

# ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL



HOW ACCESSIBILITY  
CAN HELP KEEP YOUR SHOW ON  
THE TOP OF EVERYONE'S  
WATCH LIST



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# INTRODUCTION:

Every media and entertainment executive and producer wants their show to be the newest buzz-worthy (and binge-worthy) program. And thanks to the plethora of networks, cable channels, and streaming platforms that make up the modern era of entertainment, it's easier than ever for audiences to find content right at home.

Filtering by genre or for particular titles means new fans can be made all the time. But it also means content creators face even more competition for viewership.

In an industry that's now so full of options for consumers, creators can't afford to miss out on potential viewers due to accessibility issues.

**This book highlights just a few ways that you can make your programs and video content accessible to everyone. Among the topics we'll discuss include:**

- » *Captioning for Buzz*
- » *Audio Description*
- » *Going global: Subtitles and Dubbing*
- » *Non-Negotiable Accessibility*
- » *Keys to finding the right accessibility provider*



# CAPTIONS EQUAL MORE VIEWERS

You've worked hard to create something uniquely yours and now it's time to share that with the world. But if the 1 in 5 people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can't access or understand the content, that's a whole lot of people who are less likely to enjoy it and much less likely to watch.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires captioning on traditional television broadcasts, and many streaming content producers and platforms like Netflix, Hulu, HBO Max, and others have taken it upon themselves to caption their shows to reach the largest possible audience.

*Captioning service providers aren't the only ones who've noticed that people use captions for many different reasons, even if they aren't deaf or hard of hearing. A [2020 Wall Street Journal article](#) lists several Millennial and Generation Z viewers saying that some jokes just "seem funnier" or "more relevant" when the captions are on.*

## Two Ways to Caption

Captions on TV can be created live in real time as the show airs or in advance with prerecorded content.

**Live programming** is captioned by specially trained captioners who listen to a program as it is airing and "write" or respeak what they hear, sometimes at speeds of up to 250 words per minute. Live captions can be seen on live programs like news, sports, and awards shows, and other live programs.

**Offline or prerecorded captioning** is the post-production process of adding captions to a program or video after it has been recorded. Offline captions are seen on prerecorded shows like sitcoms, soap operas, cartoons, and primetime dramas.



