THREE WAYS TO IMPROVE ACCURACY IN CLOSED CAPTIONS

WORKING TOGETHER

It's no secret – humans create the most accurate closed captions, and VITAC provides more human-generated captions than anyone else. However, there are steps that we can take together to make the captions you see even better.

On the next few pages, we'll outline three quick things that you – the customer – can do to make sure that you receive only the best-quality captions. This includes sharing preparation materials, supplying a clear audio source, and scheduling your program or event in advance. We'll also talk a little about how we – the captioners – use the preparation materials you share to supplement our own research.

By working together, we can ensure that only the best, most-accurate captions show up on your screen, whether it be on a television, computer, or mobile device.

1. SHARING PREPARATION MATERIALS

An old adage says that preparation is the key to success, and we couldn't agree more.

As someone ordering captions for a program or event, you play a role in making sure that you get the best-quality captions by sharing any advance preparation materials that will help captioners do their best work.

For media and entertainment customers, this might include sharing:

- **Scripts**: Scripts include anything written in advance of a program, including prompter text, introductions to guests and pre-packaged news stories. We use these scripts to identify any difficult-to-write terms or names that may be mentioned.

- **Lists**: Lists include proper names, places, and unique terms that may come up in a program – for example, a list of nominees up for a particular award. Captioners add these to their pre-loaded dictionaries with corresponding keystroke translation and write them correctly when spoken.

- **Rundowns**: A rundown details the order of a show, including subjects, packages, interviewees, etc.

- **Song Lyrics**: Song lyrics can be hard to understand by fans let alone those charged with transcribing every word. When you send lyrics, we prepare an accurate transcript, complete with the music notes.

PREP FOR ALL EVENTS

But prep work isn't exclusive to captioning media and entertainment programs. The same preparation also goes into captioning a variety of other events, including business meetings, conferences, or classroom discussions.

- For corporate board meetings, customers typically provide prep materials, including meeting topics, participants, and who is leading the discussion.

- For classroom lectures, captioners will get a class syllabus in advance or go online to find class notes and terms that might be discussed.

- For business conferences, customers share a program or schedule which typically includes speaker bios, keynote speakers, and information on specific sessions.

2. CLEAR, STRONG AUDIO

It's important that captioners have access to clear audio during assignments. Below are a few audio items to consider when requesting captions.

- **Use a Strong Internet Connection.** Whether you're recording a live event or streaming live content via Zoom or Facebook, you need a strong and stable internet connection. Interruptions to the live stream can result in inaccurate and/or missing captions.

- **Ensure High-Quality Audio.** Make sure to use a good microphone or headset that can clearly pick up your voice without any distortion.

- **Reduce or Eliminate Background Noise.** Find a quiet place free from distraction to present and/or record your video. Eliminate as much background noise as possible.

- **Multiple Speakers.** If more than one speaker will feature in your recording, it's a good idea to minimize overlapping speech. A common issue with online meetings, the audio often will cut out if more than one person is speaking, requiring speakers to repeat themselves.

- **Speak and Enunciate Clearly.** Speak at an appropriate volume and speed with clear pronunciation (granted, this sometimes is easier said than done as you want your speech to be natural).

3. THINK AHEAD

Giving captioners enough time to prepare for the event is another way to ensure you receive quality captions.

It's simple to book captions in advance via VITAC's online ordering site. There, you can set the date, time, and duration of your event, add contact details, and include any special notes for the captioner.

Connecting with us in advance also gives us time to work with you to test all connections and make sure your captions display correctly on your screen. It also allows us to walk you through the captioning process – a part of the onboarding we do for all customers – and explain the captioning technology and answer any questions.

CAPTIONER RESEARCH

In addition to poring through all of the advance prep materials we receive, VITAC captioners will do their own research before each assignment, looking up such things as names, places, terms, and topics that they anticipate will pop up during the program or event. We'll check multiple sources, including, among other things, news reports, social media pages, and any materials related to the assignment, to gain as much information as possible before beginning to caption.

We'll also share that research – the spelling of tricky scientific words, the names of characters, and any other helpful advice they have – with our colleagues who might be working on similar programs to help ease their research load.

VITAC captioners also can send questions to our Captioner Management team, who will verify with our Quality Assurance department to make sure everyone is on the same page. The updated information is posted each day for all captioners to access.

TRUST THE EXPERTS

Since 1986, VITAC has been the leader in media and communications accessibility, featuring the most professional, highly skilled employees and 24/7 client support. Whether you need live or prerecorded captioning, audio description, translation, subtitling, or all of the above, you can count on us for all your accessibility solutions.

Contact our captioning experts today.

TALK TO US