WRITING & EDITING

Translators

PEARLS OF GREAT VALUE

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46).

Jesus' metaphor is also relevant when applied to the Christian book industry in Brazil. Editors seek good translators, like merchants seek fine pearls. Good translations are still needed. They are not optional.

Fine pearls are not easily found. As a matter of fact, they hide deep in the ocean. Good professional translators, likewise, "hide" in their shells, their home offices, where they are besieged with phone calls and e-mails from editors. It is a hard task for an editor to bring those fine pearls out of their shells!

Good translators are no longer attracted merely by fat checks. Translation costs in Brazil have quadrupled in the past 15 years (rising from \$2 dollars per page to \$7 or \$8 dollars), and finding good translators is still a challenge for editors.

How can an editor be convincing and present an attractive proposal in hiring a translator? Here are some ways to make good translators "rise to the bait."

Good relationships

Translators must have trusting relationships with their editors. They sometimes find themselves under hard pressures such as sickness, stress, family problems, financial difficulties, etc. Be alert to any opportunity to make a translator's life easier. One way to do this effectively is to try to anticipate his or her needs.

A trustful and sincere Christian relationship includes respect and friendship. In his or her relationship to the translators, the editor must prove to be a reliable, trustworthy and understanding person. Do not underestimate the importance of your promises and agreements with the translator. Always keep your word. Answer his or her phone calls and/or e-mails. Be present whenever he or she asks for your assistance. Give your translator the certainty that he or she is truly important to you and your company. You, as an editor, must proclaim by your behavior that you care.

Tools

Translators require two indispensable tools to engage in their craft: training and equipment.

Training is essential even for good translators. Whenever I send our translators suggestions on how to improve their work, they always show gratitude and good will to change what needs to be changed. They not only welcome corrections for their work, but also welcome other opportunities to learn through dictionaries, grammars, style books and web sites that you can recommend. Buy books and send them as special gifts. Let them know of seminars and courses important to their work. Subsidize their training if needed.

What about equipment? Equipment is often a source of stress for translators. Computers and accessories such as memory, hard disks, softwares and even maintenance should be part of an editor's program of support to good translators. If you are able to offer translators these tools, they will certainly be sure that you are a special editor, someone who can be trusted and who cares about their work.

If you do not know any good translators

To find good translators or to expand your pool of professional translators, dive deep in the ocean of your target audience. Who is your audience? Teachers, students, pastors? Precious pearls will certainly be there. And be wise enough to respect the golden rule: look for native speakers of the desired language. If you publish books or magazines for Spanish-speaking people, look for the best people as far as knowledge of Spanish is concerned. Remember, too, that knowledge of the culture in which that language is spoken is key.

Value translators

Once you have found pearls of great value, do as the merchant from the parable: sell everything if needed and buy them. Invest your time to build a Christian relationship with your translators. Apply your financial resources for their training. You will never be wasting your time—nor your money!

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