



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Fabiano Cid

Magic mirror on the wall, am I not the best salesperson of all?

I recently returned from a trip to Barcelona to attend what was supposed to be The Greatest Localization Show on Earth. I had arrived in town a few days earlier to visit some clients and attend a meeting, which after a two-week delayed honeymoon through Portugal and Spain put me back in the "professional" mood. By the time Localization World started, I had the stamina, I had my mojo and... I had a new suit!

My first chance to meet conference attendees was the Opening Reception at Poble Espanyol. After seeing the picture on the website and reading the description in my guidebook, I could not help but think "TACKY!" But I was pleasantly surprised when, after being surrounded by the trees of Montjuïc, I saw the "synthesis of Spanish architecture, arts and crafts, conceived for the 1929 International Exhibition." The place was simply amazing and right after Donna Parish completed her welcome speech, the glasses of champagne started to dance on air. The organizers certainly knew how to throw an industry party and it was time to move that body and network!

The Good

The first night was rather promising and, perhaps because of the bubbles, perhaps because it was an event for the exclusive purpose of networking, people were all very friendly to me. I started to feel there was more to it and realized I had to leave my usual shyness at the hotel room and just go for it. It was time to play the salesperson role and interact with as many people as possible. Business opportunities were all up for grabs and nothing was as exciting as the possibility of closing a deal or discussing a potential partnership.

When I arrived at the conference, I was quite impressed with the choice of venue and could already feel that the fine mood from the previous night was there to stay. With my badge around my neck, I went down the stairs to attend the opening session, "Atomization of the Localization Industry," by keynote speaker Roger Camrass. I went out for a quick coffee and returned to the same room to watch a panel that included representatives from Adobe, AttachmateWRQ, Autodesk and Rockwell Automation. Coincidentally enough, Rockwell's representative was Eva Müller, who will contribute an article for a future edition of the Ccaps Newsletter.



I must confess that my interests were manifold: learn more from industry veterans by attending the sessions, network with colleagues during coffee breaks and social events, meet with associates and clients, discover new partners and – obviously – sell, sell, sell. Having said that, the reaction from the people I talked to during cigarette escapades and walks down the hall started to make me feel good... Really good!



Learning everything about sales from SLS International's Isabel Jiménez and celebrating a successful event at Cava Codorníu

I had been to other events both in Brazil and abroad that catered to other industries, but my feeling was that it had been rather difficult to sell Ccaps' services to potential buyers. After all, not only were they not looking for localization services, but those potential buyers were also selling services or goods of their own. And suddenly, it felt like paradise: those people were in the same industry, knew what I was talking about and might be willing to hear what I had to offer. It was my very own Localization World!

During such conversations, I was amazed to realize that there are clients out there — and sometimes rather major clients — that were interested in working with single language vendors. This meant I could maintain the quality of our services and still be properly compensated for our hard work. I arrived in Barcelona thinking that Ccaps only had a chance with the usual MLVs, but a whole new scenario opened before my eyes. Quite a few seasoned professionals on the client side were interested in learning about our processes, structure and history.



Perhaps because of the recent return of merger and acquisition fever, clients are looking for alternative choices and restructuring their purchasing strategies. Or maybe Adam Blau, whose most interesting presentation I also attended at Localization World, is right to say in his [article](#) that the second generation of localization has already begun. In any case, these new perspectives all sounded new, exciting and promising to me. One more session and it was time to try my luck again as Mr. Sales himself.

Man, was I feeling good!

The Bad

In the smoking area, I cornered another potential client. Actually, she approached me first and was very friendly, asking who I was, what I was doing there etc. The localization manager of a large telecom company, she explained that she had no need for Brazilian Portuguese at the moment. Yet, she was interested in meeting vendors for other languages, such as Japanese and Spanish. The rush was so high that I ventured to offer multilanguage services through a Ccaps associate: "Are you looking for an MLV then?" But when she heard me say that, she backed off and the mood changed.

What had I done wrong? Until then, I didn't know that multilanguage vendors had become some kind of satanic cult. Could "MLV" be the acronym for a new contagious disease that I was unaware of? Did my attitude sound too sales-like? Had I used the wrong tone? I couldn't believe this was happening! My previous attempts had put me in such a good mood that I would not give up easily. I then decided to try to reach her again with the help of the salesperson of "those we do not speak of," namely the multilanguage vendor with whom we had established a close relationship. Yet, she kept running away from us and pretending she didn't see me approaching... Was it the breath from the smoking? Had she not liked the color of my tie? Was my hair too wild after I had gone out into the wind? But this was MY Localization World and I decided I should talk to her anyway. After all, I had the stamina, I had my mojo and... Nah, forget it! She was cold as ice and didn't seem interested at all.

