Subtitling every programme –
the journey to 100%

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Red Bee Media – who we are

• The BBC subtitling department from 1982-2005

• Sold by the BBC in 2005, we remain their exclusive supplier

• We also supply Channel 4, UKTV and Five among others

• Access Services operations across the UK and Australia

• Operation in Paris since January 2007, supplying M6 and LCP
History

• 1979 - UK’s first programme is subtitled
• 1982 – BBC starts to subtitle regularly
• 1986 – BBC’s first live programme is subtitled
• 1990 – BBC’s first live news programme is subtitled
• 1999 - BBC make commitment to 100% by 2008
• 2000 – BBC starts to use sign language interpretation and audio description on some of its programmes
• 2001 – Speech recognition introduced on live subtitling
• 2008 – 100% on all seven BBC networks will be reached
  – 50,000 hours of subtitling
  – 4,000 hours of audio description
  – 2,000 hours of visual signing
UK context

• There are now 91 regulated channels in the UK
• Regulation covers subtitling, sign language interpretation and audio description and is based on audience share
• In April 2008, as well as 100% subtitling on BBC programmes, 5% will have sign language interpretation, and 10% will carry audio description
• It has taken a long time to get from 0% to 100%
• Other countries may need to achieve this more quickly
Production

- Red Bee Media produces over 50,000 hours of subtitles per year
- We produce over 20,000 hours of live subtitling – over 50 hours per day
- We use a variety of production techniques
- Pre-recorded subtitling
  - automation tools
- Live subtitling
  - stenography
  - speech recognition
  - prepared live
- Red Bee’s expertise: resource planning and workflow
Quality

- Quality means different things to different people
- Quality has meant different things at different points on the journey
- Quality can be defined as:
  - The presence (or not) of subtitles
  - Textual accuracy
  - Contextual accuracy
  - Synchronicity or delay
- Ideal vs achievable
- The last dimension is cost – reasonable production cost is what enables broadcasters to provide large volumes for the audience
100% means you have to...

- find production methods for very large volumes
- subtitle some very difficult programmes
- balance audience expectations with affordability
- keep talking to the audience and managing expectations
- recruit, train and retain a large number of suitably skilled people
- be expert in operational management and resource planning
100% is possible...

- 100% is not the end of the journey
- Challenges remain:
  - Improving quality – this becomes the focus of the debate once volume is there
  - Making subtitles work in digital world
  - Providing access to new media – IPTV, mobile, HD
- “Access” is not an absolute – 100% is possible now