Hiring Qualified Speech-to-Text Providers

Overview

Speech-to-text is one method of providing effective communication access under the law. However, it is more than simply providing technology, it requires the provision of effective services, and speech-to-text services are only as good as the skills of the service provider. When hiring a service provider, a number of qualification factors must be considered. It is imperative that institutions evaluate the quality of service to ensure that effective, real-time communication access is occurring.

Who is a qualified service provider?

In essence, under ADA, a qualified speech-to-text provider is defined as someone who effectively, accurately, and impartially conveys real-time communication access in text, either on-site or remotely.[1] A qualified provider will have a high level of comprehension, ethical behavior, real-time speed, and accuracy.

The first step to assessing qualification is to determine the provider's relevant education, training, and experience in their specific speech-to-text system.

- A **CART provider** should hold either an associate's or bachelor's degree from a National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) certified school. The NCRA also grants qualified candidates a Certified Realtime Captioner (CRC) certification.
- A **C-Print® provider** should hold a certificate of completion of the online training program from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of the Rochester Institute of Technology.
- A **TypeWell provider** should hold a certificate verifying successful completion of the online training program from TypeWell.

What is the real-time standard for a provider and is it measurable?

The standard for a CART provider using a steno-keyboard is a minimum of 180 words per minute (wpm) and an accuracy rate of 96%, which is determined with a "Word Error Rate" calculation method. Errors are identified as a "substitution" of a word, "deletion" of a word and "insertion" of a word that was not spoken. The calculation to determine accuracy of a transcript is: Word Error Rate = (Substitution + Deletion + Insertion) ÷ the total number of words spoken.

The standard for C-Print® and TypeWell using a standard keyboard is a minimum of 60 wpm and an accuracy rate of 96%, which is not easily determined with a calculation method due to the nature of "meaning-for-meaning" captioning. An analysis of the content is needed to determine completeness and equivalence. The hiring entry or current employer will be able to assess this in real- time by observing the captioning produced by a service provider during an assignment. Another analysis option is for the presenter or speaker to review the transcript and comment on the completeness as well as the equivalence of the content.

What role do references and referrals play in the hiring process?

Interviews with the service provider's current and former colleagues, consumers, and supervisors are always a good source of information about the provider's qualifications. Seek references that, in addition to skill level and experience, also provide insight on the provider's ethics and professionalism, which are equally important factors when assessing a provider's qualifications.

What work experience is important to consider?

As in most professions, education and training establishes the foundation of functional skills. Competency and real-time skills develop further in an internship or with structured mentoring and these type of professional development activities lead to a higher quality of service.

Work experience in a particular setting supports the qualifications of a provider to work in the same environment, though real-time skills are transferable in most circumstances. For example, a provider working in K-12 schools may transition more easily from elementary to high school but require more mentoring when transitioning to a postsecondary environment.

Professionalism and Ethics

Each system of speech-to-text services has a Code of Professional Ethics that describes the high professional standards expected of providers. Below are links to each organization's code:

- NCRA Code of Professional Ethics: **www.tinyurl.com/NCRAcode**
- C-Print Captionist Code of Ethics: **www.tinyurl.com/Cprintcode**
- TypeWell Transcriber Duties and Code of Ethics: **www.tinyurl.com/TypeWellcode**

Finding a provider

There are professional organizations and job boards associated with each system, which may help in identifying service providers. Agencies that provide media captioning may also provide real-time captioning.

- NCRA CART Community Provider Directory: **www.ncrasourcebook.com**
- C-Print® Community Job Board: **www.rit.edu/ntid/cprint/community/job-board**
- TypeWell Community Job Board: **www.typewell.com/jobs**
- Association of Transcribers & Speech-to-text Providers (ATSP) Directories: **www.atspnetwork.org/directory**

Additional Resource

Postsecondary Interpreting and Speech-to-Text Survey Summary (Pepnet, 2009): **www.nationaldeafcenter.org/2009survey**

Additional resources on this subject may be available at **www.NationalDeafCenter.org**.

Reference

[1] Effective Communication. Retrieved from **www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm**