



# DIRECT MARKETING IN 5 EASY STEPS

How to get in front of your dream clients  
and wow them into working with you

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## Your 5-Step Guide to Creating a Successful Direct Marketing Campaign

There comes a point in every translator's career when you want more control over your working life. You dream of the type of clients that give you a steady stream of interesting assignments, who value your advice and happily pay what you know you're worth.

Instead, you find yourself sifting through an enormous pile of emails, your cursor hovering over the delete button. You know, the ones that read *could you revise this machine translation for us? Our budget is...* [too low to survive on a diet of beans], *we need 10,000 words back in two days*, or those ultra-special emails that are addressed to you as *Dear Linguist*. Ugh.

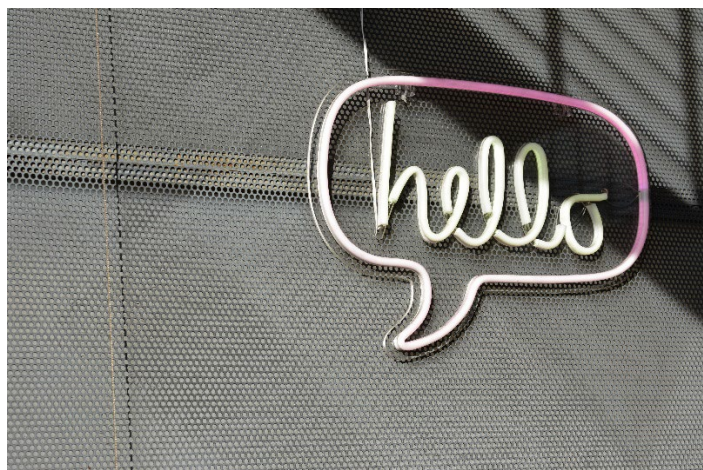
Or maybe you just feel you've reached the ceiling of what your current clients will pay? If any of that sounds familiar, it's time to get serious about marketing to the types of clients you *do* want to work with.

Very often our dream clients don't know we exist. They know translators exist, but it doesn't cross their minds to look for a specific breed of translator like you. They don't dare to imagine such a thing as the perfect blend of specialised translator, someone who understands their industry *and* has advanced language skills and can provide cultural insights into their target market.

So they don't look for you.

Instead, our ideal clients seek out the nearest translation agency or locate multilingual staff to deal with their translations. We know how to get a professional translation by the right person, they don't. And the chances of them landing on your website or social media account are slim. I mean, it could happen... but if they're not looking, they won't find you.

This is where you come in. Ta da!



You introduce yourself, present your amazing skills, and your secret recipe that turns clients and colleagues into loyal fans. And bingo, your dream clients swiftly find regular, well-paying work for you for the indefinite future. Not only that, but they also rave about this extraordinary translator they've found to all their friends.

Well... it doesn't work *exactly* like that, but that's the ultimate aim. And one of the ways to achieve this is to market to these ideal clients in a way they can't – and don't want to – ignore. Your new contacts and future business partners will be more than happy to hear from you. You'll market to people who have never heard of you before, by post, digitally, even in person if the opportunity arises. Over time, you'll contact them regularly, offering help and guidance until (and beyond) the moment they need you.



*You're there, ready and waiting when they need you.*

A direct marketing campaign is a long-term strategy that gives you multiple opportunities to contact companies you want as clients. It takes the pressure off you creating *the* perfect marketing brochure etc. and pinning all your hopes on your website or trying to meet and impress clients in person at events. Only about 3 % of people are ready to buy when you contact them<sup>1</sup> – and they don't know who you are yet, so you have a bit of trust and relationship building to do.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marketingdonut.co.uk/sales/sales-techniques-and-negotiations/why-you-must-follow-up-leads>

By consistently contacting your dream list every 2-4 weeks with useful information, sales messages, and surprise packages, you'll stay top of mind and be there precisely when they do need you.



Physical post



Email / online



Real conversations

This is direct marketing and the following five steps will take you through how to set up a successful direct marketing campaign to your dream clients.

1. Creating Your Dream Client List
2. Your Action Plan for Success
3. Sales Letters, Offers and What to Send
4. Sending and Following Up
5. Persistence and Consistency, the Unsexy Way to Boost Sales



## Step 1: Create Your Dream Client List

Your dream clients, your rules. Who do you want to work with?

We often downsize our dreams for what we think is achievable but don't aim too small. If, like me, your favourite clients are those you love to hear from and they also send you regular projects, consider company size as smaller companies don't always need frequent translations.



