

Catherine Christaki Interview – December, 2012

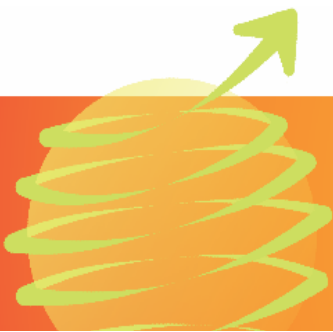
Marcela: Hi, everyone. This is Marcela Reyes with an “Expert Interview” for the Translators Marketing Club. Today I am interviewing Catherine Christaki, a professional translator of English, French, and German into Greek. She has co-owned Lingua Greca Translations since March of 2012. Catherine received her Bachelor of Arts in French and German from Anglia Ruskin University in the United Kingdom in 2001. She also holds a diploma in English-into-Greek translation from the Chartered Institute of Linguists in the United Kingdom. Her specialization includes IT, Medical, and Gambling texts. She has been a proud member of the American Translators Association since 2008 and the Chartered Institute of Linguists since 2007. She is active in social media, especially on Twitter [@LinguaGreca](#), and co-maintains a blog about translation of freelancing called “Adventures in Freelance Translation.” If you want to know the address, it is <http://linguagreca.com/blog>. For the last couple years, her Twitter account has been chosen among the Top 25 Language Twitterers and her blog among the Top 100 Language Lovers, the largest competition for language enthusiasts hosted by bab.la & Lexiophiles. I’ve known Catherine since 2010. She attended a couple of my presentations at the ATA Conference in Denver, Colorado. Welcome to the call, Catherine. I am very, very pleased to be interviewing you today.

Catherine: Hello, Marcela. Thank you very much for having me.

Marcela: It's really, really a pleasure. Everybody knows who Lingua Greca is and who Catherine Christaki is. You have become very famous in cyberspace. Oh, yes, Catherine. So, tell us what kind of marketing strategy you follow? What is your secret?

Catherine: I work mostly with translation agencies for the time being. The only marketing strategy I have ever used is cold e-mailing and sending quotes to posted jobs in portals like Proz, but I am currently planning my marketing strategy for finding direct clients.

Marcela: Okay.



Catherine: I could describe it to you, if you want.

Marcela: Please, go ahead.

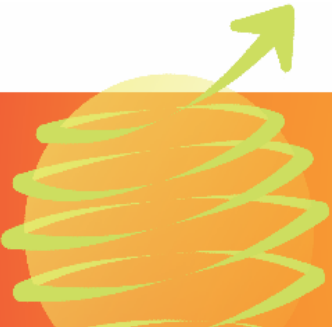
Catherine: Okay. First, I am planning to identify my ideal clients. For example, as an IT translator, IBM or Oracle would be a good match. Then I will research those companies online as much as possible and, of course, all of that is free. Like their financial results, whether they have an in-house translation department or if they outsource, who are the people I should contact, you know, the key decision-makers with regards to localization, of course. Then I will try calling them, actually picking up the phone and calling, which is not something I have much experience in — just cold-calling — but I hope after a few attempts, I will get better at it. And I will call them in the companies that I have identified, and I will introduce myself and ask if I can send them an e-mail with my sales pitch, i.e. my background, the services I offer, my rates and so on. I will ask them in the e-mail to study what I have to offer and then I will mention that I will be in touch in a few weeks for a follow-up, or a meeting if they want, and in the meantime I might send them (I am not sure yet, but I will probably do that) by post a nice folder with promotional material like brochures and fliers that demonstrate my services. And I was also thinking in that folder I might add interviews that I have done. For example, I did an interview in a localization blog about gaming. That shows that I know what I am talking about and have some experience in the field. You know, they probably won't even read it but still it's nice to have, and I think it will look a bit impressive in a folder.

Marcela: And those clients that you're going to try to reach — are those within a geographical area or are they overseas? How are you going to divide the demographics? Your clients — I mean “prospects” — are they local or potential? Do you want to go overseas?

Catherine: As a first step, I will try with local clients. Of course, this will not be easy at all because of the financial situation in Greece. So, I am not very hopeful that a lot will come of that, but it will be my first step to getting better at cold-calling and contacting direct clients. I am also planning on targeting overseas clients, but I will do that by attending conferences and expos abroad.

Marcela: Okay.

