Caption Software vs. Captioning Service – which is best for me?

Closed captioning products MacCaption and CaptionMaker allow you to easily author, edit, encode and repurpose video captions for television, web and mobile delivery. Utilizing exclusive e-Captioning™ technology, MacCaption (for Mac) and CaptionMaker (for Windows) simplify the process of complying with FCC regulatory requirements, enabling greater access to broadcast content for television, online and mobile viewers.

Introduction

In the past, bringing closed captioning in-house wasn't feasible for many organizations due to the high cost of the hardware and software required—not to mention the specialized training needed to run the system. Recent advances in affordable and easy-to-use closed captioning software encoders have made it possible for anyone to create their own closed captions, right from their NLE system. These advances have eliminated the need for expensive hardware and put closed captioning skills within the reach of content providers.

However, most organizations still hire a caption service provider to handle all of their captioning needs. With cost effective captioning software available, why would organizations want to use a captioning service?

The Case for Captioning Service

The main reason to use a captioning service is if you need closed captioning infrequently. Why invest the time and money in a software product if you'll only be using it periodically? And, some organizations simply do not have the time or resources to devote to captioning, so they prefer to outsource this service. Additionally, if you have a project with particularly complex captioning requirements, hiring a captioning service can save you frustration and even costly mistakes.

The Case for Captioning Software

Closed captioning software has never been easier to use. In fact, most people are ready to begin creating their own captions after just a 30-minute training session. Advances in end-user software workflows are helping to reduce the complexity of closed captioning. Now, it is practical for most editors with modest NLE systems to do their own captioning – even in HD.

Even if you use a service for some of your captioning needs, having the ability to edit and convert closed captions in-house can be extremely useful. For example, if you need to make a last-minute edit or correction, you will be able to do so without having to wait several days for the service company to make a new captioned master. If you need multiple versions of a program for different markets, you can have the service company do the bulk of the captioning work, and make the small changes yourself, without incurring additional fees.

Using software will also allow you to re-use and convert closed captions you have done on past projects. For example, if you want to take a captioned tape from your library and re-master it for the web, DVD or Blu-ray, you can convert the closed captions on the master into captions or subtitles for virtually any other delivery method.

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A Note on Transcription

When you caption a video, you need a transcript for each of your videos. The bulk of the closed captioning work occurs in the transcription step, during which the dialogue and audio cues of the program have to be entered as text. This step is very labor-intensive. Having a script can drastically cut down the time required for this step.

The Best of Both Worlds

Many organizations can benefit from a hybrid approach, using a captioning service and also having access to captioning software. You can outsource the labor-intensive parts of the process such as transcription, while still enjoying the advantages of having access to closed captioning software in-house. For example, this allows you to caption large digital media files at your facility without having to upload huge files via the Internet. Also you can make last minute changes and corrections without having to go back through a third party.