

TeleTraining – An Inside Look: Providing Video Remote Interpreting Accommodations

Follow Up Questions from the May 22, 2007 TeleTraining

The original TeleTraining audio file, Power Point presentation and transcripts can be downloaded at the following URL:

<http://centerondeafness.utk.edu/pec/vriteletrain.html>

Each panel members' answers are color-coded as follows:

AccessAmerica
Birnbaum Interpreting Services
SignOn

I. Technology

What make and model of a web cam is recommend for VRI?

Logitech makes an excellent product. The 4000 works very well.

For webcam, the client has a full range of devices from which to choose. For most environments, BIS recommends the Logitech 4000 webcam for its quality and affordability.

Logitech QuickCam Fusion:

http://www.amazon.com/Logitech-961403-0403-Quickcam-Fusion/dp/B000AA2IC8/ref=sr_1_7/102-8072310-7410543?ie=UTF8&s=electronics&qid=1184000289&sr=1-7

Do you recommend the Tandberg 1700 Centric? If so could you elaborate on the cost and tech needs that are required?

Not one of our choices but the Tandberg line is a good one.

The Tanberg 1700 Centric is among a variety of devices compatible with BIS VRI. We are not aware of any extraordinary technical or set up considerations for this device.

The 1700 Centric is a High Def unit that is very high quality and new to the market. It might be a little more than you need but would be a very good solution. I suggest downloading a whitepaper or asking your IT staff to research what Network requirements are needed to support this particular device.

How does voice interpreting work in order for the Deaf student's comments to be incorporated?

The interpreter's voice is heard through the video conferencing equipment being used by the student.

Depending on the type of video device being used, the audio connection is higher in quality when passed through to a phone or speakerphone, so that the Deaf consumer's comments are heard clearly.

The interpreter can see the deaf student through the web cam. When the student signs, the interpreter speaks into their headset and audio is transmitted from the interpreter to the internal speakers of the student's laptop or video device.

What equipment do you normally recommend?

We recommend the Polycom VSG3000. It is not very cost effective for individuals but for business, it works nicely.

The type of equipment to be used is at the discretion of the client given their allotted budget. Total equipment costs can range from \$300 to over \$5,000. BIS VRI recommends the affordable solution of using either a Logitech 4000 webcam or D-Link DVC 1000/1100 Videophone, used in conjunction with a standard phone line for optimal audio connection. This solution can be outfitted for about \$300. This cost can increase depending on the size of TV or video output. For more information please visit <http://www.bisvri.com/page.asp?pgID=3&pgCategory=3>.

BIS VRI analyzes each point-of-service location to ensure our equipment recommendation meets the needs of our clients and is within their allotted budget.

Laptop with built-in web cam or external web cam

Logitech Quickcam Fusion

External wireless microphone system

Can VRI be integrated into a videoconference that involves several sites?

Yes, we have multi-point software that allows us to connect with several sites at the same time.

When connecting to several sites, the connection becomes a conference call whereby Video Relay Service (VRS) can be utilized at no cost to the consumer. Because BIS offers both VRI and VRS, our clients have the luxury of utilizing their preferred VI for either type of service.

Yes.

Is the equipment portable or does a classroom site have its own setup?

Video Conferencing equipment is much like automobiles. You can get just about any shape size with many different features. There are some very portable units that work well for VRI.

The type of equipment and level of portability is completely at the discretion of the client. Fixed and portable solutions are available.

The equipment is portable if you have a laptop. You can also put equipment on a mobile videoconference cart.

Could you explain how to use a laptop in the classrooms? Would you use two web cameras; one faces the instructor and another towards the student?

For the purposes of classroom instruction you can certainly use one camera facing the teacher, naturally. However, if the conferencing equipment has the capability of broadcasting two images from two different cameras, that would be optimal.

A laptop can be used in the classroom with a video conferencing solution such as Polycom PVX software. For optimal audio, the instructor would wear a laniar microphone connected to a phone line. This set up allows for the highest quality in audio transmission. The instructor echoes questions/comments from the floor while the camera on the laptop enables the Deaf consumer's questions/comments to be made through the interpreter.

One camera on the student and the mic on the instructor is the typical set up. Any documents/visuals discussed in class can be viewed by our interpreter using our document sharing program.

How does the interpreter hear the instructor and/or student comments in the classroom if a phone line is not required?

Audio is picked up through the video conferencing equipment (self contained mics or external mics) and delivered to the interpreter through their own equipment.