Catherine: In the industries and the fields of my specializations: IT, Medical and



Gambling. For example, there are many gaming expos, and some of the people there are app developers and people like that who would be really great clients for me. But I am not sure if the overseas strategy will work because it will be more difficult to arrange meetings and have face-to-face contact with those clients.

Marcela: Okay. I think you are on the right track. Yes, definitely. And, with your online identity and your online reputation, that is going to be really easy for you. You know, I actually conducted a Google search of you yesterday, and there are over 108,000 hits from that. Yes! Did you know that?

Catherine: No.

Marcela: Yeah. So, you are really, really strong in that way. You have what I call an online identity, a very strong online identity. So, that's going to help you so much when you start with your strategy.

Catherine: Especially with the clients abroad, because in Greece clients are not that impressed with a website and a blog and stuff like that. So, with clients abroad, yes, I think it will help. Twitter and LinkedIn and all those networks will be great, but in Greece nobody really uses that stuff here yet.

Marcela: Okay.

Catherine: Well, I hope they will start using them.

Marcela: Oh, yeah. It just takes more time. The same thing happens in Latin-America. It takes more time to embrace the new technologies, but it will get there. Eventually it will. Catherine, have you ever struggled to get clients?

Catherine: Something like that happened to me at the very beginning of my career. Right after I graduated from the university, I worked in the travel industry for a couple of years and I translated part-time, mostly for clients that found me through mutual friends or acquaintances — someone like a manager in a company my brother knew or someone that I met at the hotel where I was working. When I quit my day job in the travel industry and decided it was time to be a full-time freelance translator, I sent e-mails to all the Greek translation agencies. At the time I thought that was the next natural step to do, but only a few replied back. They sent me tests, which I completed, of course, but I never



got any feedback. So, I started working with publishing houses and a few direct clients, associations and the like. A few years later I decided I was experienced enough to send e-mails to agencies abroad, and that was it. I mean, I haven't found myself without sufficient work since.

Marcela: Oh, wow!

Catherine: But I still don't get why those Greek agencies never replied to me back then. A few years later some tried to ask for my CV or rates, but I was already too expensive for them by then. You know, it's weird because everybody – yeah, I think it's natural — every translator has worked with agencies in their country. I mean, I have to be a weird example, for not having worked with or actually working now with any Greek agencies on a regular basis.

Marcela: That's interesting.

Catherine: That was the only time when I was a bit anxious as to whether I would find work. I always had a few clients around and a few prospects, but I thought that my main clients would be the Greek translation agencies. I think that's normal, right?

Marcela: Absolutely.

Catherine: And so it was a big surprise.

Marcela: Yeah, very interesting. Oh, wow! So what role has social media played? I know you're a big social media user. You've embraced social media, oh wow, since when? 2009, maybe? How long have you had your Twitter account and blog?

Catherine: I've been on Twitter for 2 years. It was October. Right after the ATA Conference where we met in Denver.

Marcela: Okay.

Catherine: So, October 2010. I think it was the 31st of October. And my blog went online last August.



Marcela: Wow! And you really, really took seriously all the tips from way back then, because you've been among the top 100 blogs of language lovers, which is excellent, amazing! So, what social media channels do you use besides the blog and Twitter? You're a big tweeter.

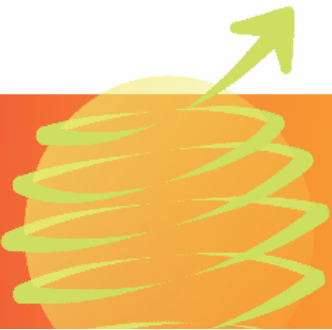
Catherine: Yes. I am a very big fan. Twitter is my favorite one. I use Facebook. I have a personal account and the company page and LinkedIn and Google+, but everything for me starts with Twitter. I am kind of a curator of online content. So, what someone will see me share online are links and blog posts and articles that I found online, maybe papers, mostly about translation and interpreting, but sometimes about freelancing as well. So, my first job — let's say "task" — is to read all the old blogs that I follow and read what the people that I follow on Twitter are sharing. Then I compile a list and I plan my tweets for the next day or the day after. I use my tweets to share useful stuff on my other accounts as well — LinkedIn and Google+ and Facebook. Everything starts with Twitter.

Marcela: Wow! How much time do you spend every day in social media? That's one of the biggest question translators ask me: "Oh, that's so time-consuming!" How much time do you think that you spend every day doing this kind of activity?