*City dweller with dreams of being a digital nomad? Don't let your current situation define your vision.*

Not sure where to start? If you have clients you love already, hunt for more like those. Perhaps you're after clients in a specific niche, or you love translating a specific type of document. Look at companies exhibiting at industry events, contacts on LinkedIn or other social platforms, companies you've read about, those whose marketing you've despised or delighted at.

The more research you do at this stage to identify who you want to work with and why, the better. The more similar these clients are, the more focused (and more successful) your marketing will be because it's far easier to talk about specifics that apply to a particular industry than a broader problem that could apply to many.

## **How many people do I need?**

Let's talk numbers. A targeted list is essential so even if you've gathered a list of 100 names, pick a selection of these for your first campaign. I don't believe you can put the right amount of time and energy into personalising your marketing to a huge number of people. You'll be following up with these contact several times so consider how much time you have to spare and your budget for sending physical post to these people.

My first campaign focused on 25 contacts and it was just about manageable during an unexpectedly busy period. My second and third campaigns targeted just 10 contacts because I offered them something that would take a lot more time to deliver. And the numbers were a lot easier to manage.

## **What type of information is on your list?**

You need to find (or make an educated guess at) the person in charge of translation. Ideally, the decision maker, the person with the authority to spend the budget. You'll want their full name, postal address, email address, as much information on them as you can find so you can make sure your marketing is relevant and reaches them personally (not their assistant).

## **Is this taking too much time?**

Sometimes you head down a research rabbit hole. If you find yourself overthinking each potential client and spending hours investigating, set a timer and work in bursts.

Look at your list. Are you excited? Apprehensive? (also normal) Raring to go? Brilliant, let's make a date to start talking with these people.

## Step 2: Action Plan

You know who you want to reach, now you're going to decide **when** you'll contact them and **how**.

What are you going to send, what's your message, when exactly are you going to send what?

A plan helps to keep you focused and gives you deadlines to work towards. Ever had a translation assignment with no end date? It tends to expand and takes longer to deliver than those with a deadline.



*Treat your business like you treat your clients. Set deadlines for your campaign.*

Plan some form of marketing every 2-4 weeks. More regularly at the start and then less often if they don't need you right away. Don't stop (unless they expressly tell you to). You want to keep in touch for when they do need you.

Include a mix of marketing methods. I start with a physical letter with a gift by post for a few reasons:

- ✓ This is your first impression, so you want to create a surprise and delight package. Most translators and agencies won't send anything physical but if they do, it'll be a postcard or brochure about themselves. Send a letter talking about your potential client's problems and solutions *and* something useful or fun to make them smile and you'll be way ahead of most of your competition.
- ✓ It gets you in front of the right person. If a package looks interesting and personal, it's got more chance of reaching the intended recipient (instead of being opened by their assistant) and it'll move straight to the 'must-open' pile ahead of the invoices, official paperwork and less interesting marketing.
- ✓ Sending marketing by mail also gets around strict GDPR cold contacting rules (check the rules in your target market to be on the safe side).

Then mix it up using a combination of physical post (package, postcard), digital communication (email, social media, content writing), and 'live' conversations by telephone, video call or in person.

Consider the time of year, any public holidays and your schedule. You may not get an enthusiastic response if you start a campaign during the peak summer holiday season or right before Christmas. Then again, depending on your industry, it might be fine. If you're happy to meet clients in person, you can travel or live nearby, maximise the chances of meeting them by attending an industry event as part of your campaign.



## Step 3: Sales Letters, Offers and What to Send

### Understand your client

What's your dream client's biggest problem? Hint: it's not translation (even if that's part of the solution).

This is all about them. Whenever you start talking about yourself and your services, pretend your reader is a moody teenager asking "so what?" (what's in it for me?) to everything you write.



*Same old, same old. You need something relevant to attract attention.*

Answering that question helps you get closer to the client's perspective – what we really do for them, rather than what we *think* we do for them. For instance, we might think we help them communicate with their international customers, but the real benefits are that we save them time, money, get them more website traffic, help them fill an event, or something completely unexpected.

Top tip: ask your current clients what they appreciate most about your service and what issues they had before working with you.

Pick one problem that you can solve (at least partially). And decide on a fantastic offer – a free consultation, sample translation, special offer/discount, helpful tips document, something that'll be useful to them and you're happy to provide.

## **Sales letters**

Then write your letter to your contacts.

The standard copywriting formula to follow for sales letters is AIDA: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action.

