

Why is my translation agency not growing?

More often than not the answer to this is because the director is not doing anything to make the agency grow. But how is this possible?

Does your business really need to grow?

Put this question to a translation agency director, and most will answer without hesitation: “Of course it does! Who doesn’t want their business grow?”

And as fast as possible!

The more acute a need is, the more energy a person will spend on meeting that need. If a person is tormented by unbearable thirst, all his thoughts will be focused on water, and all other desires will become secondary. If that same person is not thirsty, he will probably consider a glass of water from the office cooler “because it is good for you” to be more than enough, but will not take any drastic measures to obtain it.

The desire to grow a business is also a need, but a psychological rather than physiological one. How this desire is born is not important in this case; what is important is that the person is motivated to grow his company, constantly thinks about how to do it, takes action, makes mistakes, does not lose heart, and carries on down the path. And he who seeks will always find: and sooner or later he will discover the right path. In our digital era, when any information can be accessed with a couple of clicks, this can be done with great speed: the main thing is to set a goal.

But the difficulty is that it is impossible to consciously make yourself want something. Try, for example, to want to eat some kind of food that you find disgusting. Not to eat it against your will, but to actually want it. Such a desire can arise if the circumstances demand it—for example, if you are very hungry. It is the same with business growth: you either have an irresistible desire to do it or you don’t.

It is possible that the director of a translation agency is simply not interested in exactly how the corporate gears spin: The business is more of a hobby or a source of adrenaline, something that the person is ashamed to admit even to himself. Society forces him to strive for success, and at some point it becomes difficult to distinguish his own authentic desires from the desires that arise due to social influence.

In this way an internal conflict is sparked. A director succumbing to the influence of social convention which demands that he must desire success, formally declares the desire to improve the production process, to be the top company in an important industry rating, etc., but in practice he does nothing to achieve these goals, and constantly rehashes old ideas, which all leads to him developing a loser complex.

It is important to realize what you are actually striving for, and whether company growth for its own sake is really important to you. Do you feel excitement when drawing up a development strategy, honing internal corporate governance mechanisms, or identifying problem areas in the system? Do you enjoy this kind of work and the corresponding results? Or do you simply run the company to satisfy some other needs you may have? What does it all mean for you—social status, material opportunities, freedom to manage your time?

Answer these questions for yourself. And if it turns out that you are “okay as it is,” then there is no point looking over your shoulder at anyone else or working to make changes. If you are looking for new opportunities for yourself, and running a company does not tickle your fancy, find a business partner or hire a top manager to take on this role. Yes, this can be difficult and even risky, but there are no other options. If you *wanted* to learn leadership skills, you could achieve this goal.

I want to do this! But how do I find the time and energy?

There is a contradiction in the way the question is formulated. There is always time and energy for the most important things. If you cannot find the time, this means that your everyday tasks seem more important to you. It requires conscious effort to change your focus.

So what should I do to find the time and energy?

The answer will surprise you: nothing. Literally. Try going to the office and doing nothing. Just sit in a chair or even lie on the couch if you have one.

Most likely, in a short period of time you will want to get up and start doing something. In other words, you have more than enough energy, and sitting on the couch and doing nothing is just not possible. This means that you can also find the energy and will to grow your company while being forced to lie on the couch.

You may object: how can you lie on the couch when there are so many urgent things to do? There is not a minute to waste! You perceive a cup of coffee as a waste of time, and any action not related to work (for example, trying to log into Facebook) is a crime. There is no time to think about higher pursuits.

Let's say this is the case. But this is precisely the problem. A director must reach out and observe his company from a bird's-eye view, otherwise he will simply drown in the hustle and bustle of the office. A company director who is bogged down in the everyday work of the office is not leading, but rather floating along with the corporate current.

An officer is useless on the front line, no matter how inspiring his presence there may be: he needs to be at the back, ensuring the battle plan is implemented as forecasted, and not charging at the enemy with a bayonet.

To escape the hustle and bustle of the office, you will need to purposefully allocate an hour or two to doing nothing, at a time when no one will distract you. Believe me, if you do this, ideas will begin to flow on how to improve your company.

And if you can't allocate a couple of hours to this, it means one thing and one thing alone: you are not focused on the management process.

What if management is not for me?

As already said, many company directors don't like to get involved in company development strategies and business process optimization. Does this mean that they are ineffective managers?

First of all, you need to understand that being a manager is not about social status (although many people think differently), but is a profession in itself. The professional duties of a manager require skills that take a lot of time to develop.

Doing something you are not good at is no fun; you will have to learn how to manage. But learning is a physiologically energy-intensive process, and the human brain does not like to strain any more than it already has to.

They say that in order to become an expert in something, you need to devote at least 10,000 hours to it. During this time, the required connections between neurons are formed in the brain, and your actions become automatic. In 10,000 hours, an amateur can turn into a professional. And when you reach this level you really begin to enjoy what you do: your brain is no longer under so much strain, since it is working on the cognitive ease level.

In this sense the profession of a manager is not any different from others: it will also take 10,000 hours to learn.

Some people have time to learn management skills before they take up a director's role. The reasons for this are many: playing with brothers or sisters in childhood, the position of president of a university group or a sergeant in the army, a passion for strategic computer games—in a word, actions that develop systems thinking and communication abilities.

However, many others will have to start from scratch. This is much more difficult, and it is near on impossible if you do not have the motivation. This is where the irrepressible "I want to do this" comes to the fore.