Catherine: I think it depends on what stage of a Twitter-user you are. For example, at the beginning, you follow only 20 people. They don't talk much, so you press "Refresh" every, I don't know, hour or something because it's something new and exciting. I did that as well. During the first few months, I thought that I was supposed to read everything other people had written — everything! So, for example, if I had to work for five hours and I couldn't take a break and check Twitter, then I would stay late at night so I could read what everybody had said in those five hours. Or every morning it would take me two hours to read what everybody had said since last night.

Marcela: Oh, wow!

Catherine: But that only happened in the first few months, and back then I think I also shared too much, meaning I sent too many tweets. I hadn't really discovered what my ideal tweet number would be per day. For example, I would find something and tweet about it right away. Then I used my iPhone clock and set it to 20 minutes, so every 20 minutes I would log in and send a new tweet. It was crazy. But now I think I have more of a balance going on. So,



once or twice a week, if I have the time, I read my RSS reader and the blogs I follow and I plan my tweets for the next days. Usually on weekends that takes me two to three hours maximum. So, that's done.

Marcela: Okay.

Catherine: For example, to plan the tweets for a week, it only takes me two, three hours every Saturday or every Sunday and then I am done. I log in to Twitter every day and, depending on how busy I am, I check what others are sharing, reply to something someone has sent me or something like that, but that's it really. So, in total every day it might take 10 minutes or, if I am not very busy and something very interesting is going on in Twitter, it might take, I don't know, half an hour, 40 minutes.

Marcela: Okay. It seems that you know how to manage your social media. Do you use any system like HootSuite to manage? What do you use?

Catherine: I use HootSuite to send tweets that don't have links in them. For example, if I want to have a conversation with you, I will do it via HootSuite.

Marcela: Okay.

Catherine: For planning the tweets that I will send I use SocialOomph. I put them there so they can be posted on the time and day that I want and then I also use SocialOomph to create my list of weekly favorites that I have in the blog every week.

Marcela: So, you have all the tools that you need, like Twitter and all your social media tools. Excellent, excellent.

Catherine: With so much content you need tools to be able to cope with all that. The Twitter interface is nice, but it's not enough. With HootSuite I have five lists showing on my screen. I have added everybody I follow in lists. For example, the translators are in the translation languages list. The freelancers, the writers and all that are in different lists. So, you can see everything together there. It's like a nice big Twitter right on your screen.

Marcela: Let's move on to your website. You use blue; you use green. I see there is a nice design there. By the way, for the listeners, it's linguagrec.com.



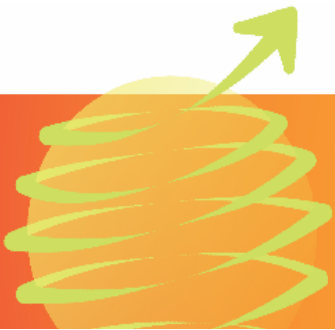
How did you come up with your website? What about the colors, the design? Did you use anything like WordPress? I love your website, by the way. It's clean. It has everything you need. It has the social media, your tweets. It has your award badges for 2012/2011 and also the Twitter. Everything is there. So, what was the idea behind it?

Catherine: Well, everything started with the company name. That was the first thing we came up with. Again, that was at the conference. I remember thinking about the company name right after your presentation.

Marcela: Oh, wow!

Catherine: Your presentation was great food for thought — the brand colors and what you have to think about your brand. So, we came up with the company name. Then came the logo. We asked a design company, a local one here in Athens, to work on it. We just told them that we wanted something professional but fresh and creative because we're not accountants or lawyers. We don't have to be super-serious with our websites and stuff like that. We are creative people. We are writers, after all. That's when they asked us about the colors — that's the only thing they asked us — and we said green and blue because we liked both colors. As you said before, our site looks clean, so I think our purpose has been accomplished because that was what we wanted and that's the first thing everybody says when they see our website. And we think that's a great compliment, because we didn't want it to be something heavy or overloaded or too dark. We wanted people to...how can I say it? I think it's good for your mood, those two colors. So, they came up with our logo, which we loved. So, we didn't have much to do with the creative process because they just sent us this logo, nothing else, and it had the colors we wanted. Next we found a web designer and – oh, wait, before that, let me just say that we didn't use a WordPress template.