# WHY CAPTIONING IS ONLY PART OF THE ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTION

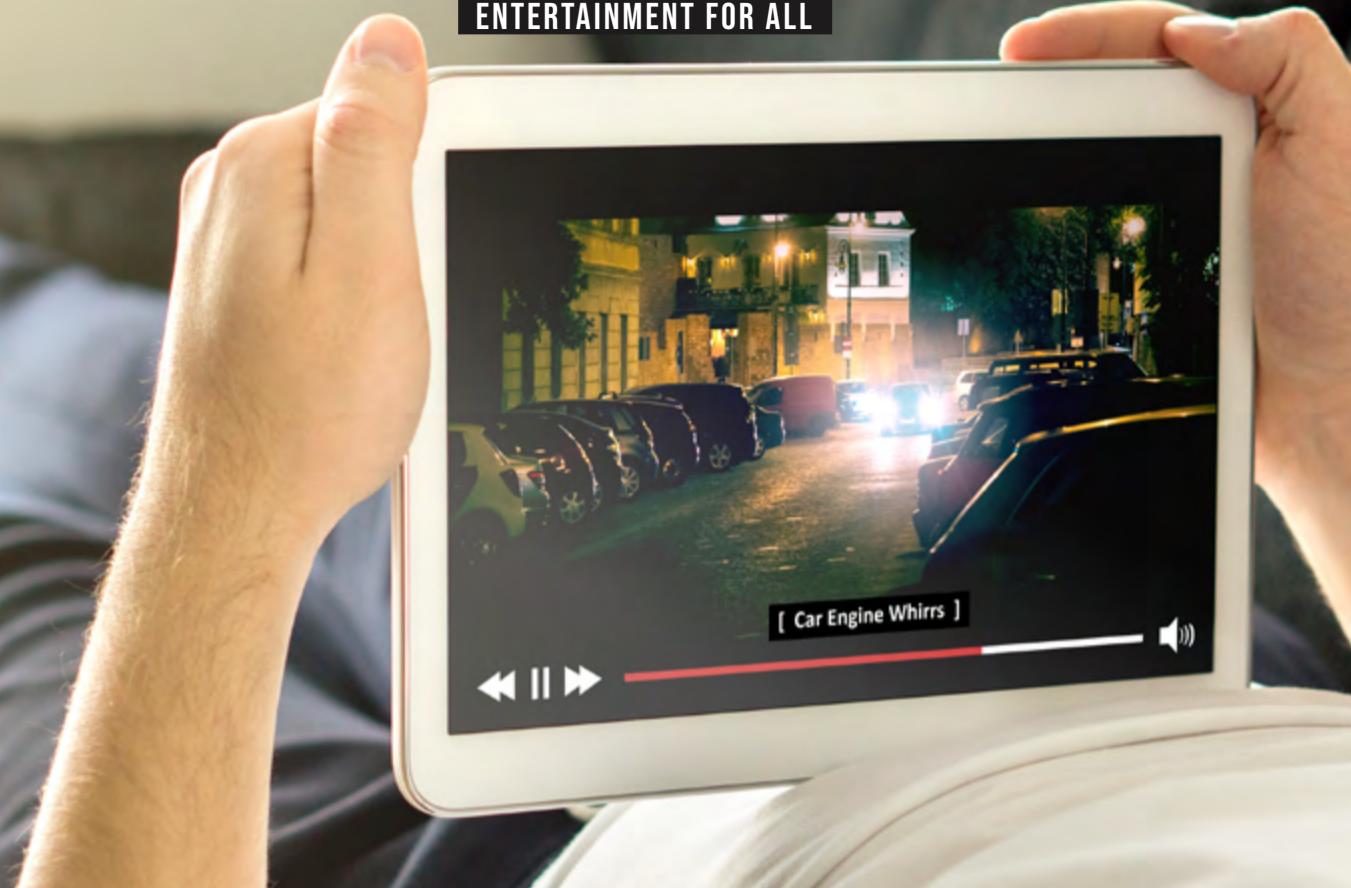
Captions make content accessible for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, but what about someone who's blind or with low-vision?

Audio description makes video programming more accessible by inserting narrated descriptions of a television program's key visual elements during natural pauses in the program's dialogue.

The FCC mandates a set number of hours of audio described content on programming on the major broadcast networks and the top five cable networks. Most streaming platforms offer audio description in multiple languages.

Many streaming platforms also are making audio description part of their accessibility measures. As with captioning, producers and content creators understand a key factor — greater accessibility can lead to a wider audience which means a better chance of your content being seen and creating a buzz.

