ProZ.com Moderator Program

Overview

Role overview

The forum and KudoZ areas of ProZ.com are moderated by a group of volunteers around the world. Their role is as follows:

- The primary role of moderators is to establish and protect a positive, results-oriented environment on the site by carrying out enforcement of the site's rules in a consistent and structured manner. In other words, the moderator is akin to a referee in a sport such as football.

- The next most important role of moderators is to "greet and guide" site users. This involves welcoming new participants to the forums and KudoZ, and sharing information and experience to help members and visitors make the most of what is available to them at ProZ.com.

- Moderators also vet forum postings (when this is required), help ensure that KudoZ questions and forum topics are properly categorized and identified, and report to site staff members on KudoZ or forum interactions that may require attention.

- Moderators are not considered to occupy a hierarchical echelon within the community. Rather, moderators are volunteers among peers.

- Although an attempt is made to select competent professionals, neither advanced industry knowledge nor exceptional linguistic ability are screened for in the moderator selection process. Therefore, nothing about the program assumes moderators to be superior to non-moderator members in these respects.

- Moderators derive no direct commercial advantages as a result of taking part in the role. By the same token, moderators' own use of site features such as KudoZ and the jobs system is not cut off; for example, moderators are not prevented from answering KudoZ questions.

The spirit of the moderator role is to help deliver on ProZ.com's mission of "providing tools and opportunities for translators to network, expand their businesses, do better work and have more fun".

Logistics

- The ProZ.com moderator group consists of a network of approximately one hundred professionals. They are located throughout the world.

- Moderators enter as a "class" and then serve for one-year terms running from July to June.

- As a condition of serving in the role, moderators accept program policies and undergo a brief training program at the start of their service.

- A dedicated moderator forum provides a place for moderators to consult with fellow moderators on the topics of rules enforcement and user guidance.

Code of conduct

Moderators aim to operate according to high standards of excellence, consistency, respect and service, and adhere to a code of conduct. The professional standard applies to all moderator communications, including those with site users, fellow moderators and staff members.

Benefits of participating in the program

Moderators are not paid for their work. However, there are a number of benefits to participating in the program.

- First, serving as a moderator provides an enhanced opportunity to <u>help others benefit from the mission</u>. For a person who has achieved success as a translator or interpreter, or in a translation company, and who has derived benefit from ProZ.com, the moderator program provides an opportunity to give something back by sharing what you have learned with others.

- Secondly, as it turns out, helping others to benefit from the mission also allows one to <u>experience the benefits of the mission in a deeper way oneself</u>. For example, because each class of moderators consists of a group of about 100 professionals from around the world, the program provides a great opportunity for personal networking. The camaraderie, and resulting friendships, cross linguistic and geographical boundaries. Also, because of the high profile nature of the role, moderators gain exposure that in some cases may lead to new business opportunities. Finally, as is the case with any professional challenge, the moderator role provides opportunities to advance as a professional and have fun at the same time.

Commitment

It is a fundamental principle of the moderator program that as volunteers, participants will contribute what they can, when they can. It is understood that other priorities may prevent a moderator from being present for some period of days from time to time.

That said, when they do act, moderators are expected to be exemplary in their professional conduct. Moderators should be respectful, courteous, diplomatic and positive in all their site interactions and activities.

Furthermore, during their year of service, moderators are expected to be models of balance and composure. Just as a good referee does not attempt to influence the outcome of a game, by definition a moderator devotes him or herself primarily to ensuring fair play. To be highly opinionated or critical, or to argue one's positions forcefully and at length -- while within the prerogative of site users -- is considered antithetical to the moderator role's as referee. (Feel free to jump back into the game as a player at the end of the year of service.)

Beyond that, there are certain minimum expectations for participation and responsiveness. Generally speaking, moderators are expected to log in the site at least once per week. (Areas that do not get weekly activity may be exceptions.) Also, posts that require vetting should be processed in a timely manner. Inquiries from members and site staff should also be responded to within a reasonable time frame.

As volunteers, moderators are free to resign from the program at any point for any reason. Likewise, moderators may be asked to resign, or may be removed from the program, at the discretion of program administrators.

# Details regarding the various aspects of the role

Rules enforcement

In their translation workplace, ProZ.com participants require and expect -- above all else -- a safe and comfortable place where collaboration can occur. This provides the foundation upon which all ProZ.com 'tools and opportunities' rely (and without which they could not exist.)

This being the case, there is an obligation on the part of the site to bring about, and protect, a **positive, results-oriented environment**. To make this possible, a clear set of rules, and a well-defined process of rules enforcement, have been formed. These rules and rule enforcement processes represent the combined efforts of moderators and site staff members over a number of years, and they have been proven effective in practice.