- You grab your reader's attention by highlighting a problem. Empathise and show you understand what they're going through.
- Interest them by talking further about their problems and what they want to achieve.
- Create a desire – eliminate the problem, offer a reason to buy from you specifically.
- Ask your reader to take action, take up a time-limited offer, and make it easy to do. It's easy to click a link in an email, but not in a printed letter. If you're sending them to a website, make the link short and simple, you could even provide a stamped addressed return card for your reader to complete.

Above all, make sure it sounds like you. Ultimately, you're the one these contacts will be working with so make sure your marketing represents you.

We're all language professionals here, we understand the importance of cultural references and creating an impeccable first impression with our words. Team up with a colleague who is a native speaker of your market's language and make sure your letter works. Explain what you want to achieve and seek advice.

## **Make it lumpy**

Make your letter special by adding little extras. This helps to push your letter into the 'must-open' pile and doesn't have to cost a lot. There's no need to blow the budget so keep an eye out for useful, lightweight gifts to include in your lumpy mail.

You also want your message to tie in with the gift. Get creative and put a smile on the recipient's face. Maybe a boomerang for dormant clients you want to come back to you, a compass to give your recipient some direction when their options are overwhelming, a magnifying glass (I'm got some of these to use) to help hunt down those hard-to-find productivity leaks. Perhaps something little that

represents your country – I often include a teabag to play up to the British stereotype. You're only limited by your imagination and budget.

## **Let's talk money**

While we're on the subject of budgets, many people shy away from direct mail because it costs to send marketing through the post. It does. Email is cheaper but gets a much lower response rate by itself (1% versus 4.9% for direct mail<sup>2</sup>).



*Marketing is an investment*

There are ways to minimise your costs but sending carefully created packages to a small list will get you a better response than mass mailing a large list. Your recipient will appreciate the extra care and feel special when they realise you won't have sent this to a huge database of prospects.

Consider marketing an investment you will cover with the proceeds of your first assignment or two.

## **Now you're ready**

Phew! You've done a lot of work to get to this point, but the time you've invested *will* pay off. And this is where the campaign gets fun.

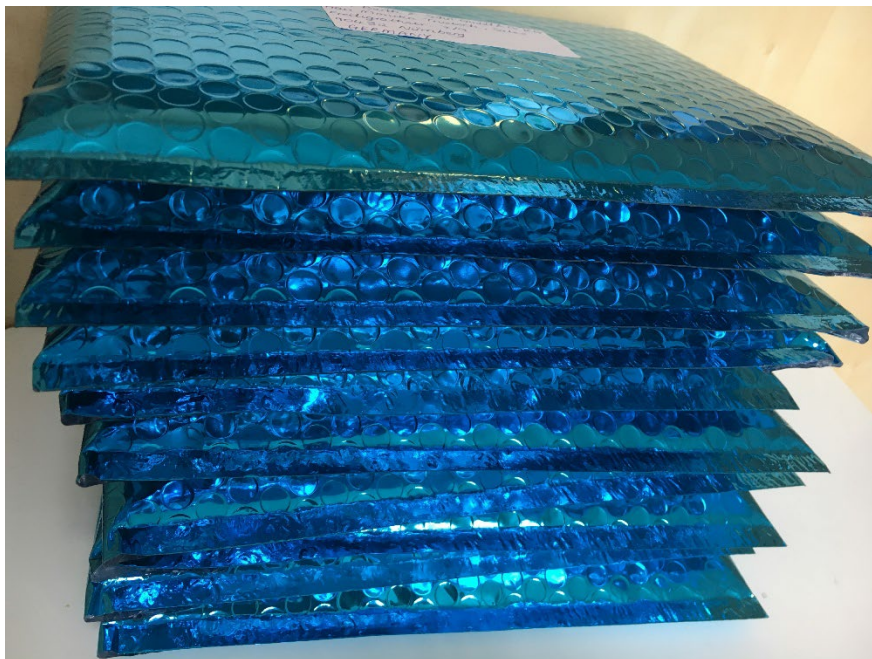
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<sup>2</sup> <https://inkit.io/2019/02/direct-mail-response-rate-average/>

## Step 4: Send Your First Package and Follow Up

Surprise and delight your dream clients. You'll feel like Santa Claus putting everything together. Best done, I find, with a willing friend and a glass of your favourite tippie. Coloured envelopes to attract attention can put your post in the must-open pile and handwritten addresses improve response rate by 16 %.

Intrigue your local post office worker with all the interesting-looking mail you have to send, and while you're waiting on your first response, start working on the next piece of marketing.



*Bright and shiny packages ready to go!*

### How to follow up

Marketing piece no. 2 should follow up with the people who haven't responded to your sales letter. If you put a deadline for your offer (a good idea), you can remind them of the upcoming deadline and encourage them to act before the offer runs out.