**The World Health Organization estimates that, globally, at least 2.2 billion people are blind or low-vision.**



# GOING GLOBAL: SUBTITLES AND DUBBING

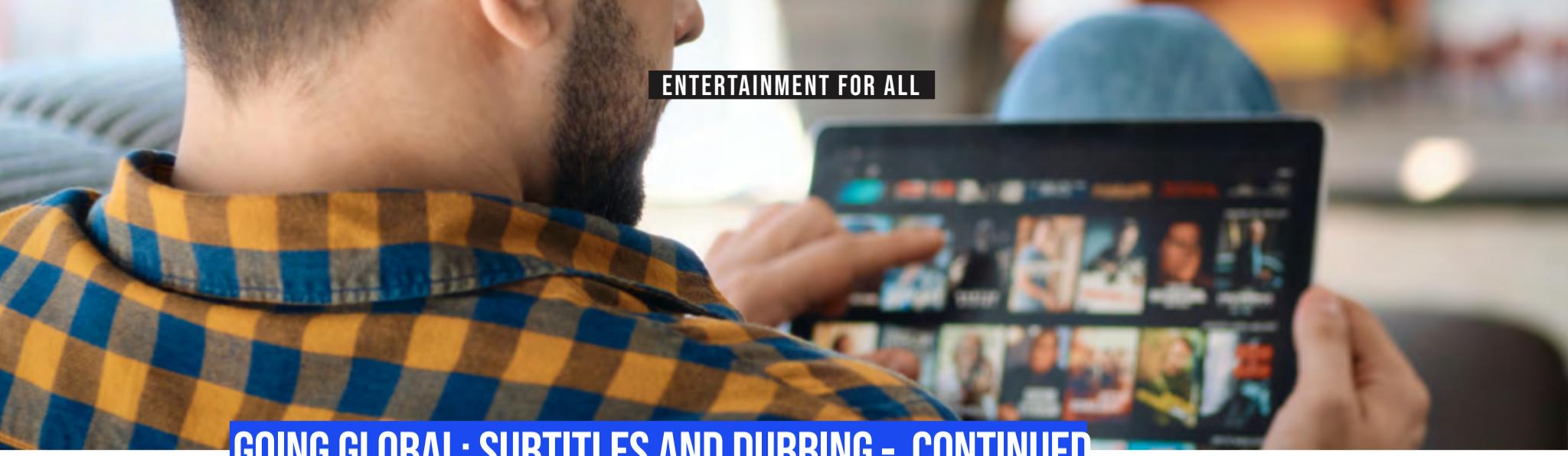
Subtitles and dubbing can make shows accessible to all viewers regardless of where they're watching.

The global demand for online video has skyrocketed in recent years and streaming services across the board have seen their international audiences grow.

Some point to social media channels like TikTok and Instagram, which regularly include text with images and video to explain younger people's ease with subtitles. Others suggest that, by choosing the subtitle option, viewers who are multitaskers can better focus on the programs they are watching.

*A recent study by Stagetext showed that younger viewers (Generation Z-ers) are almost four times more likely than those between the ages of 56 and 75 to select subtitles over dubbing, despite those in the older bracket being twice as likely to be deaf or hard of hearing.*

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## GOING GLOBAL: SUBTITLES AND DUBBING - CONTINUED

### Captions vs. Subtitles

As with captions, subtitles can help your program reach a larger, global, cross-cultural audience. But what's the difference between captions and subtitles?

Captions make video content accessible for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers by providing textual representation of on-screen audio.

Captions include music and song lyrics, sound effects, (like cats purring or car engines revving), and any other sound heard on the audio track.

Subtitles, on the other hand, provide a translation of a video's audio for viewers who might not understand the language, opening up a much wider potential for reaching and engaging an audience.

### Subtitles vs. Dubbing

Dubbing is a term used to describe the act of creating a new "dubbed" audio track.

Whereas subtitles are a written translation of a video's audio for viewers who might not understand the language, dubbing enables viewers to follow the program's audio in their native tongue. When done professionally, the newly dubbed track fits seamlessly into the video.

While debates have raged over the preference for either subtitles or dubbing, each service broadens a video's reach and delivers entertainment without borders.

# EASIER DOESN'T MEAN BETTER

Adding captions and audio description is a great step to ensuring your project reaches the widest audience possible. But just ticking a box to satisfy FCC and ADA requirements isn't always going to ensure more viewers.

Systems that rely entirely or heavily on Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), for example, tend to produce lower-quality captions. And lower-quality captions produce a lower-quality experience. While emerging technologies offer exciting potential solutions for the future, it's important to remember that for right now, most ASR solutions operating on their own don't offer the level of quality needed to provide the same experience for someone who's deaf or hard of hearing.

