

Prime motivation



Paul Michaels set out to gauge how entrepreneurial his SLTI colleagues were. Here, he reports on his findings

In Spring 2020, I took part in 'What Are You Worth: Special Edition', run by Darren Townsend-Handscorn and Ben Phillips. This course was described as 'focusing on our worth and the challenges of working as interpreters pre, during and post Covid-19 and the lockdown'.

Darren spoke about some sign language translators and interpreters (SLTIs) feeling particularly uncomfortable about the notion of running a business. I would strongly agree that few interpreters are motivated by financial gain. If they are, then they may be disappointed as 'interpreters' charges haven't gone up much over time and are around the same as the national average wage' (Dodds, 2014). My feeling is that SLTIs are instead attracted by a desire to facilitate communication between deaf and hearing people. That said, most SLTIs are freelance (Napier et al, 2021) and are effectively running a business as a sole trader or a limited company.

In June 2020, I attended an online session on 'The Enterprising Researcher', part of a series of workshops aimed at postgraduate researchers and early-career researchers at Durham University. The premise was that an enterprising mindset is highly valued in academia as well as in the public,

private and not-for-profit sectors. The enterprising researcher uses their own entrepreneurial qualities to help them recognise opportunities within the research environment and plan new ventures. The workshop encouraged us to consider the skills, behaviours and expertise of enterprising researchers, develop these and become more effective and proactive researchers, increasing employability and broadening our horizons.

Testing times

The increase in interpreters available online because of the pandemic has created a hugely competitive environment. This prompted me to ask whether we need to re-think our strategy to secure bookings and earn money and consider how entrepreneurial we are as interpreters and how able we are at adapting our business model.

Before the 'Enterprising Researcher' workshop, I was asked to complete the General Measure of Enterprising Tendency (GET) Test, developed by Dr Sally Caird and Cliff Johnson at Durham University Business School in the late 1980s. The researchers sought to identify 'key characteristics of entrepreneurial people associated with entrepreneurial behaviour, and entrepreneurship itself'. The key entrepreneurial characteristics identified were: strong motivation; high need for achievement; high need for autonomy; creative tendency; calculated risk-taking; and an internal locus of control (belief you have control over your own destiny and make your own 'luck').

The GET2Test describes itself as providing 'an indicative not definitive measure of enterprising potential... It should primarily be used as an educational aid for stimulating personal reflection and discussion about enterprise' (Caird, 2021). It comprises 54 statements that you are asked to

agree or disagree with and participants are asked to 'respond with candour' (Caird, 2013).

I decided to invite my colleagues to take the test and find out just how enterprising BSL SLTIs might be. I piloted it with a group of eight interpreters, who were known to me, to gather feedback. This pilot did not collect demographic data, which I later realised would have been useful and was subsequently included in the actual test. The pilot data was also included in the results, some of which I will share with you now.

The study involved 140 participants: 97% were hearing interpreters and 3% deaf interpreters. The group was made up of 83% female, 16% male and 1% who withheld their gender identity. Almost 73% of all respondents were aged 40+ with almost 38% residing in London and the South-East and almost 83% having qualified in the last 20 years.

Overall, the enterprising tendency of 82% respondents was medium with 16% being low and only 2% being high. See the table opposite. Using the GET2Test profiling, these results provide us with a very general and most certainly not indicative picture of the enterprising tendency of SLTIs, based on the small percentage of respondents from the overall number of SLTIs in the UK. In general, interpreters were most likely to consider 'tried and tested' enterprising ideas and would prefer to be advised about managing their work and would

SLTIs' enterprising tendencies

Tendency	Low	Medium	High
Need for achievement	23%	69%	8%
Need for autonomy	45%	26%	29%
Creative tendency	41%	39%	20%
Calculated risk-taking	9%	47%	44%
Internal locus of control	19%	52%	29%

not enjoy the responsibility of taking charge of an enterprise. They would probably look to others for entrepreneurial ideas but are probably content with proven, traditional approaches to enterprise and would probably be happiest with less risky enterprising or business ideas where someone else takes the risk.

SLTIs may have some entrepreneurial qualities but, if they want to start a business, they may need to develop their self-confidence and entrepreneurial skills. They could be helped by developing specific business or project management skills.

As this is an initial piece of research, it would be interesting for this element of being a freelance SLTI to be explored further as it may become more important as the landscape evolves. For the full results, please email paul.michaels@me.com.

REFERENCES

- Caird, S, Sally (2013). *General measure of Enterprising Tendency test*. www.get2test.net.
- Caird, S, 2021. *General Measure of Enterprising Tendency v2 – GET2*. [Get2test.net](http://www.get2test.net). <<http://www.get2test.net>>
- Dodds, J, 2014. 'Some agencies treat freelance sign language interpreters as cash cows' (BSL), *The Limping Chicken*. Available at: <<https://limpingchicken.com/2014/05/20/en-dodds-some-agencies-treat-freelance-sign-language-interpreters-as-cash-cows-bsl/>>
- Napier, J, Skinner, R, Adam, R, Stone, C, Pratt, S, and Obasi, C, 2021. 'A demographic snapshot of the profession: The 2021 Census of sign language translators & interpreters in the UK'. ASLI. Available at: <https://asli.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Census-Project-report_Final-August2021.pdf> .
- Townsend-Handscorn, D, 2021. *Workshops & Talks, moonpoppy interpreting*. Available at: <<https://www.moonpoppyinterpreting.com/workshops--talks.html>>