If the audio is not passed through to a phone/speakerphone, the audio can be passed through the video device, possibly at lesser quality, depending on the device being used.

Audio is carried through a lapel mic on the instructor and a handheld mic used by students. Audio is transmitted through the videoconference software.

Is this service user-friendly and accurate?

It is very user-friendly and very accurate.

Absolutely! Once you are set as a client with equipment in place, you can access BIS VRI at a moment's notice and receive the highest quality interpretation and customer service.

Yes! It's as simple as opening a program on a computer. Most of our educational customers assign an AV person to set up the equipment before class. The most important component for accuracy is the audio feed from the instructor to the interpreter. If you use a good lapel wireless mic system, the interpreter can hear very clear.

What are some trouble shooting tips for the equipment?

We have found that in some locations reducing the number of computers or other equipment utilizing the internet can increase the bandwidth available for video and could increase the quality of the video picture.

BIS VRI Technical Support department can provide expert guidance for any type of equipment set-up. We provide live service 10a-10p, Monday thru Friday, by phone, video, email and instant messaging. To contact the BIS VRI Technical Support department visit this website –

<http://www.bisvri.com/page.asp?pgID=6&pgCategory=6>

Depends on what type of equipment you are purchasing.

What type of infrastructure is needed for VRI services, especially in an educational setting?

Video conferencing equipment basically means a video source (camera) with audio capability and a high speed internet connection.

The basic infrastructure to support the use of BIS VRI is a video conferencing solution and if necessary, an audio device. The video conferencing solution varies dependent on the client's needs and budget. The spectrum of compatible devices ranges among: webcam with a variety of video conferencing software programs, Videophones such as the DVC 1000/1100 and Videophone 100/200, or video conferencing products such as those offered by Polycom, Tandberg, Viacom and others.

II. Interpreting Services

If you provide VRI for a three hour class that needs two interpreters, do you charge double?

No we do not.

No, the beauty of BIS VRI is that you pay for only the interpreting services that you use. The service charges by minute and not by the number of interpreters used to provide service.

No.

Are your interpreters centrally located in your region or do you utilize interpreters from across the country? If not, do you monitor your interpreters to insure quality of service and how do you do this?

We currently utilize interpreters within our region (Louisiana and Texas) however we are very much open to utilizing interpreters from around the country.

We do monitor our interpreters on occasion and we do that through patching into the video interpreted sessions. We obtain permission from all involved PRIOR to doing such monitoring.

When you call to access BIS VRI services, you can connect to any one of our three call centers. We currently have call centers located in Louisiana, Wisconsin and Maryland. All of our interpreters are under close supervision of the call center supervisor.

Our interpreters are centrally located in our Seattle office. All interpreters are RID certified and also evaluated prior to hire by our interpreter coordinator, Dr. Janice Humphrey. We will also assign an interpreter with knowledge/experience in the subject.

Knowing that students will be matched with an interpreter, how does the interpreter do a pre-assignment assessment of the student's signing communication style?

That can be arranged in advance of the actually interpreting assignment.

Before the actual interpreting takes place, the interpreter asks for the client ID number and requestor information to properly process the VRI session. During this screening, the client may feel free to communicate any necessary information. Then, the interpreter asks if the client is ready for interpreting services to begin, when the client gives the interpreter the approval, the VRI session begins.

If a pre-assignment assessment is needed, a videoconference meeting can be arranged prior to start of class.

What is the minimum certification needed for an interpreter?

RID CI or CT or State Cert. Level III, IV or V

BIS extensively screens potential interpreters before hire and must meet a high standard to be considered for hire unless otherwise referred to our Entry Level Interpreter Program. Upon hire, all staff interpreters receive in-depth video interpreter training, regardless of their level of certification or experience. There is not a minimum certification needed to be an interpreter for BIS, although, in order to work in video interpreting, extensive training, observation and re-training is required.

RID Certified

Is VRI an effective tool in an educational setting? Are the interpreters seasoned in post-secondary settings?

We feel VRI is extremely effective in the educational setting. Optimally, yes, interpreters are seasoned in the specific educational setting they will be working in.

Though we believe that nothing can take the place of an on-site interpreter, BIS VRI is highly effective in providing interpreting in the educational setting. In fact, BIS VRI has nationally certified educational interpreters (EIPA) on staff with a full complement of nationally certified interpreters with extensive background experience across a wide variety of settings and in-depth training in video interpreting.

