



# The Sudden Shift to eConferencing

And the Growing Importance of Remote Language Services

# The Global Events and Language Services Industries Pre-COVID-19

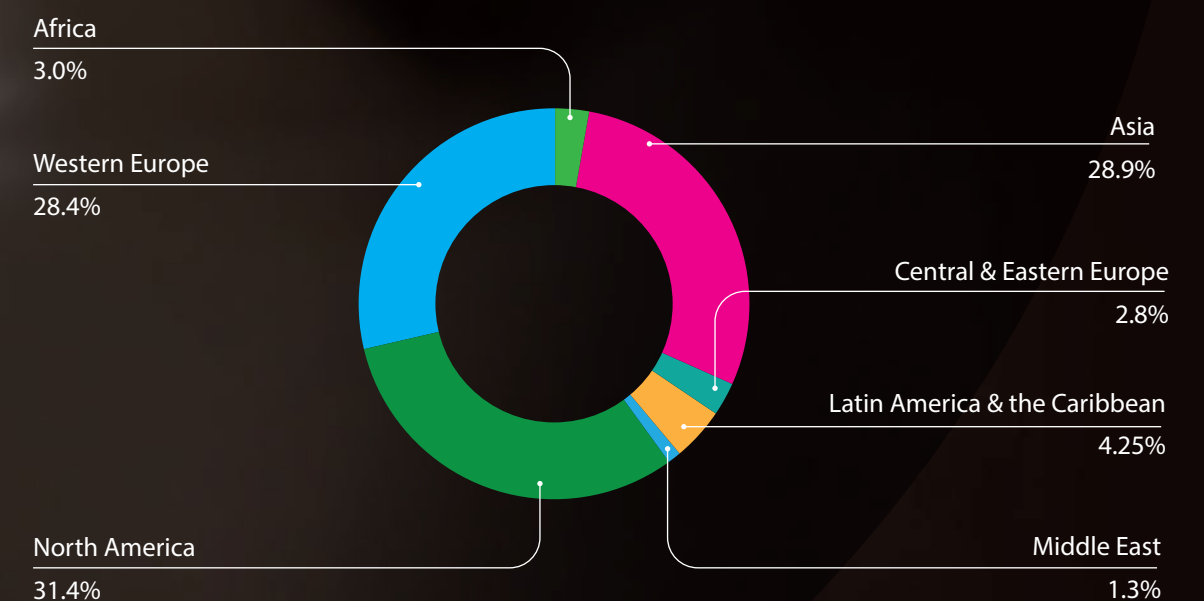
There is little argument that prior to the onset of the new coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), face-to-face meetings and events - across all industries, from local to national to international gatherings - have had an enormous impact on the global economy.

In fact, the 2018 Global Economic Significance of Business Events study, commissioned by the Events Industry Council and conducted by Oxford Economics, reveal[ed]:

- ▶ 1.5 billion people worldwide participate in business events annually
- ▶ \$2.5 trillion (USD) in direct and indirect spending as a result of business events
- ▶ \$1.5 trillion (USD) in global GDP contribution
- ▶ 26 million people have direct or indirect jobs in this industry
- ▶ \$704 (USD) average spending by business events participants

With North America taking the biggest piece of the pie followed closely by Asia and Western Europe, the events industry has been vital to the continued health and wellbeing of the global economy.

## Average % of Total Global Impact



Data Source: Events Industry Council



*Business events involved more than 1.5 billion participants across more than 180 countries*

Oxford Economics

# Specialised Language Services for Conferences

Part and parcel of industry conferences has been the investment in - and partnership with - professional language services. This investment not only ensures that all attendees have equal access to key conference information but further assists everyone's ability to fully engage throughout the conference.

To understand just how important language services are to the global events industry, in 2018, a study conducted by Oxford Economics [found that] "business events involved more than 1.5 billion participants across more than 180 countries."1 Some of the most common requests for specialised language services for conferences include interpreting, translation, live captioning, and transcription services.

## Interpreting

It is often the size and nature of an event that dictates the specific need for - and mode of - interpreting services. Large corporate events and conventions, for instance, might require interpreting services in multiple languages.

