Virtual Spaces

Working with signed-spoken language interpreters

Online and hybrid meetings are mainstays in our workplaces and pose challenges when integrating interpreting services. Depending on whether the event is completely online or partially hybrid, the details will dictate certain requirements for interpreting services. Here are a few ideas to start your planning.

Top Tips

- All online meeting platforms offer different accessibility features. Currently, the preferred platform is Zoom. When possible and practical, use Zoom.

- Be mindful that the ASL users (Deaf and interpreting team) may be running multiple devices to ensure complete access to each other. This may include a second device to run another Zoom or FaceTime meeting, a device running a transcript service, etc. If they "look" distracted it could mean they are accessing the information through another device.

- Provide all meeting participants with a copy of the meeting documentation in advance. It is difficult to split focus from the interpreter to the speaker, to the shared screen, and possibly the transcript.

- Practice turn-taking during discussions; ideally using a digital raised-hand system. No interpreter can simultaneously render accurate interpretations when multiple people are speaking.

- The chat function can be utilized for terminology, comments, clarifications, etc.

- When controlling the mute functions of participants, be mindful to not override the interpreters' mute function when the ASL user is commenting.

- It is fatiguing to look at a screen constantly to access information. Build in breaks to the event, if possible and practical, to allow for self-care.

World without limits.

- When hosting a hybrid meeting, it is imperative to install an omnidirectional microphone that has a large enough reach for the in-person space. Do not rely on one person's laptop microphone or the webcam at the front of the room.

- When practical hire a professional CART captionist, or install a high-quality AI transcription service (such as Otter.ai). Do not rely on the embedded transcription service in most programs.

Unsure about something? Just ask!

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