



A MULTILINGUAL VIRTUAL EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

Factors to consider when planning a multilingual
virtual event

[Abstract](#)

An event organizers guide to planning successful multilingual virtual events

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Introduction

ZipDX Multilingual enables virtual meetings using simultaneous interpretation. A successful event that delivers a satisfactory experience for all participants requires advance planning and attention to detail. This Guide will help to gather the information necessary to engage the right human and technical resources.

Key Parameters Questionnaire:

- 1) When will the event take place (date / time / timezone)?
- 2) How long will it last (give a range if uncertain)?
- 3) If it is a recurring event, with what frequency?
 - a. How far in advance are meeting dates/times fixed?
- 4) How many participants are you expecting (indicate a range if you do not have exact numbers)?
 - a. In North America?
 - b. In Europe?
 - c. In South America?
 - d. In Asia/Pacific?
 - e. If you have details by country, that's helpful
- 5) What languages are required?
- 6) Indicate which of the following modes are applicable to your meeting:
 - a. Conversational (all participants free to talk back and forth)
 - b. Lecture (one or a few presenters giving prepared remarks – indicate language(s))
 - c. Question-and-answer from the audience
 - d. Participation managed by a moderator (individuals recognized and speaking in turn)
- 7) How will the list of participants be established?
 - a. The meeting organizer has a specific list of invited/planned participants
 - b. Guests will sign up to participate ahead of time after the meeting is announced
 - c. Meeting access information will be published and anybody can join at meeting time
- 8) Do you (or will you) have connection details ahead of time for each participant:
 - a. Email Address
 - b. Telephone number(s)
 - c. Preferred Language
 - d. Name
 - e. Affiliation (Company / Organization)
- 9) Are you confident that those doing most of the talking will connect using a high-quality headset or headset with a fixed line telephone?
- 10) Will any single connection serve more than one participant (e.g., a conference room)?
 - a. If so, will all parties on each connection be listening and talking in the same language?
- 11) What is the topic of discussion? Will it involve specialized terminology?
- 12) Do you have your own interpreter(s) for this event? If yes:
 - a. Are they qualified in simultaneous interpretation?
 - b. Have they been trained and are they equipped to use the ZipDX platform?
 - c. Are you planning any relay interpretation? In which direction(s)?
- 13) Do you have your own facilitator / moderator for the meeting?

- a. What language(s) does this person speak?

Web Engagement

The following questions apply if you are planning to have a web component to your meeting:

- 14) Have you selected a specific web conferencing platform?
 - a. If so, which one (WebEx, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting)?
 - b. Do you already have the necessary subscription and training for this tool?
- 15) Do you plan to offer a “listen-only” capability over the Internet? If so, in how many languages?
- 16) Do you expect to take questions from the audience via text chat? Do you have resources to translate these questions?
- 17) Will you be showing PowerPoint or other materials? If so, do you expect to have a separate set of materials for each language?

Video Engagement

The following questions apply if you are planning video (images of participants):

- 18) Do you plan to use an existing in-house video conferencing system? If so, describe it (manufacturer, model, architecture, locations to be used for this meeting).
- 19) Do you plan to use individual webcams? For some or all of the participants?
- 20) Do you have specific desires regard which cameras will be visible under what circumstances? (In other words, the current speaker will always be visible, or all participants will always be visible, or most of the time slides will be visible but the speaker will be shown occasionally, etc.)
- 21) Do you have an existing system in mind and available to support webcams?

Minimizing Risks

The more technology is involved in the meeting, the more likely something is to go wrong. The most straightforward meetings will be those involving only an audio conference.

Sharing slides via the web

Adding a web component (to show slides) using is generally easy. ZipDX includes two forms of web-shared visuals; Web Sharing and Slide Show.

Web Sharing

Web sharing a tool that allows you to share all or part of your computer desktop in real-time during the event. The presenter must use the Chrome web browser. Participants access the shared material using a simple web link.