Small group meetings, however, and more intimate one-on-one discussions might only require interpreting services for a handful of languages.

The three most commonly requested modes of interpreting (regardless of the size and nature of an event) include consecutive, relay, and simultaneous.

## Consecutive

Best used in intimate settings such as business meetings and one-on-one discussions, consecutive interpreting generally involves the interpreter sitting or standing directly next to the person for whom they are interpreting. Interpreters listen intently and when natural breaks occur in the conversation, (e.g. at the end of an idea or the end of a sentence), they provide accurate interpretation.

## Relay

Some events require interpreting into more than one language at the same time. Large presentations or discussions at large international conferences are prime examples of events that often require relay interpreting. This mode of interpreting involves a "relay" interpreter who initially interprets a speaker's content into a common language for fellow interpreters. The fellow interpreters then interpret the relayed interpretation into any number of respective languages.

## Simultaneous

When interpreters interpret the spoken word in real time, they are providing simultaneous interpreting. With this form of interpreting, interpreters generally sit in a separate interpreting booth with specialised headsets and equipment and deliver their interpretation directly into microphones in real time.





## Translation

The world of translation has only grown over the years with translators specialising in several types of translation, from technical and scientific translation to financial, legal, and literary translation.

When it comes to events such as conferences, conventions, symposiums, trade shows, and corporate events, translators are generally tasked with translating presentations, marketing materials, legal documents, corporate communications and more.

## Live-captioning

As the term implies, live-captioning is advanced technology that allows an audience to read captions that accompany any video on practically any device.

Live-captioning is ideal if the video's content is in a language you don't understand. It is also a wonderful option for those who need to watch the video on a muted setting.

However, perhaps the greatest benefit to live-captioning is the inclusive experience it creates for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities who might otherwise be excluded from valuable information. Live-captioning allows everyone to actively engage, making your message accessible to all.

## Transcription

Simply put, a transcription service converts speech into a written or electronic document. When event organisers want to enhance the experience of attendees, ensure accessibility to all, provide quality reading material following the event, or provide a quality document that can be used for marketing purposes, transcription services are often used.

Language services and conferences of all shapes and sizes have often gone hand in hand, but when the pandemic hit in the first quarter of 2020, this partnership had to transform almost immediately in order to survive.

*Looking ahead, virtual events are people's new "real world" events.*

Wayne Kurtzman



# Impact of COVID-19 on the Global Events and Language Services Industries

With the sudden onset of COVID-19 in late 2019, nations began to take drastic measures to protect their citizens. As the virus continued to spread and the travel and tourism industry continued to plummet, face-to-face conferences came to a sudden and crashing halt.

In fact, according to Forbes, with the cancellation (or postponement) of hundreds of global events, as of April 2020, "more than 83 million attendees [were] forced to change their plans."2 Right alongside these cancellations came the drastic decrease in requests for in-person language services.

But the events industry was not down for long. Ever so gradually we began to see a shift from in-person to virtual conferences, and in turn, we likewise saw a

shift in how language services were being delivered.