The interpreters we assign to post secondary work have a minimum B.A., RID certified, and interpreting experience in post secondary. VRI can be an effective tool as a backup to in-person interpreters or an interpreting source for more advanced courses. We are also noticing more schools use VRI to replace interpreter agency work.

Are there specific interpreters for medical assignments?

We do have interpreters that are more familiar with medical terminology and tend to do more medical type assignments.

Since many of our clients are hospitals, all BIS VRI interpreters are trained and experienced to interpret for medical settings.

What questions should a post-secondary institution ask potential vendors?

Exactly what equipment are they using for VRI? We believe that Video Phones (Sorenson) and Web Cams on the Vendor's end is extremely inappropriate since these two devices tend to not deliver a quality product. It is our opinion that Vendors should be utilizing state of the art Video Conferencing equipment and technology.

How often can/should we make test calls?

How long does it take to get an interpreter if you do not schedule one ahead of time?

Do you have tech support?

Do you provide staff training on how to utilize services?

How can I control the use for our students calling the services too often?

All of the listed questions are great questions to ask. One thing I would add is to ask for a demo of the service prior to signing any contracts.

Is there an effort on the part of the VRI companies to recruit interpreters who have a background in specific content areas (i.e., statistics, psychology, etc.)

Yes.

Yes. The human resource department at BIS recruits a wide variety of specialized skilled and qualified interpreters both in general and in response to specific needs of particular clients.

Yes. Our interpreters do have a wide variety of backgrounds suitable to educational interpreting in the post secondary world.

III. General VRI Questions

Is the service nationwide?

Yes.

BIS VRI is a nationwide service.

Yes.

How much notice do you need in advance before a service is needed?

Our service is provided “On-Demand” and notice, while preferred, is not necessary.

BIS VRI is an on-demand service therefore; no advanced notice is needed, although requesting services in advance allows you to select specific interpreters for the session.

4-6 weeks is preferred.

Does each participant, particularly the instructor, have to stay in one place or can the equipment track the instructor as he/she moves around the room?

Some equipment does have the ability to “track” the instructor. However it is extremely rare to find an institution with this particular feature since it is so cost prohibitive.

If the instructor is deaf, then he/she will need to be in sight of the interpreter. If the instructor is hearing, he/she does not need to stay in one place, with proper equipment to ensure that sound quality is effective; the instructor may feel free to walk about the classroom.

The camera is on the student (sitting) and the wireless lapel mic is worn by the instructor, allowing the instructor to move freely. If the student wishes to move to another part of the room, this can be done by moving the laptop.

Do you provide interpreting for medical institutions? Legal situations?

Yes to both.

Yes, BIS VRI provides services for medical and legal situations.

Yes.

Can VRI be used for home use; for example, a deaf family member might need an interpreter to communicate with his/her hearing family, would that be possible?

Definitely can be used for home use.

Yes. BIS VRI services can be used anywhere with high speed internet accessibility. Our clients are individuals, self-proprietors, small businesses, companies, universities, hospitals and local/state/national agencies.

Yes.

Is an interpreter available 24/7?

Yes.

BIS VRI is available 24/7

We will soon release 24/7 interpreter availability

Have any of the providers offered VRI to students in other countries? Could this be a viable strategy for students in study-abroad programs? If so, what challenges might you anticipate for this kind of service and how would you work with the student, the DSS office, and the receiving university to prepare for this?

Because location is one of the more flexible components of VRI and one of its strengths we can offer VRI in any country that has compatible high speed internet access. We currently provide interpreting services for "Learning Centers" located in many different countries. Communication prior to any VRI assignment is critical. Distance should not be an issue when providing the service to other countries.

BIS VRI has not yet had the experience of providing services to other countries, although we have done demonstrations in Europe and India. Utilizing any H.323 device with adequate bandwidth will allow for connection to BIS VRI services.

We have never handled this kind of request but would be able to do so. We would work with the remote school's IT department to set up the equipment and test prior to the start of class. Recommend 6 weeks advance notice to get everything set up.

Given the long experience with live interpreters how do you market technology-based interpreting?

We are becoming more and more aware of the various benefits of VRI. Among them is its flexibility, use of qualified interpreters even though they are not physically present and, of course, very very cost effective. There are not charges for travel or hidden fees. You pay for what you use.

BIS VRI markets its service to those most in need of an on-demand, interpreting solution, as well as those locations unable to acquire on-site interpreters or those interpreters with the necessary skill and experience level to meet the consumer's needs.