Non-pushy ways to follow-up after that could include sending a useful tips booklet, articles you or others may have written e.g. to help make the most of industry events. News items with a little note that says "saw this and thought of you". You could congratulate them on awards, mergers, new initiatives, ask to meet them in person at a trade fair or conference if you're both attending.



Sign up to their newsletters/updates and respond to a report they've written or a post on social media. I recently signed up to a company's newsletter and the link didn't work, which gave me another valid opportunity to contact this potential client.

If this all sounds like a lot of work, trust me, it's not. These opportunities will crop up when you least expect, and you'll be alert to them. Especially once you've had a conversation or two (written or verbal) with your new contacts and they mention specific details you can talk about the next time you talk.

## Step 5: Persistence and Consistency

**(also known as the unsexy way to boost sales)**

Don't give up! Remember, not everyone wants translation all the time. Plus, 80 % of prospects say "no" four times before they say "yes". Most of the people you contact won't have a translation project ready to give you even if you were the person they've been looking for their entire life. Expect any response from a heart-racing "love what you offer, let's talk" to a "vaguely interested but these are our objections" to a simple "no thanks" or the also common zero response.

Don't be disheartened by a lack of response or a "no thanks". People are busy and let's face it, they may not be interested. Obviously, if they request you delete their details and never contact them again, do exactly what they say. Otherwise, they're simply saying no to your very specific offer and would be more than happy to receive your next piece of useful and entertaining marketing. It's not a "no", it's a "not yet".

### **Is anybody out there?**

Zero response doesn't mean you should stop immediately either.



*I can see something on the horizon!*

A friend of mine had a contact on her email list for 18 months (receiving daily emails and without any replies during that time). All of a sudden, they became a very good customer. On my first campaign I got an 8 % response rate to my first

package. By the third piece of marketing that had increased to 44 %, which I wouldn't have achieved without following up those who hadn't responded.

As long as you're sending useful information and are providing a clear way for people to contact you and tell you they don't want to hear from you, then carry on. Personally, I would stop sending regular marketing after a few attempts without response. I'll leave it to your own judgement and level of persistence.

### **Reasons, objections, valuable insights**

A response along the lines of "vaguely interested but these are our objections" is fantastic because you gain so much information and valuable insights into your market: translator buyers' specific concerns, their priorities, what they also need besides translation. All of which you can use to tweak your marketing across the board and make your services more attractive.

If, like I did, you have a fear of rejection – which makes sales and marketing tricky because people will say no (harsh but true) –, I highly recommend reading *Go For No* by Richard Fenton and Andrea Waltz. It's a short book that speaks a lot of sense and will turn your marketing mindset on its head.

## **You're all set**

That's it. You've got all the steps you need to run a successful direct marketing campaign.

You could easily adapt this campaign to target existing clients to generate referrals, to resurrect your relationship with clients you haven't heard from for a while, or even to agencies or colleagues. Your results from these types of campaigns will be far more impressive because these people already know, like, and trust you.

Now go have fun and get yourself some dream clients.

Let me know what you get up to. I'd love to hear from you. Send me a photo of your packages going out and what you're sending, what results you get, I want to know it all! And if you have any questions or comments, send them my way too please: [sarah@businesstranslated.com](mailto:sarah@businesstranslated.com).

Looking forward to hearing about your direct marketing successes!

*Sarah*

## **Extra support**

If you'd like to work on a direct marketing campaign with support, take a look at [Destination Direct Clients](#).

You'll design and implement your marketing campaign at the same time as colleagues, get structured guidance and support at every stage and enjoy the accountability to get it done. The next live round starts 27 November 2023.

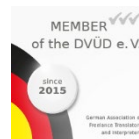


## About the Author

A specialised German to English translator since 2008, I work with a mix of direct clients in the chemical coatings, brewing and food industry and some agencies. Over time and a heck of a lot of training, I've learned to love marketing – it all clicks into place once you figure out how best to adapt certain strategies to the translation industry and for us personally.

Yes, my Portuguese surname is deceptive. It's my married name and I'm British to the core. Committed tea drinker, profuse apologist, but *not* a Brexit supporter.

Never one to shirk a challenge, I've been known to skydive, abseil down a block of flats, and voluntarily enter mud runs. Lately I've been channelling my inner circus girl to learn aerial hoop skills and fulfil a lifelong ambition to ride a unicycle for longer than 15 seconds. I'll get there, persistence is everything – ask anyone who's grappled with Polish grammar for fun.



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German to English Chemical Translator – Author – Direct Marketing Enthusiast

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