

DATAMARK

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Recruiting and Retaining Professional Interpreters Translates to captured Market Share



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Phone and video language interpretation service scales rapidly using a Work-From-Home (WFH) model

Background

DATAMARK's client, the industry leader in over-the-phone interpreting, continued to pave the way by expanding into face-to-face, video, mobile, and telehealth services over recent years. After assessing the continued changes in demographics in the United States, where one-in-five U.S. residents speak a language other than English at home, it was determined that there was a growing need for in-person, phone, and video interpretation services in medical and business settings.

The challenge

To remain competitive in the marketplace, the world leader in phone interpretation services recognized that they required more qualified interpreters to meet the needs of a rapidly diversifying population. But finding adept interpreters who could both speak fluently and understand and communicate language nuances was a difficult challenge. The decision was made to expand the pool of qualified medical interpreters. This would allow the company to capture increased market share in this area.

Finding qualified applicants was only the first step. Ushering bilingual speakers through a rigorous four-week training program was the next hurdle. In the past, the company conducted its

own training, but this had absorbed valuable resources. Which in the end caused them to stray from their core competencies. They searched for a Contact Center and BPO provider to recruit and teach interpreters the skills to communicate sensitive information easily, fluently, and in a manner that generated customer trust. All the while also faced with the fact that complex medical terminology proved difficult for prospective interpreters.

Finally, the company also grappled with a dilemma that many other language and interpretation companies face—the ability to retain employees. Although early on, they provided a remote working option that was attractive to prospective employees, it wasn't what they expected. It became apparent that the sensitive nature of live medical interpretation and the intellectual and psychological strain caused early burnout. Resulting with most interpreters only remaining in the job for one to three years. This caused a brain drain and proved to have a very high human resources retention cost. A solution was necessary to prevent these highly trained employees from quitting.



The solution

In 2016 as the company began its quest to expand its pool of interpreters, it evaluated end-to-end BPO providers to find the right fit to outsource the recruiting, training, and retention of interpretation employees. They found DATAMARK and recognized that it excelled in many areas that would serve their growth needs.

For starters, DATAMARK's reliance on analytics and data to improve structure and processes consistently would allow them to grow their pool of interpreters thoughtfully yet aggressively. Furthermore, DATAMARK already had a proven track record in the trifecta of hiring, training, and retention of agents.

The Pilot Program

So, in 2016, DATAMARK got to work developing a pilot program to source, hire and train new interpretation employees. They started by gathering together senior business leaders, operations directors, and training managers who implemented a pilot program to collect data and intelligence to find areas of improvement.

Immediately, DATAMARK proposed a novel idea. Instead of looking for experienced interpreters, the company would find fluent bilingual speakers and train them to be interpreters. With that goal in mind, DATAMARK launched a pilot program in Mexico to find and train interpreters to the high standards of the phone interpretation industry.

DATAMARK identified that the company's interview, evaluation, and training process was difficult for many prospects, so they developed a successful pipeline program that ushered bilingual candidates through their rigorous training and testing program to graduate a higher number and higher caliber of interpreters.

The program successfully trained candidates to provide a customer-centric experience focused on high communication and cultural understanding while providing customers with a comfortable, stress-free translation experience.





Employee Retention

Once the four-week training was completed, DATAMARK made another change. They developed an on-site location to gauge how standardization impacted performance metrics and retention of the company's interpretation employees. To that end, DATAMARK built specially designed cubicles that provided more oversight, privacy, and standardized backgrounds. They also required all interpreters to wear company-branded shirts for a more professional presentation.

In addition, DATAMARK implemented its expertise in retaining employees over the long term. In the area of medical interpretation, where the company was seeing the most

growth, burnout among interpreters is exceptionally high, given the sensitive and emotional nature of medical video and call interactions. DATAMARK drew upon its proven retention and incentive programs to keep these highly trained employees happy over the long term.

The pilot program put into place by DATAMARK quickly grew to 200 interpreter hires in Mexico before expanding into India. Bringing operations into India came with the advantage of increasing the number of languages offered, and the transition to a work-from-home model for interpretation staff began in 2019.