A web share shows the presenters material to everyone on the conference. Thus it works best if there is ONE set of slides to support all languages. This is practical if the slides contain pictures and graphs and charts (with legends, perhaps, in the applicable languages). It won't be practical if the slides are full of text.

Slide Show

Slide Show is a feature that requires that the slides have been translated, creating a set in each of the required languages. The various slide sets are uploaded to the ZipDX servers and associated with the conference for the event.

At event time everyone joining the web share will see the slides corresponding to their preferred language. Hosts have the ability to control the playout of the slides. As the host moves through the slides the participants view in all languages change as well.

If someone moves to a different language channel they will then see the slides appropriate for that language.

Other Web Conference Solutions

A ZipDX multilingual event can be run using common web conferencing services, such as WebEx, Adobe Connect or GoToMeeting. These services do not support multiple language channels, making it necessary to use a single common set of slides, or email the slides to the participants in advance of the event.

Nor do such services support multilingual audio. That makes it simplest, and most reliable, to use ZipDX for all of the audio requirements of the event. All participants should join the event by telephone, or the ZipDX web phone.

Trying to use a web conferencing tool's VoIP technology in combination with a ZipDX multilingual conference call is advisable only if ALL participants using VoIP are speaking the same language. Even then, it can be problematic as the quality of many VoIP systems is not adequate for simultaneous interpretation.

Participants LISTENING (only) via VoIP is safer because that won't impact the interpreter's ability to perform. Usually only a single language can be available for VoIP listeners. Those needing to listen in an alternate language and those planning to speak should connect by telephone.

Video

Deploying video is a further complication. Video conferencing systems do not support multiple audio channels. Video requires significantly more bandwidth than audio, and may not be practical in certain geographies. Participants that attempt to send video under insufficient bandwidth conditions may compromise their audio and disrupt the meeting. Some organizations find that video is a distraction and it is better to focus on the audio and, if applicable, graphical content of the meeting. However, with proper planning, preparation and testing, video certainly can play a role in a multilingual meeting.

Examples

The following examples are typical of the different types of multilingual events that have actually occurred using the ZipDX multilingual platform.

Interview

- One or a few interviewers, all speaking English, engage in a series of interviews with doctors in different locations.
- Each doctor is a non-English speaker.
- The interviews are scheduled for successive days at times convenient to the experts based on their time zones.
- Each interview is planned for 30 to 45 minutes.
- At meeting time, ZipDX is programmed to call;
 - a. The interviewers (they could all be in the same room, or in separate locations)
 - b. The expert
- The appropriate interpreter(s) connects via the ZipLine 3.0 web phone
- The interpreters are provided with the interview guide ahead of time to allow familiarization with the vocabulary.
- The interviewers are programmed to go into the English channel.
- The expert is connected to the alternate language channel.
- They converse back and forth via the interpreter.

Project Meeting

- A cross-border diplomatic working group has monthly telephone meetings to discuss progress and resolve issues involving an ongoing project.
- At meeting time, ZipDX calls each of the 20 participants
 - a. They also have the option of dialing into an in-country telephone number.
 - b.
- The interpreter and the meeting organizer are connected 5 minutes early, so they are ready to greet the others as they arrive.
- Once the group is assembled, the interpreter places the conference in interpretation mode.
 - a. Some participants are bilingual and elect to listen to the floor channel, rather than listening to the interpreter;
 - b. Others are placed automatically into the appropriate language channel.
- Although all microphones are open, the organizer insures that order is maintained (similar to a single-language conference).
- Meetings typically last about an hour and are handled by a single interpreter comfortable with the team and familiar with the topic.
- Sometimes one or more participants will share their screen with others to present slides or show an application.

Board of Directors Meeting

- A multinational organization has two groups of board members, each preferring a different language. (Think of a Canadian company operating in French and English, or a US company with

English and Spanish-speaking directors, or perhaps Airbus in French and German or Alcatel-Lucent in French and English.)