## Where ASR fails

Even though an ASR solution may tout a high accuracy rate, high accuracy rates don't always account for missing key words. For instance, missing the word "not" in the sentence "I am not allergic to penicillin" changes its entire meaning. Errors like that leave gaps in comprehension and require viewers to be constantly filling in the missing pieces, leaving them with a less enjoyable viewing experience all-around.

## The H-Factor (Human)

What ASR-only solutions miss is knowing that there are people on the other end depending on accuracy to meet their accessibility needs. While a smart automated solution can learn vocabularies and some speech patterns, it can't know the way a sentence's entire meaning changes with a missed word, a missed proper noun, or even missed punctuation.

*Research by The National Deaf Center (NDC) has shown that not all captioning solutions effectively communicate the spoken word for deaf or hard-of-hearing audiences.*

# THE KEYS TO FINDING THE RIGHT ACCESSIBILITY PROVIDER



With all the options out there, the task of finding the right accessibility provider can seem overwhelming. But making your content accessible to the broadest audience possible doesn't have to be stressful or complicated if you keep in mind the following important key factors:

- » **ORDERING PROCESS, FLEXIBILITY, AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT**
- » **SERVICE OFFERINGS**
- » **QUALITY**
- » **EXPERIENCE**
- » **COST/BILLING**

Let's examine each key factor separately on the following page.

## ORDERING PROCESS, FLEXIBILITY, AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT

The importance of understanding how the vendor will work with you cannot be understated.

- » Can files be uploaded or sent directly to the vendor? Is the upload secure?
- » Will someone walk you through the process?
- » What is the process for creating captions and audio description?
- » Can they deliver the finished files in different formats?
- » Can the vendor work on tight deadlines?

Do they have the staff and capacity to handle rush projects?

- » When is customer support available?

## SERVICE OFFERINGS

Where do you start with what to ask prospective providers? Here are a few questions to keep in mind:

- » Does the provider offer a full range of services?
- » Do they have industry experience?

## QUALITY

Every provider promises quality service, so how are you able to choose? Here are a few questions to keep in mind when evaluating a provider for quality:

- » Does the provider meet FCC captioning standards and audio description guidelines?
- » Do the captions include sound effects, lyrics, speaker IDs, and appropriate punctuation (as required by the FCC)?
- » Are the captions created by human transcribers or by automatic speech recognition (ASR) programs?
- » What sort of quality control do you offer?

## EXPERIENCE

Last but not least, consider your provider's experience. Ask them:

- » Have you done this work before?
- » Do you understand the industry?
- » Are you familiar with FCC rules and requirements?

## COST/BILLING

Costs can fluctuate depending on the size of the project, services needed, and turnaround time, among other things. Ask prospective providers:

- » Is the rate per minute or per hour?
- » Are there any additional/rush fees?
- » How does the vendor handle its billing and invoicing?

## KEYS TO FINDING THE RIGHT ACCESSIBILITY PROVIDER



# HOW VITAC CAN HELP:

Since 1986, VITAC has been the leader in captioning and accessibility services, featuring the most professional, highly skilled employees, 24/7 support, and a secure, technically sophisticated infrastructure.

As the largest and most trusted captioning provider in the industry, many of the most recognized companies and institutions trust us to get the job done right every day. We offer a wide range offerings to meet growing consumer needs and simplify the process of ensuring accessibility for our clients. We work closely with our customers and take time to learn their needs and find the solution that fits them. We provide peace of mind and work to eliminate any worries over captioning concerns, regulatory problems, scheduling issues, or engineering hang-ups.

- » VITAC's processes are seamless and secure for all customers.
- » Our employees have helped develop the standards for captioning and subtitling and many of the systems used to create, encode, and decode captions.
- » We use this deep experience to ensure that clients receive the highest levels of technical assistance and customer service, along with the best, most efficiently produced, and stylistically consistent captions and subtitles that anyone can create.

**When you choose VITAC's services, you can be sure that you will receive the highest quality product with unmatched customer service. Let us show you why we're the "no worries" captioning company.**

**[Click here to contact us today!](#)**