

# White Paper: How to Hire an Interpretation Service Provider



Perhaps you have an upcoming meeting with an overseas client, or a conference with a featured presenter who doesn't speak English. Maybe you've asked an expert from your Asian headquarters to come tour your operations and meet with your staff. To ensure the best service that fits your budget, give your interpretation service provider as much information up front as possible. Below are some suggestions for what your interpretation service needs to know to provide an accurate service level and cost estimate.

## Confirm Event Details

Often people contact interpretation services with only the slimmest idea of what they need. Without specific information about duration, location, and setting, your provider will not even be able to give you a ballpark estimate of cost.

**Duration:** Most clients are prepared with the general time and date information, but they don't always break it down into actual hours of interpretation needed. If your event runs for three days, do you need interpreters for the luncheons? What about for break-out sessions in a conference? If the event is only 1-hour, do you still need interpreters

afterwards in case participants want to ask informal questions of the speaker?

Additionally, the longer the event, the more interpreters you will need, because interpretation is stressful and tiring. While you may only need one interpreter for a 1-hour lecture, chances are you will need several for an all day or multi-day event.

**Location:** The type of location makes a difference as well. If the event is to take place in a conference center, different equipment will be needed than for a 3-way conference call which the interpreter may be able to



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handle from his own office with no extra equipment.

**Style:** Will you have one speaker who stands behind a podium or will you be hosting a town hall event with several speaker moving freely about the room? Maybe you are planning a panel session? The kind of event you plan has an impact on interpreter staffing and logistics, both of which will affect your budgeting.

### Correctly Identify the Language(s)

What language will you need interpretation services for? If you think you need Chinese, be sure to find out if it is Mandarin or Cantonese. Spanish for Spain is different than Spanish for Mexico. Try to be as precise as possible so that the interpreters can convey the meaning of the words accurately to the listeners.

You may need to hire multiple interpreters for an international audience. How many languages will you need, and are the foreign

language guests active participants in the event, or are they going to be in the audience listening to a presentation? Will there be a Q & A session afterwards that will require the interpreter to convert the foreign language to English?

### Determine What Kind of Interpretation You Need

Decide in advance, or through consultation with the interpretation firm, what kind of interpretation will be most suitable for your event.

**Simultaneous interpreters** are best for presentations that need to be converted into multiple languages or when you do not want to stop the flow of the presentation to wait for the interpreters. Because of the arduous nature of the work, most assignments require the services of at least two interpreters, making this the most expensive form of interpretation.

Simultaneous interpretation also requires a microphone for the in-

terpreters, wireless headsets for the audience members to hear what they are saying, and other equipment like transmitters, amplifiers, adapters, etc.

**Consecutive interpreters** can be used when pacing of the event is not an issue, or for small groups when you want the focus to be on the speaker when he/she is talking. Because the intensity is less than that of simultaneous interpretation, usually only one interpreter is needed.

### Provide Contextual Background

The more technical your subject, the more important it is for interpreters to be up to speed on the issues involved.

Be sure to specify what your meeting is about well in advance. Will the presentation be on a technical topic? For example, is a French heart surgeon giving a lecture? Is the seminar on factory robotics? If so, you need an inter-

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preter with a background in that specific subject so that he/she will be able to correctly convey the meaning of technical terms.

As early as possible, provide copies of background documents so that interpreters can prepare properly. If you will be using statements, slides, or referring to previous minutes and reports, make sure your interpreter has them in advance.

### Put Technology to Work

If possible, allow the interpretation agency access to the venue ahead of time. Technicians will be assigned to your event, and will want to test equipment on-site to ensure that the event goes smoothly and that they have the right gear for the given acoustics and event type.

### Take-Aways

Before hiring an interpretation service, be sure you know:

- exactly what kind of event you're hosting
- the duration of the event
- the languages involved
- the kind of interpretation service you need

Keep in mind that it is critical to provide as much background information as possible on the content of the event. Supplying your interpreters with detailed notes, copies of the speech, and industry insights will ensure that you will receive high quality service and that your audience members will be engaged.

### About RABI

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