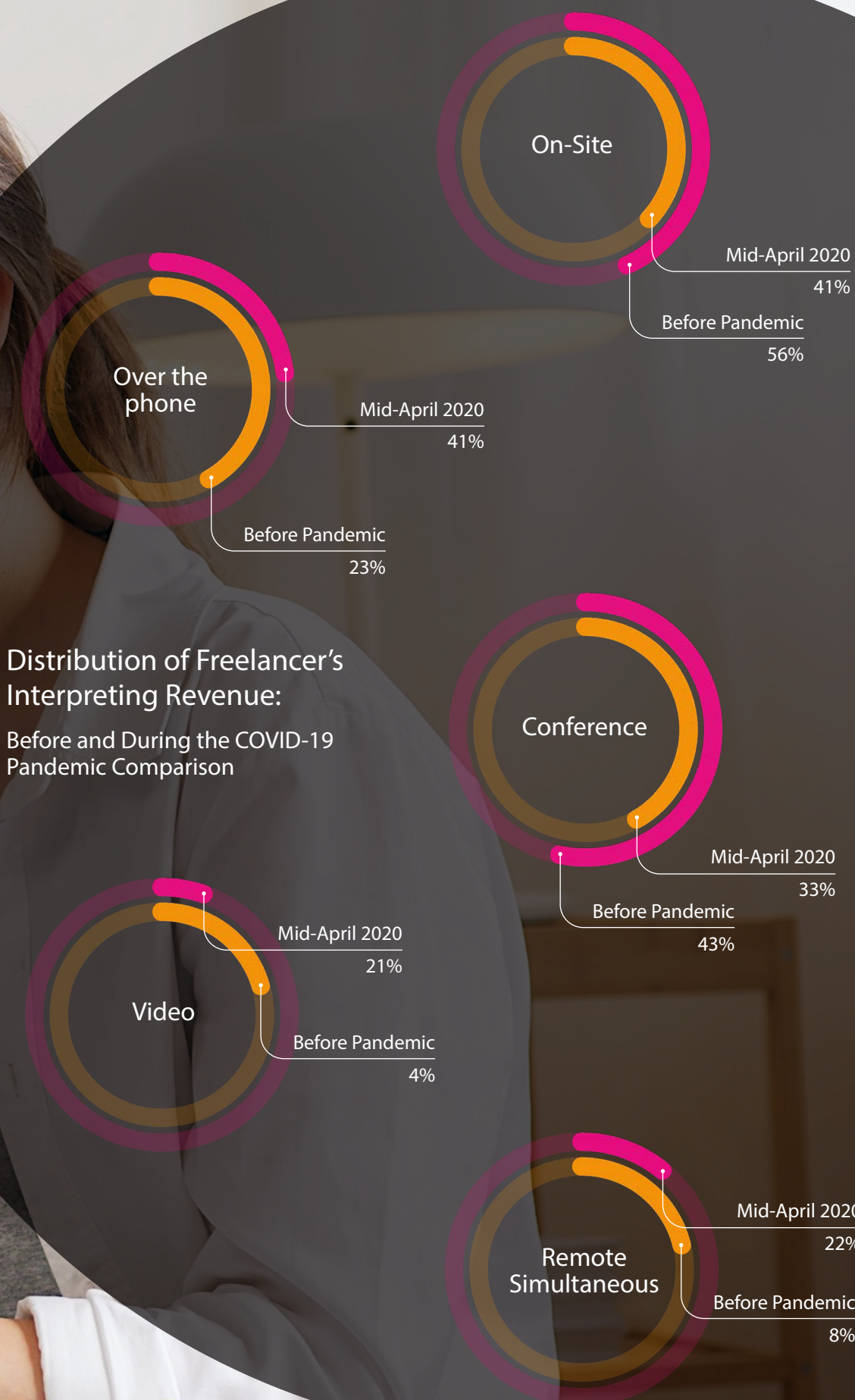
While on-site interpreting dropped by 15% and traditional conference interpreting dropped by 10%, over-the-phone, video, and remote simultaneous interpreting increased by 18%, 17%, and 14% respectively - clearly, there is a direct correlation between the shift to remote events and the increase in the need for remote interpreting services.

