

Ten top tips for working with Conference Interpreters

- 1** Make sure the interpreter has *enough information* about the assignment to allow time to check on company-specific terminology. This is best done when the interpreter is first requested. It is extremely important that the interpreter has the final text of your presentation and slides several *days beforehand*.
- 2** Make sure the *interpreter has a clear view* of the conference room, the speaker *and* the projection screen. Do not place booths in a corner or behind a pillar. Ensure he/she *can hear properly*. If you move around use a clip-on microphone.
- 3** There are many accents and speech styles. Everybody thinks that they speak clearly, but not everybody is right. It's a case of "*tuning in*". *Clear questions* and care with ambiguity make for successful transfer of meaning. *Beware of jokes*. They do not translate well and are often culturally inappropriate.
- 4** *Beware of acronyms*, as they may not mean anything to the interpreter or may mean something different: e.g. PTA (Paint, Trim and Assembly but also Parent Teacher Association).
- 5** Interpreters should *not* be expected to interpret *videos and audio recordings*.

- 6** If the interpreter is delivering simultaneous whispered interpreting¹, this is only effective for a *maximum of two people*. More than two means that, if all the delegates involved are to hear, the interpreter can no longer whisper, which in turn disturbs the speakers and other delegates.
- 7** When delivering *consecutive interpreting*², the interpreter needs to be positioned so as to hear the speaker and takes notes adequately.
- 8** *Break times* are rest times for the interpreter and must be respected. Interpreters should be given a separate table at meal times. An interpreter who works through lunch will be engaged in the language switching process (working) all the time and will not be able to eat/rest. This will damage performance later in the day.
- 9** If there is to be an early start, and the interpreter has to travel, you should book *overnight accommodation*.
- 10** Please remember that *the interpreter's role* is specialist and specific to relaying meaning across language and culture. He/she is not there to undertake other roles e.g. secretary or personal shopper. This may cause undue pressure regarding confidentiality.

- ¹ Simultaneous interpreting is when the interpreter is listening, changing the language and speaking (whispering) all at once.
- ² Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter listens and takes notes while one party speaks and then passes the message on in the other language, before the other party replies.

Where to go next

The Chartered Institute of Linguists.
The Institute serves the interests of professional linguists throughout the world and acts as a respected language assessment and accredited awarding body.
www.iol.org.uk

Institute of Translation and Interpreting.
Independent professional association of practising translators and interpreters in the UK.
www.tti.org.uk

BLIS Professionals. Database of international communication experts.
www.blis.org.uk/professionals

Regional Language Network Northwest

To order copies of 'Conference Interpreting - a guide to commissioning an excellent service' visit the publications page on our website or contact us via e-mail or telephone.

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This tent card has been designed to give tips/guidance to business people when using a conference interpreter.

It is not a definitive guide and is meant as a quick reference only. For more detailed help and advice contact the Regional Language Network NW (RLN NW)

The RLN websites are a gateway to many useful resources relating to language and culture.

BLIS Services serves as a single reference point for anyone looking to use or provide services in language and cultural expertise and includes:

BLIS Professionals

A quality assured database of translators, interpreters, cultural consultants and language trainers

BLIS Jobs

The job site for people with languages

BLIS Facilities

Providers of support services

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