With rapid growth of VRS, the interpreting industry has changed. There is a shortage of in-person interpreters in many cities due to increased demand from VRS. Video interpreting can be a great solution when the right interpreter is simply not available. Video interpreting can also be helpful when an interpreter is immediately needed. It's a great way to remain proactive to the needs of deaf students and staff.

Are you HUB (Historically Underutilized Businesses owned by women or minorities?)

We are a non-profit organization and are not “owned” by anyone. Our staff and interpreters are predominantly women.

Yes. BIS is a HUB; owned and operated by a Deaf individual, David Birnbaum.

Yes.

To what extent is this service being used in the post-secondary setting? Is it being used by school districts?

We find Post-secondary really enjoy utilizing VRI because of its dependability and cost effectiveness. Yes, school districts utilize VRI as a compliment to dynamic interpreters.

BIS VRI has clientele at universities as well as postsecondary and elementary settings. VRI is mostly used for parent teacher conferences and school functions.

How does one go about becoming a video relay interpreter?

Interpreters interested in becoming a VRI interpreter for AccessAmerica can start by going to our website www.accessamericavri.com and completing an “Interest Form” and sending to our office.

To become a video relay or remote interpreter through BIS, the interpreter must meet an initial standard for hire, undergo extensive theoretical and practical video interpreting training, undertake numerous performance observations and participate in on-going video interpreter training and skill development.

Apply to an agency who provides VRI. The agency should provide video interpreting training prior to starting video interpreting.

IV. Cost

What would you say is the average cost for use?

Depending on the usage plan cost can average between \$1.50 and \$3.00 per minute.

The average cost for VRI services is \$3.00 a minute.

\$1.75-\$3 per minute

When it comes to medical assignments, do you charge a monthly maintenance fee along with the cost of the services?

There are no special fees related to the “type” of assignment. Monthly fees are a specific part of each plan and vary depending on usage.

No monthly maintenance fees are associated with BIS VRI; you only pay for the services you use.

Depends on needs of the hospital.

If a pre-scheduled event is cancelled last minute, is there a charge for the service?

Generally we do not charge for last minute cancellations. This is one of the benefits of VRI. However, such charges can be built into a custom plan depending on the nature of the assignments, frequency of anticipated cancellations and amount of usage.

With BIS VRI, there are no charges for canceling requests.

Yes.

Given the pricing information that you shared, it sounds like VRI is more expensive compared to a live interpreter. Are the live interpreter rates too low? Does it cost less once a contract is signed and the technology is installed and working properly?

It has been our experience that VRI rates are lower simply because you pay for only what you use.

When comparing BIS VRI to on-site interpreting, there are many factors that make VRI seem more expensive, however it all depends on the situation and length of interpreting services. BIS encourages you to visit our website, www.bisvri.com so that you may use our cost savings calculator which compares on-site interpreting prices to BIS VRI prices and also shows a comparison chart between on-site and VRI services page.

If you are comparing a live interpreter to a video interpreter and both have equal qualifications and equal costs, a live interpreter will be the best solution. However, video interpreting can provide more flexibility to your interpreting services that a live interpreting agency may not be able to provide:

- Immediate interpreting services if your regular live interpreter is unavailable;
- Specialized interpreters knowledgeable in a unique or advanced class topic;
- Save costs on travel or two hour minimum costs typically charged by live interpreters
- Interpreters are simply not available or in short supply

Is VRI an effective, less expensive alternative to hiring actual interpreters?

Yes, in most cases.

Depending on the hiring contract, providing VRI services might be considerably cheaper. However, BIS VRI does not want to be in competition with on-site interpreting. We believe that between both on-site interpreting and video interpreting, together we guarantee the efficiency and satisfaction for all who need interpreting services.

Does it cost less once a contract is signed and the technology is installed and working properly?

Once a contract is signed, you will receive invoices that indicate the number of minutes processed thru BIS VRI and the corresponding rate per minute as stipulated in the contract.

Do you require a signed contract for a specific period of time, such as a semester, quarter, or year?

A signed contract is NOT required however it is preferred. Our only requirement is a completed USER PROFILE be on file with our office. The USER PROFILE is available on our website.

No specific amount of time is included in the BIS VRI Client contract.

Yes.



What Does PEPNet Do?