We bought our domain, linguagreca.com and .gr as well, because we are in Greece after all, and we didn't want somebody taking our brand, and we found a web designer, told him again the same things — professional but fresh and creative — and that he could have some fun with it, but he had to use the logo as a color base so it had to be green and blue. So, he sent us a few designs, and we chose what we thought was the cutest one, you know, with the weird trees and the butterflies, which now are now a huge part of our brand — the butterfly — and there's just the two small people on the prairie sitting with



their computers and working and typing away at translating.

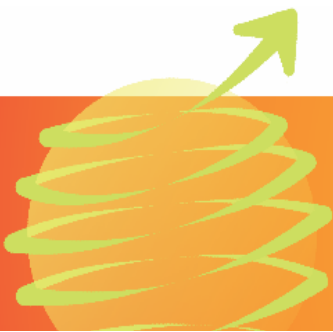
As for the content, in the nine, ten years before we had our website, I had gathered crazy amounts of information and resources, online dictionaries and glossaries, and all that. So, I wanted our website to have all the basic information a client would want to see. For example, our background, resumes, our services, our specializations, rates, even frequently-asked questions and of course, a contact page with lots of info (For me it's frustrating when I go into a website to find an address and they don't have it) like the telephone number and maybe a cell phone number for after hours, our business hours and anything we could think of so our potential client wouldn't wonder about something he wanted. And then — because I had all those resources and I didn't want them to go to waste and it would be nice to have them in one place on one page rather than all those bookmarks that I had — we created a tools page with a few subpages where we put all the glossaries and dictionaries, translation portals and links to anything you can imagine, online articles and all that, mainly because I wanted to have them organized all in one place. Because it took me a long time to find all of them, I thought it would be nice for other translators to have a “one stop shop”, well, not a “shop” actually.

Marcela: Yeah, yeah, one place where they could come and get all the information they wanted. Oh, wow! Very, very nice.

Catherine: And there are a few Greek translators that have sent me messages through LinkedIn, and they say, “Wow, this is amazing! It's like I found treasure.” and stuff like that. And that was exactly what I wanted to do, because I remember how frustrating it was for me when I started out and I was trying to find online dictionaries and things that would help me with work and how long it took me to find all of those. So, I was really happy when those translators contacted me via LinkedIn and told me that it was a great help.

Marcela: You have definitely helped colleagues. You do. That's one of the things that I can perceived of you. It's just so clear that you are so willing to share with all – not just Greek translators — what, in general, you know: information, tools, all the time that you spend doing social media. It's mostly for them, you know; it's pretty much for them.

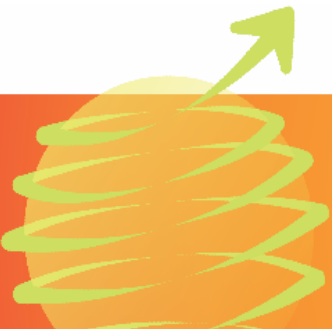
Catherine: It's good karma.



Marcela: Absolutely. That's one of the ways to do it — just help others without expecting anything in return. And you're doing a beautiful job; you are. So, we talked about your having a Twitter account that you love, you're a big Tweeter, you're a big blogger. And also you use Facebook. But have these three different tools helped you in any way to get clients? Do you feel that you have been able to get clients? Or is this more to create a good brand?

Catherine: You know, since you said that, as to the second part of your question, yes. My first purpose of doing the whole social media thing was brand exposure. First, building the brand and then creating exposure for the brand, not for myself. In these two years that I have been using social media, I admit that this has been my ultimate goal, but the way to get there has been so much fun because the social media have helped me meet colleagues and have super-interesting conversations and even make a few new friends, which is great but, as for clients, no. Social media hasn't helped me find any clients yet. I have had some contacts with clients. Some translation agencies have contacted me after following me on Twitter and have added me to their databases, etc., but no work has come. I have approached a few direct clients via LinkedIn; they contacted me back and we had a nice conversation, but for those few cases, I was too expensive for them. The main reason that my ROI — my return on investment — of the time that I am giving to social media is, at the time being, zero is because my approach isn't client-oriented. I mean, my interaction is with colleagues and some agency owners. Again, like we discussed before, with clients I do have a marketing strategy plan for social media that I am planning to implement in 2013, and, as with traditional marketing, I am planning to identify my ideal clients, see if they have social media accounts and then follow them so I can learn more about their company and more about the industry in general. Then, when I manage to build some rapport with them, I can contact them and offer my services.