Moderators play a key role in carrying out rules enforcement processes in KudoZ and the forums. In fact, this role of moderators is so important to the effectiveness of the site, and to the well-being of the community, that it has been defined as the moderators' top priority. To be clear:

> *The moderator's primary responsibility is to protect the positive, results-oriented environment that allows collaboration to occur.*

Moderators fulfill this role by learning and faithfully carrying out ProZ.com's rules and rule enforcement practices. They do this while communicating and working together with other moderators and site staff members to ensure consistent enforcement of the rules throughout the site over time.
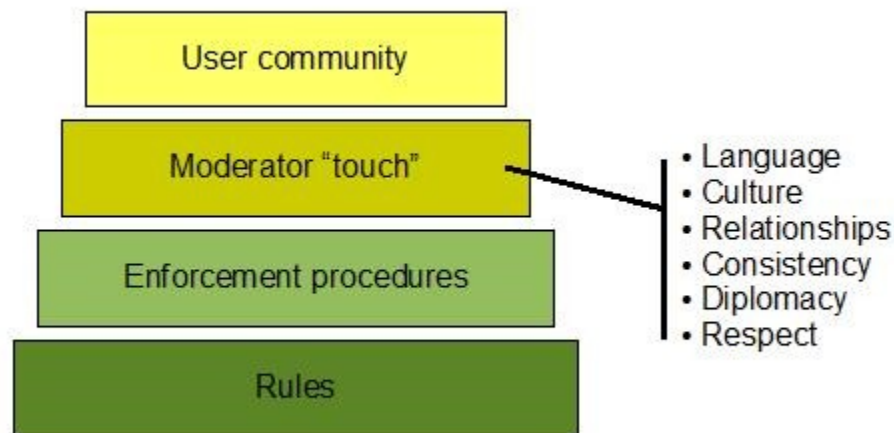
As represented in this image, when carrying out the rules enforcement part of their role, moderators always act on the basis of existing rules and rule enforcement practices. Like good referees, they never act based on personal views on what is appropriate or inappropriate. They also do not decide on their own means of enforcing rules; uniform procedures have already been defined for this.

Where judgment comes into play is during the course of carrying out the rules enforcement procedures. Here, moderators add an important "human touch", which is:

- informed by knowledge of the relevant language and culture
- supported by personal relationships, and
- marked by consistency, diplomacy and respect.

Rules enforcement actions can take various forms, ranging from friendly reminders to preventative actions ("safeguards"), and finally to the use of warnings or even temporary blocks on the use of certain site features.

In cases where these actions are not sufficient, matters may be turned over to site staff members, who have the additional options of issuing "yellow card" warnings or, in extreme cases, expelling a user from the site ("red card"). (These situations are relatively rare; as of March 2009, for example, a total of 32 users had ever received a red card. This works out to 1 person in every 1,000 active users being expelled.)

While some of the rules and enforcement policies may be intuitive, many others are not intuitive and must be learned. For this reason, a training program has been developed to help and ensure that new moderators become familiar quickly with the rules and their proper methods of enforcement.

Greeting and guiding site users

> *The next most important element of the moderator role is "greeting and guiding", ie. helping users and members to be aware of and make best use of what is available to them at ProZ.com. This aspect of the role goes hand-in-hand with rules enforcement.*

There are a wide variety of 'tools and opportunities' provided for translators and industry professionals at ProZ.com. So many, in fact, that most site members and visitors are not aware of, or do not take full advantage of, everything available to them at ProZ.com. Moreover, even when they understand certain features and want to use them, some site users will lack the confidence to jump in and get started.

Here, moderators play an important role. Moderators can help new site members and visitors get the most out of ProZ.com by:

- "Greeting", ie. welcoming new users and making them feel comfortable
- Informing site users of ProZ.com features that they may not know existed (for example, by redirecting a forum post that would be better off as a Blue Board, entry, KudoZ question or support ticket)
- Guiding users in making best use of features (based on personal experience)
- Making themselves available for site users' questions (support tickets are the best way to get authoritative answers, but if a site user wants the perspective of a fellow site member or user, in their own language, willing moderators may be well-suited to provide that.)

Various tools are provided to assist moderators in carrying out the above. For example, there are messages displayed when a new user participates in KudoZ or the forums for the first time, and editable boilerplate messages that can be sent with a few clicks.

The degree to which a moderator carries out the above activities is left largely to individual discretion, and it is understood that there will be periods when other obligations limit the time available for this aspect of the role. However, it is worth noting that while "user guidance" is defined as the moderator's

second priority, being proactive in this role helps to establish the relationships and rapport that makes rules enforcement (the first priority) easier (and the need for interventions less frequent.)