Let's see how we do at lunch then...

I happened to sit at the table with some of Ccaps associates and a few potential clients from a major hardware manufacturer. For starters, that could mean a change from the morning failure. And perhaps fortune was about to be served steamy and hot on a silver plate. "Is this seat taken?" I asked as charmingly as I could, while trying to get close to the client side. The two girls looked at each other and mumbled something unintelligible. That meant a yes for someone who was feeling so good and confident and... what was I feeling again?



It had come to my understanding that our Spanish associate was a sales expert; one of those people who knew everyone in the industry. I decided to observe her and learn how to network with as many people as possible, eventually transforming sales leads into actual clients. I followed every step of her advance, examined her posture, scrutinized her gestures, and when I thought I was ready to enter the small realm of sales professionals, tried some light conversation with the girls next to me. I introduced myself and offered one of my business cards. If only they gave me their cards in return... I couldn't believe it! How could they smile, say thank you and put my card away? I even thought about asking for theirs, but they quickly turned and started talking to someone else. My hopes started to disappear, and so did my appetite.

Now wait a minute! Don't these people know how much we pay for sales workshops? Are they aware that it is already difficult enough to remember all the cultural nuances when introducing yourself at events like these, let alone exchanging cards while having lunch with them? "Shall I hold the card with both hands and smile?," "Shall I demonstrate a huge interest or pretend I don't care?," "Shall I keep my hands on the table as the guidebook told me to do in Spain?" I was confused, frustrated and starting to feel bad. Really bad!

The Ugly

The whole experience had been very enriching and pleasant: The conference sessions, the social gatherings (either official or unofficial), the possibility of exchanging ideas and knowledge, even the "window shopping" in the exhibition area. However, I still had a sour taste in my mouth from the affairs I mentioned above and could not go home without receiving a clear answer.

On the last day of the conference, a group of friends, colleagues and associates went for a drink at the hotel bar. I thought this could be a good opportunity to better understand what was bugging me, since there were people from both the client and vendor sides. After two Bloody Marys, I asked the documentation manager of a medical device manufacturer how she felt about being approached by potential vendors. She said that she liked to be introduced to new vendors, as long as they were recommended by people she had worked with or she knew well. And what she hated most were those little taps on the back from people she had never seen before, offering their services out of nowhere at the end of a session or at a restaurant table. A sales manager friend of mine supported what she had said: "You have no idea of what clients go through! Can you imagine being pestered by all kinds of sales people who can sometimes be rather inconvenient and intrusive?"

Oh yes, I could imagine that all right ... I mean, who has never been to a bar and had someone flirting with them? If someone approaches you and offers you a drink, isn't this a similar situation? Bars are likely to be populated by even more inconvenient and intrusive people than localization conferences at five-star hotels. And yet we all find a way to either make it clear that the offer does not exactly suit our taste or end up accepting the drink to see if the conversation is as pleasant as the person who is flirting with us. I used to do that when I was a single and I must say that the more flirtatious the venues, the more exciting they were. You can find a one-night stand, a long-term relationship or your lifetime companion. I am a living witness of that! But either I had lost my flirting skills after the marriage or I had simply become... ugly.



Then I started to feel like Sancho Panza...

I returned to Brazil and started sending e-mails to the contacts I had made during the whole trip. Perhaps because most people were still catching up with overloaded inboxes, perhaps because some of them had seized the opportunity to extend their trips, the fact is that some 70% of my messages remained unanswered. If my message did make it through their spam blockers (mind you, I only e-mailed people with whom I had some contact) and they never responded, I would say this is far from being a good thing. In fact, that is what is really ugly!



Well, Not That Ugly...

A few weeks have passed and I am feeling better now. The good news is that not only did I enjoy the event to the fullest, but I also managed to acquire at least five new clients, and there are even more in the pipeline. I also understand that potential clients are busy with their professional and personal affairs and I learned to respect that. Next time, I will make sure the lessons learned from Barcelona will improve my selling skills. Since the mojo and stamina will already be back in place, hopefully I will have enough work to buy me a new suit by then...

Fabiano Cid, Managing Director of Ccaps Translation and Localization, is a fan of Austin Powers and is planning to launch a campaign called "Give sales a chance!"