

Training subtitlers in-house or outsource? A calculation example.

In 1999, I became chief editor of starting-out subtitling company Broadcast Text Amsterdam, and with that subtitling teacher as well. Dozens of people I trained and showed the ropes. Many of them sooner or later dropped out and went on to other jobs than subtitling.

Our distance-learning subtitling course evolved from that period, which makes the present situation quite different from that of Broadcast Text International in Amsterdam at the time. Subtitling companies now have a choice: train newbies in-house or let them follow a distance-learning subtitling course that has proven its value.

The disadvantages of a test

One can make a test and select strictly when hiring new subtitlers-to-be, but this has its disadvantages. A good test may give a clear answer about the skills of candidates, but it doesn't provide information about talent for and affinity with the art of subtitling, let alone about qualities like dedication, patience, the ability to concentrate. Only after a longer period of time one will find out whether candidates possess these essential qualities. That's why a test does not prevent later drop-outs. And drop-outs are lost investments.

The ultimate test: a distance-learning subtitling course

Instead of training subtitlers-to-be in the office, you can let them do a distance-learning course, ours for instance. It's interesting to compare the two methods. Immediately a few advantages of the distance-learning course stand out: you know exactly what the costs will be. You won't invest in the less talented, who are most likely to drop out at later stages. Besides, the overall costs will be substantially lower. If you consider a distance-learning course as a test, the advantages become even more obvious.

Clearly, every case is different. But any company planning to train more than, say, 2 subtitlers, would do well to utilize this webpage, make their own calculation and then choose the best option.

The calculation example

For this comparison between training in-house and distance-learning course, I chose a duration of three months, which proved to be the ideal period to acquire the basic subtitling skills, and for 10 students to make differences between both options clearly visible. With 10

students, it's reasonable to have one full-time trainer for the in-house students. The in-house students will practise 20 hours per week, spread out over de week, under supervision of the trainer and will not receive any pay.

Costs of the in-house training:

- Trainer € 35,- per hour
- Students: no fee
- Further costs (not calculated in the example)
 - hardware and software
 - workplaces
 - coffee/tea
 - any hours the management will spend on the project

Costs distance-learning costs:

10 x € 300,- Euro (3 strategic feedbacks by our expert included).

Calculation example: training 10 subtitlers-to-be

In red: negative points in the traject **In green:** positive points

The distance-learning course

In-house

months	Activities / info	costs	Activities / info	costs
1	Installation / reading introduction files by themselves Practising phase 1 (specific focusses) Exchanging via discussion group Supervision + feedback 1 Drop-outs: 2	10 x € 300,- (supervision included) € 3000,-	Showing candidates the ropes Practising at will Supervision at will The weakest getting the most attention Drop-outs: 2	1 Supervisor 30 hours per week € 3600,-
2	 Drop-outs: 2	No costs	 Drop-outs: 2	1 redacteur/begeleider 20 uur per week € 2400,-
3	 Drop-outs: 1	No costs	 Drop-outs: 2	1 redacteur/begeleider 15 uur per week € 1800,-
4 - 6	Drop-outs: 0		Drop-outs: 1	
7: Result:	4 well-motivated subtitlers Used to working independently		3 well-motivated subtitlers Familiar with house rules	<i>Not-calculated costs:</i> Hardware & software Workspaces Coffee/tea Spend management hours
	Total costs, nett:	€ 3000,-		€ 7800,-

Explanation

<p>The distance-learning course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is much cheaper ○ will mean less drop-outs after the course period (the fact that the newbies had to go it alone, which is more difficult than going along with colleagues in a department, makes it less likely that they will drop out after the training period). 	<p>Training in-house:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is more expensive (+ the not-calculated costs) ○ will mean slightly more drop-outs after the course (the fact that newbies have been led personally all the time, makes it more likely that they continued because of social reasons and will drop out finally after the training period (this is reflected in the example with 1 more drop-out)
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Conclusions of this calculation example

1. For an effective training trajectory, saving costs and efforts, outsourcing to a distance-learning course is by far the best solution
2. Causes:
 - a. the clever course material
 - b. the strategic feedbacks
 - c. the experience and effectiveness of feedbacks and supervisor
 - d. the independence of the distance-learning course students
 - e. the smaller investment in later drop-outs.

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