- Conducts training with secondary, postsecondary, vocational, and adult education professionals and support staff regarding transition and postsecondary educational services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing
- Develops a technical assistance network for the target groups
- Demonstrates how technology can be used to provide access and accommodations within programs for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing

PEPNet-South would like to give a special thanks to the panel members who were willing to contribute information from each of their respective companies in order to give us a broad sampling of what is available nationally in the area of Video Remote Interpreting Services. Please feel free to contact any of them personally to answer additional questions that you may have.

A Note from PEPNet-South

Our panel members are a representative sample of the VRI service providers that are available nationally. We appreciate their willingness to share their expertise in this forum. Additional information about VRI services and the agencies that provide these services can be found online by clicking on the following links:

- Deaf News Network - <http://deafnn.wordpress.com/2007/03/19/video-remote-interpreting-services/>
 - Proud Geek - <http://blog.proud-geek.com/2007/03/19/video-remote-interpreting-services/>
-

AccessAmerica

VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING

...making the world a much smaller place!

David W Hylan Jr., MS, CI/CT
Executive Director

The Betty and Leonard Phillips Deaf Action Center

601 Jordan Street, Shreveport, LA 71101

(318) 425-7781

Empowering the Deaf Community Since 1982.



BIS BIRNBAUM
Interpreting Services
A Deaf-Owned Company

Instant Interpreting Service

J. Anthony Glatt
Senior Manager—Video Services
Manager of Technical Initiatives
IP: call.BISVRI.com
Phone:877-BIS-VRI-2 V/TTY (877-247-8742)
Web Site: www.BISVRI.com

On-demand Interpreting Service – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Jason Smith
Video Interpreting Sales Engineer
1.866.688.7100 v/tty
Video IP: Jason.SignOnASL.com
Jason@SignOnASL.com
www.SignOnVRI.com

PEPNet-Midwest
 St. Paul College
 235 Marshall, St. Paul, MN 55102
 651-846-1337 (Voice)
 651-846-1537 (TTY)
 651-221-1339 (Fax)

 **PEPNet**
Regional Centers



PEPNet-West
 National Center on Deafness
 California State University, Northridge
 18111 Nordhoff Street
 Northridge, California 91330-8267
 818-677-2099 (tty/v)
 818-677-6270 (fax)

PEPNet-Northeast
 National Technical Institute
 for the Deaf
 Rochester Institute of Technology
 52 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester,
 New York 14623-5604
 (585) 475-6433 (tty/v)
 (585) 475-7660 (Fax)

PEPNet-South
 Center on Deafness
 Claxton Complex A239
 The University of Tennessee
 Knoxville, TN 37996-3442
 (865) 974-0607 (tty/v)
 (865) 974-3522 (Fax)

 **PEPNet-south**
Outreach Centers

**PEPNet-South
 Central Office**

Center on Deafness
 Claxton Complex A239
 The University of Tennessee
 Knoxville, TN 37996-3442
 (865) 974-0607 (V/TDD)
 (865) 974-3522 (FAX)
 pepnet-south@utk.edu

**Arkansas – Alabama – Mississippi
 Outreach Site**

Amy Hebert
 University of Arkansas at Little Rock
 2801 S. University DSC 113
 (501)683-7629 (v)
 (501) 569-8068 (Fax)
 amyhebert@ualr.edu

**Georgia – Florida
 Outreach Site**

Katherine Bruni
 Georgia Perimeter College
 324 Knots Circle
 Woodstock, GA 30188
 (770) 928-6785 (V/TDD)
 (404) 406-8194 (Cell)
 (770) 928-9929 (Fax)
 kjbruni@aol.com

**Kentucky – Tennessee – West Virginia
 Outreach Site**

Tricia Davis
 Eastern Kentucky University
 Center on Deafness
 245 Wallace Building
 521 Lancaster Ave.
 Richmond, KY 40475-3102
 (859) 622-8156 (V)
 (859) 622-2573 (Fax)
 Tricia.Davis@eku.edu

**Texas - Louisiana
 Outreach Site**

Jennie Bourgeois
 Louisiana State University
 Office of Disability Services
 111A Johnston Hall
 Baton Rouge, LA 70803
 (225) 578-4913 (V)
 (225) 578-2600 (TDD)
 (225) 578-4560 (Fax)
 jsbourg@lsu.edu

**South Carolina – North Carolina – Virginia
 Outreach Site**

Pat Varner-Bland
 Clemson University
 225 S. Pleasantburg Drive
 Greenville, SC 29606-5616
 (864) 250-8878 (V)
 (864) 250-8889 (Fax)
 pvarner@clemson.edu