

Subtitling every programme – the journey to 100%

**David Padmore, Head of Operations,
Access Services, Red Bee Media**



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

