

16 safe ways for freelancers to ruin their relationship with a translation agency

1. Try to be unavailable on the phone (landline and mobile) as long as possible. Don't answer.
2. Ignore urgent text messages from your client.
3. Just check your E-mail inbox once a day, and even then, wait for a couple of hours before replying. After all, you don't check your physical mailbox for snail mail more often.
4. Never confirm a translation order. Rely on the project manager's skills in telepathy.
5. Take on all jobs you can ever get, even within fields you have never ever heard of. That's an excellent chance to gain experience, even if the final translation won't be very convincing and the agency will get into trouble with the end-client.
6. Never read the instructions in the purchase order from the agency.
7. Change all the formats in the files as a surprise for the project manager at the agency. Crashing a file template is so easy and so much fun.
8. If you have any questions on specific terms in the source text, send the project manager a short mail each time you encounter any trouble. Setting up a summarised list of all the questions after you have finished the translation just takes too much time (see also No. 10).
9. Ignore consistent terminology and always use different target terms for the same source term, even if the meaning is exactly the same. This makes the translation more exciting.
10. Do not send any terminology questions to your client at all. If you are still in doubt, but too afraid to ask, highlight unknown terms and expressions in the text with different colours and send the translation "as is" without any explanations about these highlighted parts or any term suggestions. Project managers love unfinished products.
11. Ignore agreed deadlines. If you can't keep a deadline, and want to inform your client about this, wait until 30 minutes before the delivery time. Or set your own deadline and don't tell your client about it.
12. After delivery, don't react to the agency's mails about how much you will charge (e.g. if charging on target text and this wasn't settled before the job). Wait for at least 8 weeks before sending out your invoice and hope for fast payment because you were late in invoicing and need the money urgently.
13. If charging per target line (very often applied e.g. in Germany), use thousands of unnecessary spaces in your translation to get a higher value (rather than tabs). Hope that the client won't notice.
14. Do not issue any invoice at all, and start wondering after 3 months why the agency hasn't paid. Start telling other colleagues that the agency is a black sheep because they don't pay.
15. Charge more than you agreed with the client. Hope that the client won't notice.
16. If you go on vacation, don't tell your client until just before you're leaving. Why should the client need to know about your plans at an earlier stage? As an alternative, you can always inform your client about your vacation with a nice postcard from the Maldives.