

Examples of Versatile Career Paths

Jackie Senior

Founder member and honorary member of SENSE (Society of English-Native-Speaking Editors, the Netherlands)
Department of Genetics, University Medical Centre Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands

Career paths are not often linear, with changes being dictated by personal circumstances or market forces as much as ambition. These examples are from editors/translators in the Netherlands. If you're thinking of change, you could do a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of where you are now and of where you want to go.

Ragini Werner



Born to Dutch parents in Indonesia, I grew up speaking English in New Zealand. I was served a deep love of language and word play with the *paplepel*. Both parents had a facility with words. At school, I was tops in English; I still can't count.

Always started at the bottom and worked my way up. Never realized how entrepreneurial I am until I learned I could run a successful business.

1970 Passed University Entrance examination and in 1971 started a BA in English & Philosophy (age 16).

1972 Dropped out of Auckland University (age 18) to pursue my Grand Plan of becoming a world-famous actress.

1970-1976 **Acted all around New Zealand**. Played it all, from Shakespeare to musicals.

1977 **My first love affair broke up**. Sold my motorbike to buy a **ticket to Sydney** but couldn't get work as an actress. **I became an assistant stage manager at Sydney Opera House** until the drama company went bust. **Spent my redundancy** on a ticket to Europe.

1979 **Arrived in London** and couldn't find work backstage (no trade union card) so went to a temp agency, then fell into a job at Granada TV, selling airtime. This was more like it, but the hard reality was a dreary bedsit with rising damp. I had a Dutch passport so thought, why not try my luck in NL?

1980 **Gave myself Amsterdam** for my 26th birthday. Joined the English-Speaking Theatre of Amsterdam. Trod the boards again until **stage fright put me off for life**. **Joined Excerpta Medica as a data entry typist** (the work was in English).

1981 **Moved into secretarial jobs**. Elsevier Science gave me the job of **editor of ES World**, their corporate magazine: 10 blissful years, travelling the world on a corporate budget.

2000 **Moved to Far North**. Worked for a print-on-demand publishers and as a data entry typist, until I wrote a cheeky letter to a publisher at Wolters Noordhof, saying I was the native-English editor he needed. Hired me to edit the first title in their new English-language list and that was it ...

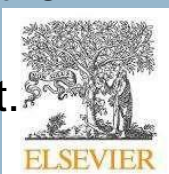
2004 **Opened my own business, NEEDSer** (Native-English Editing Service), worked for university language centres while developing my own more remunerative client base.

2007 **Joined SENSE** and **attended the SENSE/ITV Editing Course**, learned lots.

2014 Turned 60 and am proud of NEEDSer!

2015 **Elected editor of eSense** and am loving it. All the fun of creating a corporate magazine with a wonderfully supportive team.

My first novel (another childhood dream) has just been published. Yay. No retirement plans...



Hans van Bemmelen



1970s My secondary school curriculum in NL included both languages and sciences, and I also picked up practical skills such as welding from the caretaker. I was primarily interested in science and engineering (especially chemistry and chemical engineering) but lacked the mathematical faculty for a career in that area.

Mid-1980s While I was studying, my then partner (British) became a freelance translator and editor. **I discovered I enjoyed translating technical documents** (chemical engineering, health and safety, etc.). Having my work revised by an exacting editor was a great education.

1989 **Founder member of SENSE** and its first associate member.

1990 Passed the ITI membership examination (Dutch into English, Chemistry & Chemical Engineering): despite being a non-native speaker without any training in translation, I appeared to know what I was doing.

Joined the Institution of Chemical Engineers as an affiliate member.



While building scenery for the local English-speaking theatre group I learned **the benefits of doing something right the first time** round. Read *Right First Time* by Frank Price, a book which has increased my bank balance and reduced my blood pressure more than any other.

2010 **Started writing copy for corporate magazines and brochures** - at the interface of engineering and sales. Also started writing technical training documents for international operational staff with a limited education.

2015 Still busy writing and translating in areas such as engineering, heavy lifting, building construction and various niche subjects. Most importantly: still thoroughly enjoying my work and learning something new most days. Enjoy the flexibility of being a freelancer working wherever I carry my laptop (often a scenic corner of UK).

Key features of career: Thoroughly understanding my clients' businesses and the documents I translate. Giving my clients the confidence that I understand their operations and that I have the same engineering books on my bookshelves as they have. Imagining myself in the shoes of readers of my translations. Spending a lot of time reading trade magazines and technical books, visiting trade shows, following short technical courses, getting NL and UK site safety passports. Making my clients aware of differences in NL and UK technical practices. Getting involved in SENSE and the IChemE. And, again, enjoying my work and earning a very comfortable living from it.