*To date more than 83 million attendees have been forced to change their plans*

Forbes

## Distribution of Freelancer's Interpreting Revenue:

Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic Comparison



Data Source: CSA



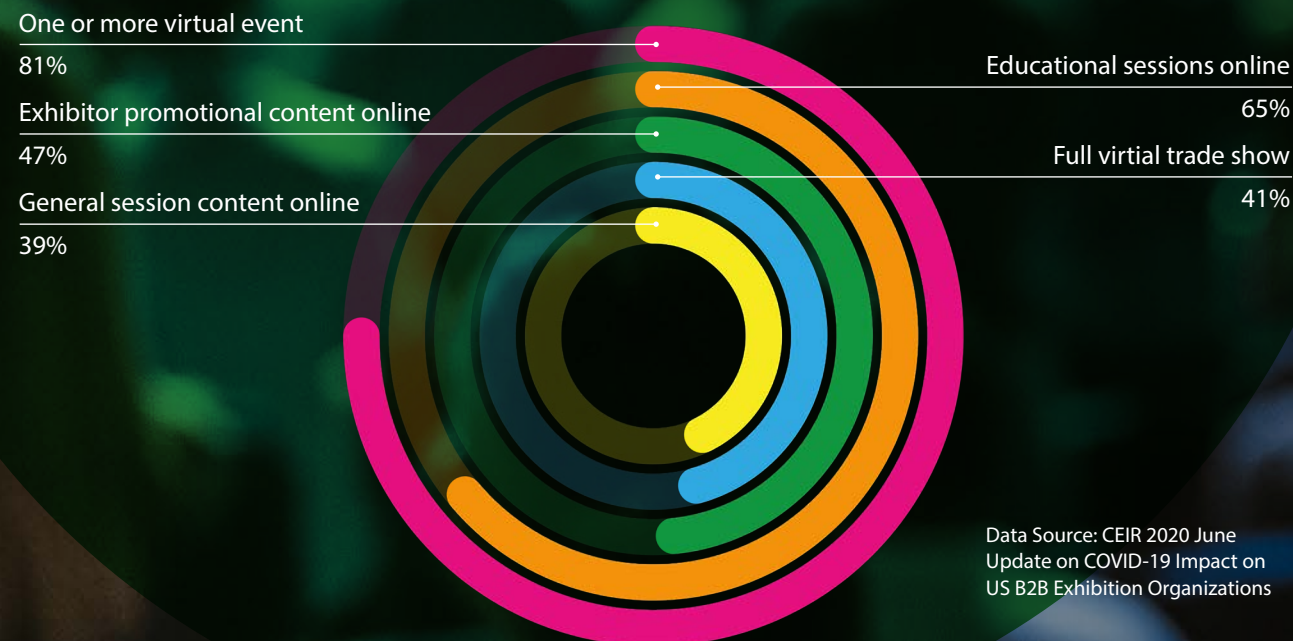
# A Glimpse into the State of the Top Three Conferencing Regions

## The United States

In order to evaluate and gauge the future state of the US-based events industry, CEIR, (Center for Exhibition Industry Research) conducted surveys of executives with oversight of US-B2B exhibitions in early April and again in June of 2020. The following represents

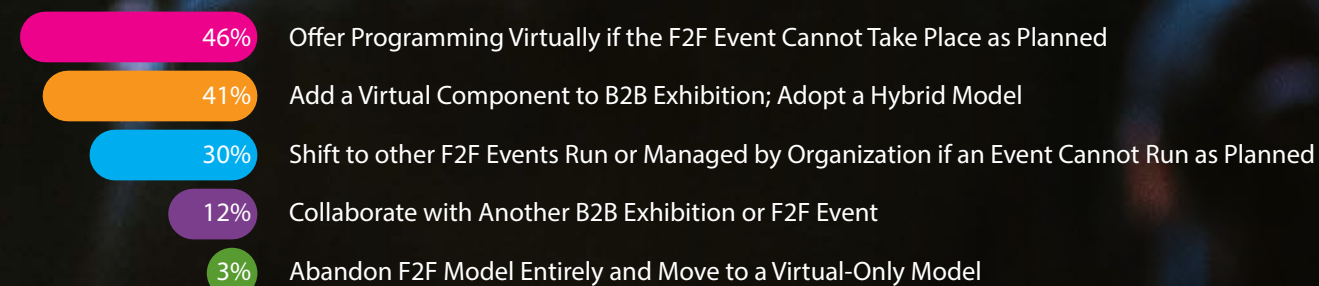
the latest survey's findings for all organisers who were forced to cancel B2B events and shift to virtual platforms. According to CEIR, the "most notable [change] is the increase in full virtual trade shows, 41% compared to 15% in the April survey."<sup>3</sup>

### (%) Events shifting to Online Platforms



In their earlier April survey, CEIR asked executives which tactics and strategies they would put into place post-COVID-19 to possibly return to in-person events. The answers varied.

