



FLEXIBILITY. DOMAIN EXPERTISE. FLAWLESS EXECUTION.

How Lionbridge's simultaneous interpretation services helped the Swiss Economic Forum enable its multilingual conference attendees to exchange ideas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

15 HOURS OF SIMULTANEOUS
INTERPRETATION

12 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP

2 LANGUAGE PAIRS



The Challenge

When the organizers of the Swiss Economic Forum (SEF) needed to secure simultaneous interpretation services for its 50 national and international speakers and 900 multilingual global decision-makers, Lionbridge was a natural choice. Lionbridge had partnered with the prestigious conference for more than a decade and consistently delivered the highest quality simultaneous interpretation services so leading experts from business, academia, politics and the media could exchange ideas with one another.

There would be the predictable challenges to overcome, including the need to secure highly specialized Swiss interpreters who were well versed in finance and business administration. These professionals would need to provide simultaneous interpretation with the utmost precision during technical presentations and breakout sessions at the Montreux Music & Convention Centre in Switzerland. As complicated as it was to plan simultaneous translation in any given year, the 2020 SEF would prove to be an even more formidable undertaking as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, SEF organizers would be required to postpone the event by several months, limit attendance to 900 participants and comply with new safety measures. This would also affect the way simultaneous interpretation would have to be conducted. Added risks brought on by COVID-19 meant it would be even more difficult to secure interpreters. Undaunted by restrictions and new challenges, Lionbridge had the flexibility and resolve to help the SEF make adaptations to simultaneous interpretation so it could ultimately enable global attendees to fully participate in the conference.

“Simultaneous interpretation is a key component to the success of a multilingual conference. When people are coming from all over the world and they are taking a risk by attending an in-person event, they expect to have a valuable experience,” said Isabelle Busch, Lionbridge Director of Account Management. “In this context, it was more important than ever to provide high-quality services. Constant communications with interpreters and the SEF organizers enabled us to adhere to safety measures and overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic.”

About the Customer

The Swiss Economic Forum (SEF) is Switzerland's leading economic conference. Launched in 1998 by Stefan Linder and Peter Stähli, the conference has evolved into Switzerland's most important business event with an international reach. Leaders from business, academia, politics and the media gather in Interlaken for an active exchange of ideas and cross-industry networking.

The platforms and initiatives of the Swiss Economic Forum promote an entrepreneurial way of thinking and actively support startups. The Swiss Economic Award is presented each year during the SEF. It is the most important prize for young entrepreneurs in Switzerland and is awarded to the three most successful startups in three categories.

What is Simultaneous Interpretation?

Simultaneous interpretation is an interpretation service that is delivered live, while the original speech is happening. The simultaneous interpreters sit in a soundproof booth and listen to the speakers via headsets. They transmit the spoken word into the target language via microphone. Recipients of the simultaneous interpretation services wear headphones to hear the speech in their preferred language. Simultaneous interpretation requires the utmost concentration. Therefore, interpreters work in teams of two and regularly take turns.

Results at-a-Glance

Swiss Economic Forum >>> Ability to Share Information with Multilingual Audience

Highly technical subject matter expertly delivered from German to French and German to English

Exchange of ideas achieved during presentations and breakout sessions

Ability to overcome interpretation challenges presented by covid-19

Methodology

Planning

Defined project scope and success criteria

Determined agreed upon roles and responsibilities

Created a detailed schedule and communication plan

Addressed specified escalation points, including organization of the technical equipment for simultaneous interpretation and the development of emergency protocols

Multidisciplinary Team

2 project managers and 1 account executive

4 interpreters specializing in the finance industry

1 language quality manager

Communication

Submitted status reports on a regular basis

Provided transparency and focused on critical points, such as security requirements and presentation materials

Centralized the information for easy access

The Solution

Lionbridge's simultaneous interpretation solution involved three components: planning, its multidisciplinary team and communication. Each was critical for success.

Planning

For the 2020 SEF, Lionbridge secured four expert interpreters to provide a total of 15 hours of simultaneous interpretation services for two language pairs: German to English and German to French. As part of the planning process, Lionbridge worked closely with SEF organizers to educate conference speakers on how to best work with simultaneous interpreters.

Lionbridge also required presenters to submit their presentations a week before the event so interpreters could carefully study the content. Additionally, every logistical detail—from scheduled breaks to interpreters' accommodations—was planned carefully.

Multidisciplinary Team

Lionbridge's multidisciplinary team integrated itself into the event management process to ensure a seamless experience. The project managers and account executive worked behind the scenes to monitor the process and the budget. They also carried out a performance review following the event.

They developed, implemented and maintained a quality plan that brought Lionbridge's Quality Systems into compliance with the SEF's quality requirements. They chose interpreters who had worked at the SEF for the past six years to ensure continuity. These interpreters were highly qualified because of their ability to understand Swiss German. In addition, their mother tongue corresponded to the target language, and the language quality manager made sure they had advanced industry knowledge in finance and business administration.

Lionbridge's extensive work with Swiss banks facilitated the selection process and enabled the right interpreters to be secured for the job.

Communication

In addition to keeping the SEF informed about the event preparation, Lionbridge ensured a smooth flow of communications between the SEF and interpreters.



Adjustments Due To COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic forced Lionbridge and the SEF to make changes to adhere to restrictions and new safety requirements:

- Booths were disinfected and other modifications were made to the booths to promote safety for the interpreters
- Interpreters were instructed to wear masks in public spaces and be socially distant from others

Lionbridge prepared interpreters for these changes, underscored the need to adhere to safety measures and reassured them that SEF organizers would also comply with safety measures. The advance preparation ensured the best possible service from interpreters once they were on site.

The Results

By utilizing Lionbridge's simultaneous interpretation services, Switzerland's leading economic conference enabled multilingual participants to exchange ideas across industries and across languages.

The SEF was able to accommodate its global attendees during presentations and breakout sessions because of Lionbridge's flawless execution of simultaneous interpretation services in both French and English. After providing simultaneous interpretation services for 10 consecutive conferences held by the SEF, Lionbridge was able to successfully respond to COVID-19 restrictions and still secure the right interpreters for the 2020 event.

"Delivering simultaneous interpretation services during a pandemic was no easy feat. We were able to organize services extremely fast because of our 20+ years in the Swiss market," said Busch. "Whether we need to deal with COVID-19 or the environment is more relaxed, we're ready to jump in."

“ Lionbridge acted quickly to successfully meet the demands of this complex and exciting project. The interpreters' professionalism and high-quality translations enabled our multilingual attendees to create and capitalize on valuable synergies. We greatly value the longstanding partnership we have developed with Lionbridge. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, this year's services were equally effective. ”

Michael Hebeisen, SEF Teamleader Operations / Project Leader

Lionbridge can provide simultaneous interpretation for both in-person and remote events.



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