

Tips for Interpreter-Mediated Event

Your communication on the day is only as effective as the interpreting provided. Here are our top three tips.

One – Plan it in

There is a lot more than meets the eye when running an event that requires interpreting. All of the following affect the need for, as well as the cost of, interpreting: the number of languages spoken, the format of the event, the size of the audience, the venue, the duration of the event and the programme and activities of the day. Consult a service-provider early on. You may well need to re-plan and re-budget your event once the need for interpreting has been factored in.

Two – Pay for what you need

The quality of interpreting makes or breaks in at least these three situations.

At a high profile and high- impact event, you'll want your interpreter to deliver precision as well as performance. There are less than a handful of interpreters in the UK who are good at both.

At an interactive panel or bi-lateral discussion, participants rely on interpreting to decide on how to respond to each speaker. Faulty interpreting can and often does completely ruin the event.

Fee-charging training courses, particularly those run for China in the UK, are not cheap. The participants are likely to listen attentively and are often critical of the interpreting quality.

Pay the asking fee to hire the best for these three types of events. Is it worth risking the failure of your event for the sakes of one or two hundred pounds a day? Don't, for a second, believe that a cheaper interpreter is capable of delivering, despite what their CV promises.

At many international conferences, however, participants are paid to attend. Few listen attentively. Most switch off from time to time. Informal business meetings and site visits are some of the other events where there is no need for a premium quality interpreter.

Three - Help them to help yourself

High quality interpreters are knowledgeable but they aren't an encyclopaedia. Every organisation has jargon and acronyms others don't understand. The more interpreters know about what you're likely to talk about and who is participating, the better prepared they'll be. Even an early draft and a list of participants/speakers would help - getting tuned into a particular accent is a case in point.

When doing consecutive interpreting, an interpreter takes notes whilst listening. He/she then combines notes with short-term memory to produce a re-organised passage in another language. Whilst everyone else is actively thinking only part of the day, the interpreter doesn't stop. If they have to interpret during breaks and over lunch as well, they'll be worn out by early afternoon. Although most do try, few are able to defy the law of nature. Once their brain is tired, precision goes down. Giving interpreters normal breaks ensures that you get high-quality interpreting to the end of your event.