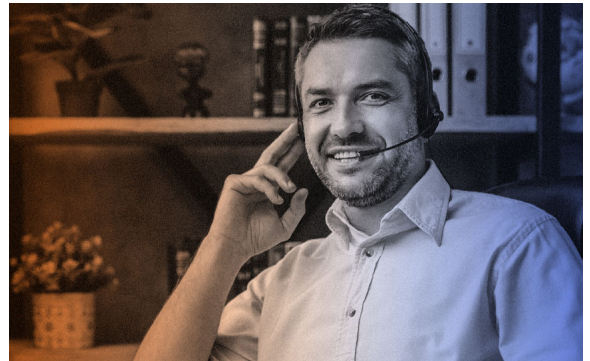


The Results

DATAMARK's dedication to honing the right BPO service for the company's very specialized needs has had resounding success. After a few years of proving training and incentive models produced positive results in hiring, training, and retaining of qualified employees, DATAMARK's methodologies were put to the ultimate test in 2020 when the COVID pandemic struck the planet. With plans already underway to pivot to a work-from-home model, DATAMARK expedited the transition and mobilized the company's workforce.

As working from home became a worldwide imperative and the number of video medical consultations skyrocketed, the medical patients and doctors served by interpreters were met with a unified, professional front that helped to put patients at ease. DATAMARK immediately put standardization protocols into place by replicating the privacy of the cubicle environment for all interpreters working from home. Each employee received a standardized backdrop for their home location and company-branded shirts for a professional appearance.

And thanks to the preparatory work done by DATAMARK's modeling, analytics, and pilot program, DATAMARK was able to double the company's interpretation capacity in short order quickly. The results have been nothing less than astounding, and the company saw record-setting volumes of interactions, with video and phone interpretations reaching 40 million interactions by the end of 2021.



Meeting the Demand

The number of qualified interpreters grew to meet this demand, starting with 20 qualified interpretation agents in 2016 to over 1,000 interpreters by the end of 2021—an almost 5,000% increase. Phone and video interpreters in Mexico and India now provide interpretation services in more than 20 of the most commonly spoken languages to people across 1,700 cities in the United States—all available through laptops, smartphones, and tablets.

2016 Pilot 2021

20 agents over 1,000 agents

1 language 17 languages

2 million calls per month 40 million calls per

DATAMARK and the company intend to keep this work-from-home model to attract qualified employees and to maintain the focus on a customer-centric organization. To ensure these highly-vetted and highly-skilled employees stay with the company, DATAMARK continues to recruit and usher employees through the training program to guarantee a high graduation rate.

Taking Care of The Employees

Programs and efforts to ensure employee retention remain a top priority. In addition to the work-from-home model, DATAMARK has spent a significant amount of time developing an attractive employee engagement and career development program to ensure employees see the value of remaining with the company.

To that end, DATAMARK has also implemented an extensive incentive program to keep employees motivated and retention high. Incentives have included reimbursements to help cover some of the costs accrued from working from home, so working from home doesn't cost employees any extra money.

Performance bonus incentives for medical interpreters are also in place to encourage the highest level of customer service. With video call interpretation services, where interpreters are often required to communicate sensitive and emotional news, metrics like accuracy in interpretation and matching the tone of the situation are used to determine these bonuses.

Finally, a savings plan is one incentive DATAMARK provides, where employer matching savings programs are not commonly seen. While U.S. employees have a 401K plan, in Mexico and India, where less than half the population has a savings account, an employer matching savings program helps encourage long-term saving efforts. It's just another way that DATAMARK stands above others in the marketplace to retain employees.

The relationship nurtured by DATAMARK is a clear example of the benefits and value of working with a trusted Contact Center and BPO company to achieve growth in market share. As DATAMARK continues improving its recruitment, training, and retention program, the company is poised to continue its dominance in language interpretation services well into the 21st century.





About DATAMARK

Founded in 1989, DATAMARK, Inc. is a leading mid-sized Contact Center and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) company headquartered in El Paso, Texas.

Small enough to care yet big enough to serve the world's leading brands, DATAMARK serves large enterprises and government agencies from its delivery centers in the U.S., Mexico, and India.

DATAMARK offers a wide range of BPO services designed to optimize and enhance the Customer Experience, including omnichannel, multilingual contact center services, document lifecycle management, loyalty program management, and finance & accounting outsourcing.

Headquartered in El Paso, Texas, DATAMARK employs over 2,700 people in its U.S., Mexico, and India facilities.

To learn more about our services and solutions, visit www.datamark.net.

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