### Which tactics and strategies will you put into place post COVID-19?

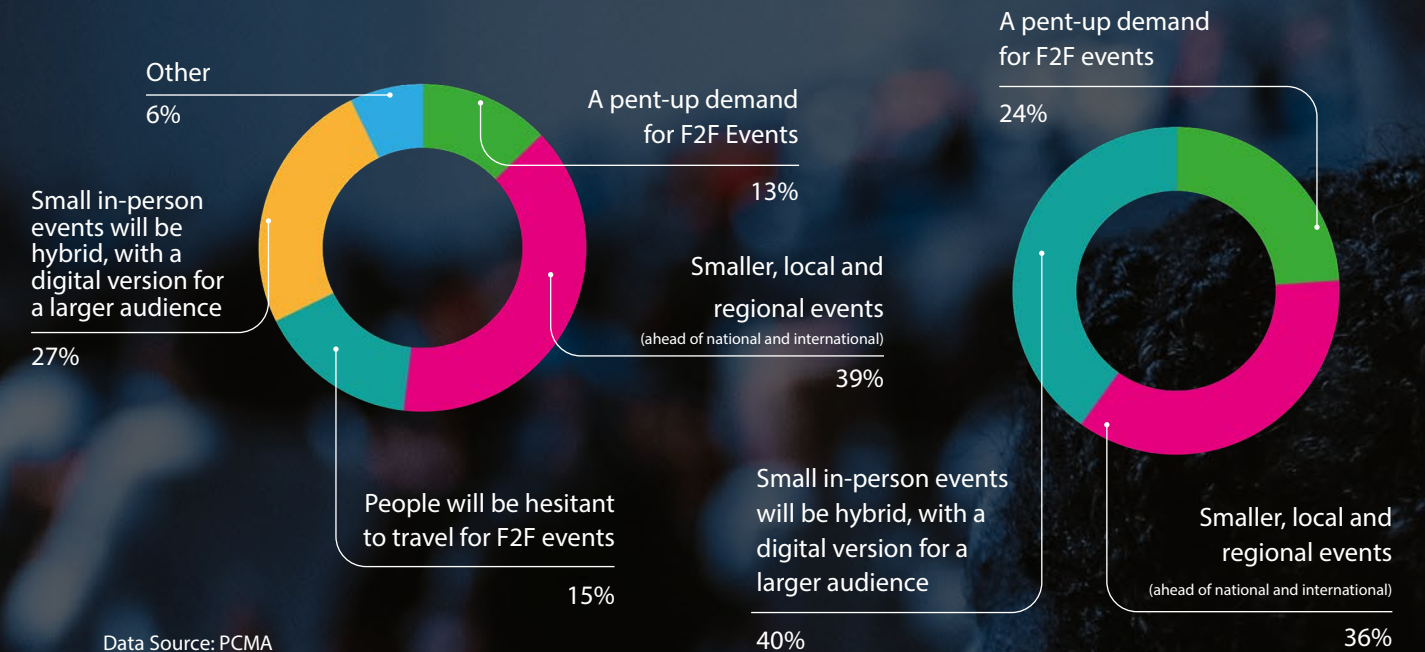


## Asia

Released in July 2020, the PCMA Convene COVID-19 Survey focused squarely "on the APAC region, including Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia, China, India, Korea, and Japan."<sup>4</sup>

The survey's participants included 531 event industry professionals comprising of 342 planners

and 189 suppliers. Although some responses did widely vary, "more than 65 percent - of planners said that the use of digital-event technology will highly impact or extensively impact their face-to-face attendance at events in the next six months"<sup>ibid</sup> but this percentage dropped to 51% when considering 2021 events.



Perhaps Singapore, a longstanding leading destination for international business events and home to several tech startups, is the best APAC example with regard to quickly adapting to an online model. In fact, at the onset of the pandemic, several of these startups went straight to work, assisting their customers with a shift from live to virtual events. Jublia, an events engagement platform that offers live, virtual, and hybrid option, puts this impressive response management into perspective.

