

CV fraud: be aware

Alarmed by the number of fake and stolen CVs her agency is receiving, Clare Suttie warns both translation agencies and freelancers to be vigilant in the face of this increasingly widespread practice



Clare Suttie has been running Atlas Translations since 1991 and loves her work as much today as she did right back then in the last century, before email, websites and Ant & Dec were invented. She takes pleasure in offering a personal and high quality service to each and every client, and tracking suitable people down to work on the most unusual language requests. Follow Atlas on Twitter @atlastranslate.

At Atlas, we always recommend making a personal application to a translation company you'd like to work with. A quick phone call to establish the best way to apply can save time for everyone.

We have recently been flooded with fake CVs, and I wonder if this will mean a new approach will be needed for all freelance applications. We are identifying at least six fake applications to Atlas each day.

A typical fake

Here's an introduction to one which tipped us off to this problem. At first sight, it looked like a common enough application:

'It is with great enthusiasm that I am forwarding my resume for your consideration. My record of academic achievements and professional career

'We have recently been flooded with fake CVs, and I wonder if this will mean a new approach will be needed for all freelance applications'

WARNING SIGNS

In addition to the above, we have identified some further clues that help us spot the imposters:

- CVs are usually Word documents with a name that follows the same format: "CV_Firstname_Lastname.doc", sometimes with the language in the name as well.
- They are usually from a Gmail address and often have numbers after the name.
- We select a distinctive phrase from the CV, and invariably find this phrase has originated from a CV held at Translators Café or ProZ.
- They usually arrive with quite elaborately worded covering letters offering 24-hour service.

history demonstrates attributes that make me a valuable professional.'

The CV looked normal enough too, but there was something not quite right. Anthony Hebert wrote that his date of birth was 09/12/1963. And yet in 1965 he was already working for the GEC in New York. By 1970 he was an Associate Professor, and in 1973 at the tender age of 10 he was an 'Elected Member and Executive Secretary of the International Council for Science Policy Studies'. Wow, a child prodigy to add to our database?!

Looking in the properties of the document, I found a familiar name – a translator I had been in touch with for a large project. I contacted George to see if he knew Mr Hebert – he didn't and was outraged to find someone had lifted his CV from the internet – word for word except for name and email address (and date of birth). A further error was spotted in that an address in Paris was non-existent, with an obviously wrong postcode.

Why and how

But what is the scam? If this was a person pretending to be a translator, what could the benefit be?

I imagine that they take on work at a very low price, possibly asking for partial or full payment up front, and deliver a translation from an automated translation programme such as Google Translate. By the time anyone spots that the translation is poor quality, they've been paid and that's that.

There is also the concern that someone may lift your experience to improve their own limited background. This happened to a freelancer I contacted after reading his warning on a forum.

He told me: 'A ProZ.com member, new to the industry (she claims to be 25, but have nine years' translation experience – go figure!), had a pretty skinny profile, so just lifted wholesale my entire personalised profile text and customer testimonials; she then published same on her external website.'

Looking at the discussion boards on translation websites, there have been many recent discussions about 'stolen' CVs.

So translators and agencies, be vigilant

Translators – beware where you post your CV, and perhaps remove it from very public websites such as ProZ and Translators Café, asking potential clients to contact you if they would like a copy.

Agencies – be on the lookout for these fake CVs. In all cases, we ask anyone who contacts us to complete our online application form, and as yet we haven't heard from Mr Hebert again.

Security and confidentiality is something many of our clients demand, and it seems we may have to exercise this closer to home.