
Choosing and Building a Specialization

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ATA Back to Business Basics
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Karen Tkaczyk



- Certified technical translator
- PhD in chemistry
- Prior industry experience
- @ChemXlator

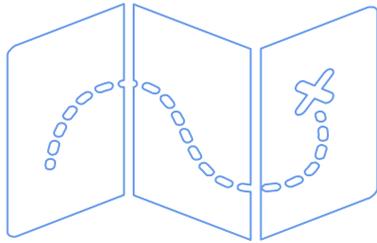


Ben Karl

BK



- Certified business translator
- BA in translation
- MBA
- @Bentranslates



Overview

- Why (ideally) translators should specialize
- How to (concretely) build a specialization
- What a (specialized) translation practice looks like
- How to (effectively) market yourself as a specialist
- Q&A

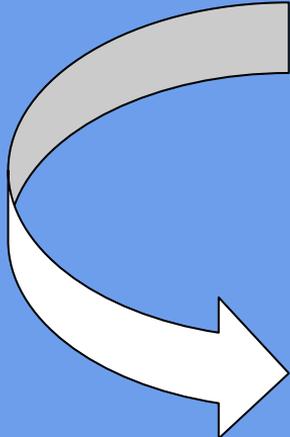
Why specialize?

Advantages of specializing

Reliability

Quality

Knowledge

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- Respect
 - Efficiency
 - Higher rates, better margins
 - Referrals



Building a specialization

Roads to specialization



You've already got one...

- Degree(s) or credential(s)
- Previous career
- Lifelong interest
- Leveraging existing knowledge in a new way
- Catching up translation skills

...or you don't.

- Just starting out
 - Learning new things
 - Finding fields that complement your language skills and interests
 - Beefing up specialist knowledge
-

You already have a foundation

Think about...



- How can you put what you already know to use?
 - How can you continue to learn in this new industry?
 - What skills need work?
 - Target language writing skills
 - Translation craft
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You are looking for a specialization

Think about...



- What interests you?
 - What do you enjoy?
 - What are you good at?
 - Where are your services needed?
-

Examples



Common, broad fields

- Medical
- Financial
- Legal
- Technical

Niche fields

- Cardiology
 - M&A
 - Contracts
 - Semiconductors
-



Growing your specialization

- Join industry associations (i.e. outside T&I)
 - Read industry publications
 - Take MOOCs or other courses (even pursue a credential/degree)
 - Attend conferences, workshops, webinars
 - Work with experienced colleagues
 - Find your clone and become close collaborators
 - Learn by doing (carefully)
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Specialized practice



Essential skills

- Be able to read specialist publications (in all language pairs) with ease, and do so regularly
 - Speak to clients on a peer-to-peer basis
 - Pursue additional credentials, certificates, certification, etc.
 - Work with specialist peers
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**Specialists refuse
a lot of work
(and refer their
colleagues)**

Specialized translation practice



- Specializations grow, change, evolve
 - Specialists regularly work to expand their specializations
 - Specialists regularly remove specializations from their list
 - Specialists know how to conduct their own terminology research
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Marketing a specialization

Marketing your specialization



- Be explicit and specific
 - Don't oversell, but...
 - ...don't sell yourself short
 - Leverage your credentials
 - Don't try to check every box
 - Don't be afraid of saying no
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**You only need
enough work for you**

**The future
belongs to experts**

Check out the new
Inside Specialization
episodes of the
ATA Podcast

Q&A

Thank you!
