

A CONVERSATION STARTER

RECLAIMING OUR TIME



“ Everything needs a budget, including time!

T. Hill

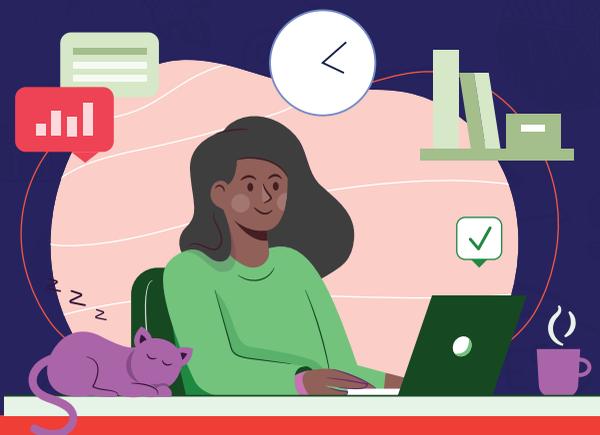


As we know, COVID-19 skyrocketed the demand for virtual requests, temporarily decreasing onsite opportunities as the world adjusted to its new landscape. While this has been a positive shift for virtual access services, the increased demand for onsite work has left a strain on a field already sorely understaffed. Many freelance interpreters are balancing the provision of virtual language/access services for consumers all over the world, in addition to in person services within their local communities. This makes the value of time even more important as we navigate work in both settings.

When working virtually, the element of time is crucial. Entities who hire interpreters to provide access during their events should take a more proactive approach during the planning phase to show consideration for everyone's time and availability. Not doing so can negatively impact not only the service providers, but also the end user(s). Please review the following considerations for planning an event which can potentially go over the scheduled time.

As part of the planning process 1) proactively plan for delays and time overage (it's better to overestimate time than to underestimate it) 2) incorporate mechanisms to discreetly check in with ALL members of the access team about their availability to stay past the scheduled end time. Not only are public requests asking the access team to stay inconsiderate, they also negatively spotlight the end users of the accommodations. The access team is now placed in an impossible position where they must consider and/or risk:

- The commitment they have made to other consumers or entities (which often includes preparing for those jobs, showing up early, and pre-conferencing with their teams)
- The transition time built in between jobs (drive time or virtual log in/tech check)
- Their biological needs (ex: meals, physical and cognitive rest between jobs)



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If the access team is unavailable to stay past the agreed upon end time, what will you do?

- “We all move together.” This is a great mantra to apply when deciding the next step. It can also help you avoid the use of language which could be perceived as blaming.
- Do not prioritize one language over another. If the ENTIRE access team cannot stay (across all languages being offered i.e. captioning, spoken languages, American Sign Language, chat translators, etc.), none of them should.
- Extending an event’s end time is unpredictable (5 minutes, 35 minutes, 60 minutes). Leaving one member of the team alone can be detrimental to the provider of services, the quality of those services, and could risk the loss of all language service providers (possibly due to tech issues).
- It’s good to be flexible and patient, but it’s better to over plan for time than to under plan. When you have under planned, be ready to close out the session in respect of everyone’s time. This means proactively factoring in temporal adjustments on the front end, and not reactively, on the back end.



Please consider the fact that the interpreters may have worked a long shift prior to your event with just enough mental and physical capacity to work the scheduled time. This helps you better frame the mindset of the access providers when unexpected time extensions occur.

So, what are practices you will employ to be more proactive in considering and honoring the time commitments made to your event’s participants and access providers? We hope it will be in the spirit of recognizing that we are all humans and so are the consumers we serve.

See “Combating Performative Accessibility” to learn other proactive strategies to support language access prior to and during your event.