

Attracting and Hosting International Attendees

For many companies, hosting international meetings is essential to their business, and years of experience have made them pros. For others that host the first-time or occasional international, multi-cultural or multi-lingual event, it can feel like diving into deep waters without a life preserver.

The challenges arise, not only in attracting targeted attendees, but also in hosting them in a way that makes them feel welcome and accepted.

At Cheshire, we strive to address our clients' needs, even in those areas we outsource, so we spoke with Doug Dohr, Language Solutions Specialist at [JR Language Translation Services, Inc.](#) to get his advice relating to those organizations hosting international meetings or events in the many parts of this country where a significant percent of the population speaks languages other than English.

He first discussed the issue of how to more effectively attract attendees whose native language is not English.

“When you’re trying to attract an international clientele, the most important factor is to demonstrate multi-cultural acceptance and show they are welcome at your event,” Doug shared.

Key ways to do that include:

1. **Program Committee** – If you work with a committee to program your event, be sure it is representative of the population you anticipate will attend. Enlist committee members' assistance in identifying trends and speakers that would have a broad global appeal
2. **Promotional Materials** - Create conference promotional materials, a conference website page, and a registration page in the organization's native language, but also have key elements, presentations and registration information translated into the other language(s) of the countries from which you expect attendees to come. Have your promotional materials professionally translated. Do not use Google to translate them, or you may not look professional or interested in that international clientele if an error or misuse of a word arises. If you're going to translate the materials, have it done by a professional translation services company. They will select a professional translator who speaks the language natively, has expertise on the theme, and knows the cultural nuances of the target culture.
3. **Speakers** – Be sure to recruit speakers from the countries you anticipate will attend. This adds a deeper level of familiarity and connection to your conference for attendees from other countries, and allows you to leverage their marketing efforts to draw additional attendees to your conference.



4. **Partnerships** – One excellent way to increase attendance and spark interest is to partner with organizations outside the U.S. (for international meetings) or in the communities to which you'll be traveling (for multi-lingual U.S. based meetings) to have stakeholders who are committed to helping build a dynamic multi-cultural event, have connections, and who also have a network within that community.

Once you've designed your event, and non-native English speaking attendees are coming, there are many things you can do to ensure they feel welcome.

1. **Conference Collateral** - Make event collateral multi-lingual. If you don't have the space or budget to *print* the materials in multiple languages, make them available online for attendees to access. Be sure they are translated by native speakers.
2. **24-Hour Clock** – It seems like a small thing, but it makes a significant difference. Since much of the world uses the 24-hour clock, indicating in the program that the reception starts at 7:00 PM/1900 ensures attendees' timely arrival and a feeling of inclusion.
3. **Simultaneous Interpretation** - Offer simultaneous interpretation for Keynotes and main presentations in the most predominant languages of the attendees. Ideally, there will be one booth per language, along with two interpreters. You'll also want to be sure the sessions are recorded for web use later.
4. **Subtitles** - Include subtitles in at least one additional language on videos, where possible, at least for key presentations.
5. **Registration/Concierge Staff** – When possible, use several multi-lingual registration staff members. If that is not possible, request a multi-lingual concierge. Yet another option is to set up an account with a legitimate interpretation service such as JR Language Translation Services, Inc., where attendees can call in on a toll-free line for interpretation assistance in their native language.
6. **Cross-cultural Training** - If possible, provide some cultural training to registration staff, especially as it pertains to speakers and key delegates.

Doug Dohr went on to caution, "Conference interpretation is only as good as the interpreters you hire. If you're using an interpretation service, try to be sure the interpreters have knowledge of the subject matter, and provide all materials to the interpreters in advance. After all, interpreters are performers, and they will perform better if they have time to prepare, and information to read and research, including the supporting material given about the conference.

Finally, one thing to remember about *all* attendees, but particularly those traveling from abroad: When people are "out of their element," and therefore, their comfort zone, they are at their most vulnerable. Whatever you can do to facilitate their comfort and make them feel at ease helps guarantee a positive customer experience and the success of your event,

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[JR Language Translation Services, Inc.](http://www.jrlanguage.com) goes the extra mile to ensure complete client satisfaction with their multilingual projects. Their professional translators are native speakers who have work experience in the industries for which they translate. Clients receive the highest quality translations with fast turnaround times at a fair market price. www.jrlanguage.com