When the pandemic hit and a ban on mass gatherings was imposed, Jublia had already planned over 400 high-level business meetings but the company responded quickly and decisively. "Nearly all of the pre-planned meetings took place virtually without a hitch"<sup>5</sup> according to Jublia's Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Errol Lim.

## Western Europe

According to Rachel Parker, Director at the Association of Event Venues, "[c]onferences are worth £11 bn to the UK economy."<sup>6</sup> However, Western Europe is not exempt from the global pivot toward virtual events. Although this trend was already happening, the pandemic has certainly accelerated the shift. We see this in the European auto retail industry, for example, and its shift toward digital retailing. As Jonathan Goodman, Managing Director of Polestar UK states, the COVID-19 lockdown "showed us that the route toward digital is coming and it is coming fast."<sup>7</sup>

In fact, we see this trend across virtually all Western European industries including legal, finance, learning and development, and more. From religious, military, and sporting events, to scientific conferences, award ceremonies, conventions, conferences, and trade shows, Western Europe is definitely witness to an immediate about-face shift to online gatherings. The waitlist for Hopin, for example, a virtual event hosting platform headquartered in London, (UK) grew "from 10,000 to well over 100,000"<sup>8</sup> in just March 2020 alone.



## What the Future Holds Near Future

Perhaps the Sapphire Now event run by SAP, a German multinational software corporation, and the TransformHER conference run by LinkedIn offer two of the greatest examples of how virtual events now require increased language support.

As the events industry quickly adopts new technologies to ensure inclusive experiences for all, Wayne Kurtzman, Social and Collaboration Research Director at IDC offers some prudent advice:

'Looking ahead, virtual events are people's new "real world" events...To succeed, make sure attendees have easy ways to engage with each other, the organizers,

and [the] speakers. Use platforms that were meant for the purpose and prepare the platform, your social team, and support teams.'<sup>10</sup>

As the world's industries move to virtual conferences, audience attendance and participation will arguably become even more globally inviting, increasing the need for language services.

## What the Future Holds For the Foreseeable Future

Even once a COVID-19 vaccine has been approved and is vastly available to all corners of the globe, virtual meetings are expected to remain. Although there will be a gradual return to in-person meetings and conferences, the hybrid model, offering both virtual and in-person options will likely continue for the foreseeable future. So, how will language services continue to fit in to this current and future scenario?

COVID-19 has impacted the language services industry in a number of marked ways. With a shift to remote internal and external meetings, there has likewise been a sudden - and drastic - increase in requests for remote interpreting.

The industry is also witness to the intensified race for advanced technology, the need for extremely robust

and organised networks of linguists, and the need for increased, diversified language services. What this truly boils down to - at least in the short run - is heightened competition.

And, in an industry that is already fragmented, language services providers (LSPs) that can check all the above boxes will undoubtedly rise to the top.

# Bespoke Language Services

As a tech-enabled LSP that injects an authentic human element into all we do, Global Lingo provides the best multilingual solutions to our customers.

From eConference interpreting and translation to transcription and live captioning, our bespoke language services will be sure to meet - even exceed - your eConferencing needs. We are one of the world's leading consultants of language solutions, enhancing our clients' businesses and helping you achieve your global goals. We are Global Lingo, and we are passionate about what we do.

Planning an upcoming event? Whether you require language services for your in-person, virtual, or hybrid conference, partner with Global Lingo and trust in our bespoke language services. Together, let us make your future conference a smashing success. Connect with us today.

*One benefit of going virtual is attracting a wide audience. While 70% of Sapphire Now delegates usually come from North America, for the virtual version SAP created 14 local events in various languages and time zones, with regional heads addressing their relevant markets.<sup>9</sup>*

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*Microsoft-owned LinkedIn also found a greater audience for its TransformHER conference when it moved online in June... [Keynote speakers] would usually be speaking in front of 350 to 400 in-person attendees at LinkedIn's San Francisco office, but this year, hosting the event online meant it could reach people in places such as Morocco, the U.K. and Kenya.<sup>ibid</sup>*



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