

Give your freelance work the best start

A special ITI online course for new entrants to the translation profession, ITI's Peer Support Group gives real benefit to people starting out as freelance translators. **Nick Rosenthal** explains



Nick Rosenthal joined ITI in 1987. He is managing director of Salford Translations Ltd, and for the past two years has led the Marketing Skills part of the PSG

What is the PSG?

Did you know that ITI runs a special training scheme to help freelance translators start out in business? The ITI Peer Support Group is a mentoring scheme, run annually for ITI members who are establishing themselves as freelance translators. It is online, so it does not matter where you live. We have had participants from all over the UK, and also from right across Europe and as far afield as Japan. We typically have around 25 participants, most of whom are Associates of ITI. The course is available to Associates and Members of ITI membership and is one of the many benefits of joining ITI.

The PSG consists of a set of exercises in which, under the guidance of senior and experienced translators (the 'peers' in the title), mentees work on their CVs and marketing literature, develop their own business and marketing plan, draw up an equipment/technology plan and gain insight into negotiation with clients and other business and IT skills. The tutors, who have expertise in individual fields, give feedback, advice and encouragement through the private online e-group.

And as well as learning from the experienced professionals, ideas are debated via the e-group and solutions pooled among the fellow mentees. In this way, participants not only learn about the profession, but also build up a lasting community of friends and colleagues. In this private, friendly and supportive environment,

newcomers gain the confidence to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ITI, such as its professional development course, language and subject networks and regional groups.

What does the course cover?

The Peer Support Group focuses on the business of translation, on the skills that you will need to work for yourself and to successfully run your own business. Over the course of three months (from March to June), you will learn how to present yourself to potential clients, how to go about invoicing for jobs that you have completed, how to keep financial records and ensure that you get paid on time (and how to respond professionally if payment is late).

The one thing that the course does not specifically cover is translation skills. This course is aimed at people who can translate, and want to learn the business skills that they need alongside their translation skills in order to work for themselves as translators.

Is it expensive?

The course fee for the PSG is deliberately set at a level that makes this scheme accessible to people starting out in the translation profession. For example, the 2006 course cost less than £100. However, taking part in the PSG does call for considerable commitment if you are to get full benefit from it. Participants should be prepared to commit 10 to

12 hours per week over the three months of the course. This will cover the time needed to check the e-group daily, respond to emails, work on assignments and do research. The assignments will have deadlines, which is useful training in a deadline-driven profession such as translation!

Who will benefit from the course?

Most of the participants on previous PSG courses have been people with previous work experience in other fields. Lanna Castellano, one of the PSG organisers, says, 'Many of the people who contact us about participating in the PSG are aged 40 or over and moving into translation after working in some other profession.'

Past participants have included teachers looking at moving into translation, accountants, staff translators who were looking to acquire new business skills ahead of going freelance, and people returning to the world of work after a break.

More information

The Peer Support Group starts in March each year. If you would like further information, please write to education@iti.org.uk, and you will be put in touch with one of the organisers who can reply direct to any of your queries, or with a former mentee who will be happy to share their personal experience of the scheme. You can also find additional information on ITI's website at www.iti.org.uk and then clicking on the 'CPD and Training' button at the top of the page.



ITI members: This event qualifies as Continuing Professional Development. Enter it in your CPD record!

Undertaking a Peer Support Group online course counts towards your Professional Development, and can be entered in your CPD record. Check with the course organisers about how to do this when you book your place.

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