PSG. The idea behind this was that an experienced translator would review a translation in our chosen field and give us advice on making further progress. Distance permitting, they would also invite us to shadow them, thus providing some real-life experience.

I haven't had the chance to participate in the mentoring part of the course yet, but one of the other mentees, Rhiannon Richards, commented: 'Having a mentor on a one-to-one basis has been an invaluable experience and one which can be tailored to the strengths and interests of both mentor and mentee. As in the real world, deadlines were agreed in advance, and detailed feedback was given. I was fortunate enough to have a mentor who provided me with the first texts, then suggested websites where I might locate more, and let me provide the final text. Situated as it is, at the end of the PSG, a number of issues discussed in other areas can and do turn up.'

All in all, even though this was a demanding course, I feel my time and the nominal amount of money I paid were well worth it. I acquired considerable knowledge and this will enhance my career. However, I believe that some exercises and discussions were too basic for some of us, because there was a combination of experienced and non-experienced mentees.

Perhaps in the future it might be a better idea to offer two schemes: one for mature, experienced translators in search of professional development and another for newcomers to the profession. Thus, everybody would profit from the whole course, and nobody would feel out of place due to their lack or excess of experience.

Hoping that ITI considers this suggestion for the future, there is nothing left for me to say but thank you to all the people involved in this year's PSG.

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