

Translation Services for More Than 150 Languages



Bobby Lahiere
President & CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Lahiere, would you tell us about SpokenHere Communications?*

Mr. Lahiere: SpokenHere is a company that helps take its clients to a global audience. The short answer is we provide translation services. A better answer is we listen to our clients to find out what their challenges are with respect to breaking into new markets, what are their language and cultural challenges? We provide professional translation, interpreting and voiceovers in more than 150 languages. We bridge the communication gap between where clients are and where they want to be.

CEOCFO: *Are people coming to you because they understand the complexities of going global or are they coming because they are looking for a translation?*

Mr. Lahiere: Both actually. The consensus in the old days of about twenty years ago was there was a lot of education we had to do on our part to get clients to understand the value of working with a professional translator. Many times clients would know somebody who spoke another language and they would give them a document to be translated. That person, while they may speak another language fairly well, is not a professional translator and not skilled in the art of translation. Over the years, as technology and the Internet have improved, clients have become more sophisticated and they understand that there is a lot more involved to communicate in another language than just the ability to speak that language. Many people now are aware of things like Google Translate and other machine translation platforms. Some of those tools can render a fast and generally understandable translation, but they are still not of the quality that a professional translator with experience and subject matter expertise can deliver. Translation at this point is really just the last step in an elaborate process. We have a professional process that we go through, and we can offer a complete turnkey service with our typesetting, voiceover and programming capabilities.

CEOCFO: *How are you able to keep up with all of the changes?*

Mr. Lahiere: Our industry is still highly unregulated. There are many different approaches across many countries; some have a lot more state certified testing and accrediting than others, but for the most part, the language services industry is not regulated much at all. The market tends to weed out the bad actors from the good actors and that is a good thing. Translators are kind of like umpires in a baseball game. They only get noticed when they make a mistake. The industry is self-policing in a way. There are no state or federal level mandates at least in the United States. It is up to us as LSPs (language service providers) to vet translators and interpreters to make sure they know the industry and the subject matter in which they are practicing their craft. Each translator and interpreter must keep up with changes in order to stay qualified and relevant.

CEOCFO: *How do you keep up-to-date on terminology?*

Mr. Lahiere: It ties into that same idea that the responsibility of keeping up with the ever-changing language is on the individual agency. It is up to us to find professional translators who understand that language is evolving all the time. The pace of language change in the 1500s, for example, was much slower than it is today because of technology. We consider working only with professional translators. Professional translators are already aware of these ideas and part of their professional preparation is keeping themselves up to date with respect to changes in language and technology. In the first few minutes of vetting a translator, we can tell whether it is worthwhile to proceed with the next steps in the qualification process by asking some key questions that a good translator knows how to answer.

CEOCFO: *How do you get the message across to prospective clients that SpokenHere is cut above?*

Mr. Lahiere: There are many good translators and language service providers out there; there are also a lot of bad ones. It is a highly competitive business because the industry is growing by leaps and bounds and anybody with a dictionary

and a computer can say they are a translator. We deal with a product, so to speak, that clients cannot really pick up and hold in their hands and say is good. When you go buy a cheesecake, you know right away whether it is good, but that is a lot harder to do with our deliverables. When we hand a document in Korean back to a client, they do not know if it is good or bad. Building trusting relationships is important in any business, but it is critical in our industry for that very reason. We have created a culture in our company that is centered around getting to know our clients and our vendors on a personal level. In this way, we can build the trust needed to develop a long-lasting relationship that encourages high quality. We have done this over 24 years that I have been in this business, and it has led to some wonderful relationships in many countries around the world. Sometimes we have to go outside our regular circle of trusted relationships. When that happens, we have a process we use that helps us find the right people. If we employ our proven process and get to know our clients and vendors on a personal level, building those long-term relationships along the way, the quality takes care of itself. We have clients and vendors in other countries that we have known for twenty years. We have never met in person, but we know a lot about their lives and interests. To us it is all about the personal relationships. If we enjoy these relationships, solve their language challenges and maybe make a little money along the way, what could be more enriching?

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

For more information visit: www.spoken-here.com

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATION ■ INTERPRETING ■ VOICEOVERS