

# Working day

Frances Nicole, general manager, Lan-bridge translation agency



## A.M.

“ I get up at around 7.30am. After cereal and a cup of English breakfast tea I am on my way to work. Sometimes I need to go in earlier so I have more time to talk to my colleagues back in China. The time difference works in our favour because we can deliver shorter translations the very next day to our clients in the UK without any trouble.

On graduation from my sociology and development studies degree I wanted to see some more of the world and have a real adventure. China was attractive because I knew it was undergoing huge changes, and I knew I would have to get there soon. I was one of the lucky few who, in 2009, managed to get on a British Council programme to work at a secondary school in a town in Sichuan province. I decided to stay one more year, then another, and another. Apart from teaching, I also worked for the British Chambers

of Commerce and as an editor for an English magazine in Chengdu. Towards the end of my six years' living in China I met Michael Zhu, the owner of the translation company – Lan-bridge – and started working for them. As a happy coincidence my decision to move back to the UK coincided with Michael's ambition to open a new office in London to develop the European market. So, having been running the office for over two years, here I am.

The first thing I do when I log on in the morning is check in with my Chinese colleagues. A chorus of beeps awaits. We share an instant messaging system so I can speak to anyone in the company and catch up with group messages, or join in online video conferencing. I check in on the progress of projects and perform detailed quality checks on any completed translations. I also help answer queries and work with my Chinese colleagues on cross-border projects, as well as joining in discussions on a host of other issues related to the company's development.



Lan-bridge was founded by Michael Zhu in 2000, and we've seen rapid growth since then. We are headquartered in Chengdu, Sichuan and, unusually, have grown



from our initial base in second-tier cities like Chongqing and Kunming, later moving to the first-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Michael is an ambitious leader and we are now ranked as one of the top five translation companies in China. Our large size brings challenges. Serving hundreds of clients means we have to have really strong quality control and management procedures in place. We've built our own proprietary systems to do this so they're tailored exactly to our needs.

## P.M.

I have lunch at around 12, a bit earlier than most people in the UK, a habit I've picked up from my time in China. In the afternoon, I spend a lot of my time talking to clients in the UK, and for bigger assignments, like website translations or branding projects, I'll often visit the client to discuss.

One of the biggest changes in Chinese translation in recent years is the number and range of UK products that are being sold into the Chinese market. Most of our work is English into Chinese. We've provided language services for everything from wood-burning stoves to dairy milking equipment. Any UK company could get in on the action, and many of them are. However, there is more to translation than meets the eye. Clients need to think carefully about their market positioning in China, as customer demands and desires can be so different. What matters to the UK audience may not matter to the Chinese, and vice versa. Because we specialise in Chinese rather than all

world languages, we're able to offer advice on this and help clients choose the best possible approach for their needs.

Michael normally spends five months of the year travelling to the UK as his family also live here, so sometimes we are able to work together. Michael's wife, Li Hongyan, heads up the company's accounting department and is also our UK director. Both Michael and Hongyan keep a handle on the bigger picture in terms of company development and strategy. Hongyan and I work closely together and it's a good chance to enjoy a few proper Chinese meals too.

I often finish at around 6.30pm and take a Boris bike home if I am not attending a China-related networking event. In my spare time, I play football (badly) on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings and being a bit of a news junkie, I spend a large amount of time reading to keep an eye on current affairs and especially China-related news. At 10pm, after one last check of the emails to see if anything has come in from our US clients, I close all screens. With no internet to distract me, I'll read a book and get ready for bed by 11pm. ”

[www.lan-bridge.co.uk](http://www.lan-bridge.co.uk)

Frances Nicole was speaking to Yintong Betser, a Chinese business specialist and the author of the acclaimed *Active Business Travel – China*  
[www.activeukchina.com](http://www.activeukchina.com)





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