Marcela: Excellent. You made a very good point that your social media have been pretty much targeted to colleagues, other translators, and the industry, and that's why you have been able to build up your brand among others in the industry. But now that you have said you're going to be changing, making a shift as to who the audience is going to be, you are once again on the right track, because social media, as you said, is all about who you're going to be talking to, who you are going to be sharing value with. The fact that your social media have been focused primarily on all the translators is why you have 108,000 hits in Google. You have a strong brand — you do! — and now that



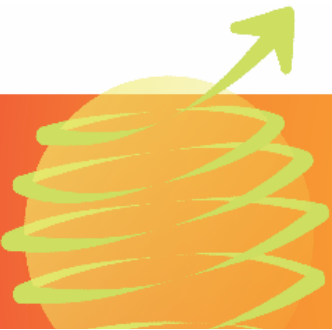
you're shifting that audience to direct clients, I know you won't have any problems, and you will continue building up your client base, mainly because you're going to be focusing on direct clients now.

Catherine: You know, Marcela, I don't think that my content will change much. For example, everywhere you read online in articles and blogs about branding and blogging and sharing on social media, it says that your audience should be your client. So, for example, if I wanted my blog to be client-oriented, then I should write how app localization works so what they have to do, and, if I wanted to have my direct clients follow me on Twitter, then I would have to share stuff on their industry. I don't think I will ever go that far. For example, yes, I am planning on writing just a few posts in my blog that are a bit more oriented towards clients and not translators. And maybe I will share just a few links on Twitter, again targeted to clients, but it's like I am not going to change what I do now completely. On Twitter, for example, I am thinking of following prospects so that I can start a relationship with them, mainly for learning news about the company and the industry. So, where I now might be more helpful to translators, in the case where I am looking for clients on Twitter, they will be helpful to me. I don't think my tweets will be of very much help to them. It will be one-sided mostly. So, that can provide me, you know, with an "eye." It's like spying on the industry and learning all the latest developments and stuff like that. I have seen a few examples of translation blogs that belong to agencies, and their posts are just too boring. I mean, they look like they are targeted to clients, the companies, but they are too boring. I don't think any direct clients read those blogs. I think there have been just one or two blogs that really offer valuable content to a client who is not a translator who has nothing to do with the translation field. So, I am not sure how this will work and if I will change my social media style completely. But we will see; we will see how it goes.

Marcela: Okay. I am going to be following you next year and see any changes and see how you're going to be doing this and definitely we need to talk again. This year, next year — December of next year — I'd like to speak with you again and see how this new strategy has worked for you. It would be very interesting to learn a year later you say, "hey, look what happened!"

Catherine: We will have many, many examples of what not to do.

Marcela: That's funny. Yeah, definitely. And I hope you share it, then, with us next year. But, okay, just one more question. I know you have shared a lot of



excellent tips and information. But, for those that are newcomers, you know, students that are just finishing with the translation or interpreting studies, and also those struggling established translators that are really having a hard time getting work, what would you recommend to them as to what they need to do? What would be your recommendation?

Catherine: First of all, you have to act professional at all times and carry business cards and dress the part whenever you're out of the office because you never know when you will meet future clients. It might be in the grocery store. It might be at the neighbor's. It might be anywhere around and someone will ask you what you do for a living. And then you have to be ready to give your "elevator speech" or your "short speech" (let's say it in other words). Most translators say, "oh, I am a translator." The other person doesn't even know what that is exactly. They just think of a person in her pajamas at home in front of a computer. So, you have to be ready at any time to demonstrate your exciting abilities and services and the exciting profession that you do. Then I have to say "quality" in every project that you deliver. Project managers in agencies or companies will appreciate your work, and they will refer you to other clients without your even having to ask. That has happened to me quite a few times. A project manager leaves one agency and they go to another one; they just call me again and use my services. So, I don't lose a client like that. I mean, the agency loses the client; I don't. The last one is don't lose hope because hard work always brings results. Sometimes there are famine periods but they don't last forever. You can't have tons of work every week and you can't be without work also every week. So, you have to keep trying and the clients will come, and, of course, never forget to market your services even when you're busy. It's a nice break. It makes sure that, when that famine period comes, you will get new clients. I am not going to say every week or every month, but the more you market and the more you try to build your brand, the more clients will come.

Marcela: Wow! Well, with that we have to wrap it up. Thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to visit Catherine's website, blog and follow her on Twitter. She has a lot of good stuff to share with you. Catherine, thank you again. It was really a pleasure to have you here today.

Catherine: Thank you, too, Marcela.

Marcela: Okay. So, until next time...