At the very least, moderators should respond to user inquiries within a few days, in most circumstances. (Bear in mind that there is a way to turn off inquiries when on holiday, and when contacted by a site user during busy periods, there is always the option of referring a matter to the support staff.)

Vetting

There are conditions under which contributions made by certain site users may be subject to review before they are made public. This is especially true in the forums, where postings from non-member users (for example) must be vetted before they are sent out and published. Moderators carrying out much of the vetting, and this is the next aspect of the moderator role:

> ***Moderators assist in the review (or "vetting") process, confirming in advance that postings are suitable for publication.***

The vetting review process involves confirming, first and foremost, that the posting is appropriate in light of the intended purpose of the site area in question. (A job posting submitted to the forums will not be vetted, for example.) Beyond that, the vetting process involves confirming that a given contribution is in compliance with relevant rules. The vetting process does not involve passing personal judgment on the views or opinions being expressed.

The overwhelming majority of posts are suitable, and vetting them is a simple matter.

Because there is often a time-sensitive nature to forum posts, etc., staff members and moderators carrying out vetting in cooperation as a group. Several practices and tools have evolved to achieve an efficient vetting process, while accommodating the fact that any given moderator may be away for periods at a time. For example, several moderators may share responsibility for the more active site areas, and it is customary to communicate with each other with regard to planned time off, etc. Also, moderators and staff members are able to see postings which have remained unvetted for an extended period, and will range to other moderators' areas to process backlogged postings.

Housekeeping

ProZ.com is structured in such a way that interactions among site users get archived for the benefit of members and future visitors. This being the case, in the interest of making the record of KudoZ questions and forum discussions most useful to members and guests using the site in the future, certain organizational tasks are undertaken, including categorizing KudoZ questions, moving forum topics to the most suitable forums, editing of the titles of topics (to make them as descriptive as possible), etc.

> ***These organizational tasks, which can generally be referred to as "housekeeping", are another optional part of the moderator role.***

Specific instructions on housekeeping activities are included in the manuals related to moderating KudoZ and the forums.

Reporting

ProZ.com is used by a large and diverse group of members and guests, and their interactions are carried out in a variety of languages. This presents a challenge; whereas it is not possible for staff administrators to follow the many forum discussions and KudoZ exchanges being carried throughout the site, it is desirable for site administrators to be aware of conditions throughout the community.

> ***Moderators help to keep staff members informed by reporting on problems, suggestions or important developments in the site's various forum and KudoZ language pairs.***

For this role, too, a number of tools are provided. For example, a moderator can tag a forum posting for review by site staff members, optionally adding notes to help provide background information.

Philosophy for moderating forums

Purpose of the ProZ.com forums

The ProZ.com forums are provided as a place for translators (and other industry professionals) to help each other solve translation-related problems.

In contrast to some forums elsewhere, the ProZ.com forums are not provided for general, unstructured discussion. Rather, constraints are put in place to ensure that the tone remains positive and results-oriented. As a condition of using the ProZ.com forums, participants agree to abide by the site's rules, and furthermore, to limit their contributions to topics that are within the site's well-defined scope.

Role of the forum moderator

The role of the forum moderator is to protect the positive, results-oriented tone of a forum by (1) enforcing the rules of the forums, and (2) welcoming new participants as they arrive. By keeping order and maintaining the positive environment in this way, moderators help to provide the conditions necessary for collaboration and networking to occur.

There is an additional role that forum moderators play. The archive of past forum exchanges serves as a free and open contribution of the ProZ.com community to industry knowledge. To help increase the usefulness of this archive, moderators engage in certain forms of "housekeeping", including editing topic titles to make them descriptive of the content of a thread, moving misplaced topics, etc.

Philosophy for moderating KudoZ

Purpose of KudoZ

ProZ.com's KudoZ service is a collaborative terminology network. There are two kinds of questions: "help-type" and "glossary-building". In help-type questions, the goal of interactions are to help an asker get the translation he or she needs in a timely fashion. In glossary-building questions (GBK), the point is for the community to work together to provide authoritative translations, with examples, and thereby help to build an open terminology reference that is useful to all.

Role of KudoZ moderators

The role of KudoZ moderators is to facilitate and encourage active and professional participation in KudoZ exchanges of both "help" and "glossary-building" types. The job is not linguistic but social: it primarily involves welcoming and guiding new KudoZ participants, and establishing and protecting a positive, results-oriented environment through the use of well-developed rules enforcement procedures.