

Nicolette Felix

OWNER OF MULTILINGUAL TRANSLATION AGENCY

BAH French Translation, Queen's 1992

In her own words: "Curious about the unknown, confident enough to tackle the status quo and open to exploring all career possibilities."

Long comfortable with the notion of a career path with no certain outcome, Nicolette Felix sums up the recent launch of her own language translation agency in two sentences: "You don't always need to be a cog in the wheel. You just need to muster up the courage and self-confidence to go out there and make things happen for yourself."

It is a philosophy that reflects her belief that today's university graduates need not limit their job hunt to positions within large corporations. "You really have to research your options, and that includes working as an independent. Given the power of information these days, you can discover a lot to further your own career. The investment of time and energy is definitely worthwhile."

She started her own exploration of life's options when she first applied to Queen's. "I was accepted but deferred for a year. At that time, I still wanted to pursue my lifelong goal of becoming a doctor but felt that I needed time to think things through and solidify my plans before committing to such an intensive course of study."

Instead, she detoured briefly into the world of French language and culture, a place that had long intrigued her. During the year between high school and university, she studied at the Sorbonne in France. "I was in a program that

allowed me to study French while I worked as a nanny. I lived and travelled with a young professional family. My main responsibility was dropping off and picking up my young charge at school and making sure he was well fed and well cared for."

Nicolette returned to Queen's to tackle the Life Sciences degree, but she was soon steering herself once again towards a career in modern languages. In the summer following her first year in Life Sciences, she polished off the required courses that allowed her to transfer into the French Translation program.

She realized she had made the right decision as soon as she entered her second year at Queen's as a major in the highly specialized translation program. "Second year was great! It was exciting to be in smaller and more personalized class for a change." Even more galvanizing for her was the chance to spend her third year studying translation abroad in Tours, France, where a part-time position as a language lab assistant in the university's law faculty further refined her foreign-language skills.

When she returned to Canada that summer, her sister helped her land a job in the accounting department of a Toronto company that often required bilingual services. "I liaised with French-speaking clients in Quebec, and because accounting and a few other departments needed translation of written texts from time to time, I started doing it for them after hours. That gave me the great idea of freelancing!"

Upon graduation, Nicolette found herself once again boarding a plane for France. “I applied for a job awarded by the Queen’s French department that placed one recent grad in a teaching position in France. I returned to Tours and taught full-time at a local lycée for a year.” It was a brief stint. Nicolette was determined to find a job in the translation industry, so she returned to Ontario, where she quickly came to appreciate the advantages of testing the waters in the job market.

“I moved to downtown Toronto and had great difficulty finding steady, full-time work in my field, so I took a bilingual position with a computer company in human resources. I was able to do some translation work for them, but not enough to satisfy me.” She next accepted a position in the translation department of a large corporation, which demonstrated for her some of the less-than-positive aspects of the translation industry. “Being a permanent full-time employee in a company that stressed high-volume output, I felt a lot of pressure to produce. Because there was such an emphasis on quantity as opposed to quality, the job became less and less gratifying.”

It was clear now that independent work was the ticket for her, and so Nicolette began searching for freelance work on a full-time basis. As a stepping stone, she accepted work with a marketing firm that was looking for bilingual representatives to help expand its business into Quebec. “It was all contract work under the umbrella of the translation company I had started. After a brief stint there, I felt confident enough to mix my marketing and freelancing skills to advance

my own business. It was then that I heard of a woman in Toronto who had been in the translation business for 25 years.”

Nicolette worked with the veteran translator for almost a year. “I enjoyed the management aspect of the translation industry and felt I could stand to gain some experience running a translation agency.” When the time came to launch her own agency, she was ready to stop translating herself and start brokering. “I became an agent between the freelance translator and the client, which also allowed me to offer services in more than 75 languages.”

Thus was born Genesis Translation Service, which recently celebrated its third year of

service. “Just recently, we moved into a large, bright office in Toronto’s downtown core. And we’ve partnered with WFO Mixed Media Inc., a graphic design and multi-media firm, to further expand our offerings. I would like to be in a position that allows me to hire more purely administrative staff. It would certainly be nice to take a vacation!”

Running a translation agency has proven to be an incredible challenge, but Nicolette is committed to

this career move. “Working independently is a viable career option that more graduates need to be aware of. It’s hard work, but you eventually meet other like-minded people who help to develop a very positive and motivational network. The pride and sense of accomplishment inherent in owning your own business makes all the hours of planning, research and overtime worthwhile. ❖

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