

INTERPRETYPE – ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

What is Interprettype?

Interprettype®, also known as an ITY™, is an interactive communication system that provides a means of communicating without using speech. It was originally designed as a tool to connect the non-signing hearing community with the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech disabled community. Applications have since been expanded to accommodate a variety of different circumstances. Some of which include non-verbal communication for police and military use, medical solutions for intubated patients, and language translation utilizing Interprettype's optional Spanish translation module. Since it is a typing device, there are no additional skills needed other than the ability to type and understand a common written language.

Interprettype® consists of a pre-programmed laptop style computer device which has the ability to send and display typed messages to other ITY™ devices or a computer. Once you log on, you have the ability to have a conversation by simply reading and typing. Each Interprettype® device is configured to communicate directly with any Windows PC utilizing Interprettype® software. This allows Interprettype® to become a computer peripheral device for communicating with the user of any workstation. It also gives the user the ability to capture and print conversations if desired.

User friendly. Customer friendly. Deaf friendly. The Interprettype® system is designed for non-verbal face-to-face communication. Each device is smaller than a standard laptop computer yet utilizes a full size keyboard for speed and accuracy in typing. The screen is relatively small and has a low profile that enables users to maintain eye contact for a more personal interaction.

Interprettype® is configured to communicate through a single cable and can be plugged in to any standard outlet or powered by the supplied rechargeable batteries. This allows Interprettype® plenty of versatility regarding placement in any business, government or educational environment. They will accommodate virtually any sales counter or professional desk. Because they are so portable, users can pack or unpack a pair of devices in about 20 seconds.

History of Interpretype®

Improving customer service was the premise on which Interpretype was developed. In an effort to improve the level of service in his auto repair shop, Ken Gan listened carefully to the requests of his front line employees. In March of 2002, his staff requested a better way to communicate with their Deaf and hard-of-hearing customers. When conversations turned technical, pen and paper proved inadequate. After nine months of research and development, Mr. Gan invented an extremely flexible solution for instantaneous face-to-face communication. He named his device Interpretype, or ITY™ for short, and deployed it at his Mechanical Service counter and in his Collision estimating office. As a result, Interpretype has proven to be so effective in promoting clear communication that his shop has seen a tenfold increase among Deaf customers.

Realizing the demand for his product early in the research stage, Mr. Gan created a company by the same name, Interpretype, LLC. He then sold his first units commercially in January of 2003. Since then, Interpretype has rapidly become a significant communication tool for organizations that want to maximize their human value within the organization, as well as providing extraordinary service through the use of this assistive technology. Some of the first customers to embrace Interpretype were colleges and universities. ITY™ devices are now being used by schools across the U.S. Rochester Institute of Technology which houses the National Institute for the Deaf has over 30 Interpretypes on campus.

Since the first successful implementation at Mr. Gan's auto repair shop in Rochester, New York, many organizations have provided their front line employees with Interpretype to improve customer service. Interpretype can now be found across the country in banks, grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, libraries, hospitals, government agencies and colleges and universities. Anywhere instant face-to-face communication needs to take place, Interpretype can help.

Interpretipe® is quickly becoming the technology of choice among many schools, colleges and universities that need an instant communication solution. Providing equal access to students and faculty that are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing presents many challenges both inside and outside the classroom. Interpreters, CART operators, note takers and internet classrooms are all valuable resources being utilized by schools. But until recently, there was no easy way to instantly communicate between hearing people and Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing people. With the advent of Interpretipe®, instant communication is now possible all over college campuses.

Perhaps the best example of a university that has seen dramatic success with Interpretetype® is Rochester Institute of Technology. RIT has the National Institute for the Deaf (NTID) on its campus. This college combines 1200 Deaf and Hard of Hearing students with 15,000 hearing students. This creates a tremendous communication challenge throughout the campus. Nearly everywhere, face to face communication between Deaf and hearing students, faculty and administrators needs to take place. Although there are nearly one hundred sign language interpreters on staff, thousands of hours go uninterpreted each semester.

RIT has looked to Interpretetype to help solve this problem. There are over 30 Interpretetype® communication systems on campus. They are being used in a variety of situations.

Here is a summary of how RIT is utilizing them:

Campus Safety uses Interpretetype® at their security office and night window to communicate with Deaf students about parking regulations, security issues and safety in general.

Housing operations has Interpretetype® in two different offices so the staff can help students instantly with dormitory issues such as lost keys, or to report a problem or maintenance issue.

RIT Registration uses Interpretetype® at their registration windows to communicate with Deaf students during registration week, or to help them change classes or adjust their schedule.

Financial Aid utilizes Interpretetype® to help Deaf students with loan and payment questions they may have about their student loans. They also use them for private conferences with students about their finances.

The Wallace Library uses Interpretetype® at both the reference desk and at the checkout desk. Since the library employs both Deaf and hearing students, Interpretetype® is used two ways; Deaf employees use it to communicate with hearing students, and hearing employees use it to communicate with Deaf students.

The College of Business purchased three Interpretetype® systems to use in a variety of ways. Interpretetype® is used by some Administrative Assistants to help Deaf students. They also have pairs of ITY™ devices that students can borrow to use during visits to their professors during office hours. The students requested the latter use due to the fact that once an interpreter leaves the classroom, the Deaf student cannot schedule an interpreter to assist him/her with a visit to the teacher. Now the student can take a pair of Interpretetypes® and use them to get help during office hours.

The Medical Center uses Interprettype® to communicate with Deaf students instantly. Although the Medical center has an interpreter on staff, sometimes the privacy that Interprettype® offers is preferable to Deaf students wishing to take advantage of it. It may be also be used for very short interactions just to let the Deaf patient know that an interpreter has been paged for them or to ask if they need ice or a wheelchair.

RIT Testimonial:

"I am writing from Wallace Library at RIT to tell you what a wonderful addition Interprettype has been to our operation. We have several hundred students in the Library everyday from RIT and NTID and Interprettype has been a wonderful aid in communicating with our deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons. It was disheartening in past years to ask our patrons to write everything down for us so that we could communicate. Now the students walk in and see that we have Interprettype and most of them know just what to do. That tells me that this device is catching on around campus and that the students and staff appreciate it. Thank you for aiding us in better serving and communicating with our patrons."

Laura DiPonzio Heise
Coordinator of Student Employees

The Future of Interprettype

Interprettype has a great deal of potential that is not readily apparent. In addition to helping Deaf and hearing individuals communicate, it is being used for non-verbal communication in police and military applications. Hostage negotiation teams are beginning to use ITY™ devices for internal silent communication. Hospitals are looking at Interprettype to solve communication issues with intubated (ventilated) patients. Interprettype can also be used by audiologists to help their patients who have lost their ability to speak.

Finally, Interprettype has developed a language translation module. When connected to a Windows PC, the Interprettype Translation Module enables a Spanish speaking person to communicate accurately and instantly with an English speaking person. Conversations can be saved and printed in either language. Other languages plan to be developed depending on demand.

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