- The board meets every two months, and certain subcommittees have their own meetings.
- These audio-only meetings are similar to the Project Meeting just described; the board secretary usually distributes some notes or slides ahead of time via email, in both languages.

Investor Call

- Every quarter, a Brazilian company hosts an investor call shortly after announcing its earnings.
- Ahead of the telephone meeting, a written press release is distributed in Portuguese, English and Spanish.
- Investors and analysts are invited to join the teleconference at a specified date and time, and are given different entrance codes to use depending on their language preference.
- Fifteen minutes before meeting time;
 - a. ZipDX dials the company's Investor Relations officer who serves as the moderator.
 - b. Two interpreters join via the ZipLine 3.0 web phone (one working between English and Portuguese, the other between Spanish and Portuguese).
- The company executives join from a conference room shortly thereafter.
- Others dialing in hear music-on-hold until the IR officer uses the ZipDX dashboard to start the meeting; at that time, they move to their respective language channels but are muted and cannot be heard.
- The executives give their briefing.
- The audience is invited to press *1 to ask a question; the IR officer recognizes them one at a time and they are individually unmuted.
- If a question is from an English speaker, the Spanish interpreter works from the Portuguese interpretation.
- References are made to the figures in the press releases previously distributed.
- Each of the language channels is recorded and the company makes the recordings (in English, Spanish and Portuguese) available afterward for download on its web site.
- Each meeting lasts 30 to 45 minutes and typically has 40 to 60 participants from North and South America.

Company Training

- A Canadian agricultural products company has representatives located round the globe.
- Several times a month, it conducts training, typically clustered by geography due to time-zone and geography considerations.
- One class might be held for Asia-Pacific in English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese; another class might cover Europe and Africa in English, German, French and Spanish; a third for the Americas in English, Spanish and Portuguese.
- Rosters are updated for each scheduled class, and ZipDX calls participants at meeting time.
- Ten minutes prior to meeting time the interpreters join via the ZipLine 3.0 web phone.
- A company trainer, speaking English, presents materials (primarily charts and graphs with multilingual labels) using a corporate web-conferencing tool.

- Those listening can interrupt to ask questions, but the trainer also monitors the ZipDX on-line dashboard, which identifies each connected participant, to look for raised hands (participants pressing *1).
- He also calls on individuals explicitly to engage them.
- All the interpreters work to and from English, using that as the relay language when necessary.
- Most sessions are scheduled for 45 minutes and are covered by a single interpreter in each language, but occasional longer sessions use two interpreters per language.

Product Announcement

- The same Canadian company also invites customers and prospects to participate in new product announcement meetings.
- Email invitations are sent by the company in advance to a company-maintained list in each invitee's preferred language.
- The company also makes a web page available announcing the event (in each of the planned languages).
- These meetings are conducted in a fashion similar to the training just described. However, participants can sign up in advance to be called, or they can dial in using specific codes for each language.
- The initial presentation is more formal and sometimes includes more than one presenter; participants are muted for this portion.
- During a Q&A session, participants are invited to raise their hands.
- A company facilitator helps the presenter(s) manage the meeting.

OTHER SCENARIOS

All of the above examples are purely virtual events, where the hosts, participants and interpreters are at different locations, connected via ZipDX. There are at least a few situations that have not been addressed here, but that can be considered on a case-by-case basis:

Remote Participation

An in-person conference (such as at the United Nations or UN Agency) takes place in a facility equipped for multilingual meetings. On-site interpreters do their jobs in soundproof booths. However, there is a desire to enable people not able to travel to participate remotely via the telephone.

Remote Interpretation

An in-person meeting is planned and some of the participants will not speak the primary language of the meeting. Simultaneous interpretation is desired, but it isn't possible or practical for interpreter(s) to travel to the venue.

Both of the above cases are hybrid events. Some participants are at a physical gathering, while others or the interpreters attend virtually. In both cases, special consideration will have to be given to the type of equipment available at the meeting venue, in addition to all of the other meeting parameters previously described.

