



COURT REPORTERS – BECOMING A GREAT REALTIME COURT REPORTER

MAY 31, 2011

A San Diego court reporter I work with passed the California Certified Shorthand Reporter (CSR) test 18 months ago. She is a hard worker and has a great attitude. I am careful to give her work that won't be too difficult, and I am proud of her because she won't take a job (has declined to report a trial with possible daily rough drafts) because she is not sure she is ready and cares about her reputation with the clients.

In chatting with this court reporter, I found out that it takes her about five hours to scope 100 pages. Her theory was not a realtime theory (neither was mine). Here are my suggestions for this young court reporter:

1. Use smart prefixes and suffixes with your CAT software. About 10 years ago I deleted my main dictionary and started all over again because it was such a huge mess with over 250K entries. I had gone from globaling everything and anything to being a realtime court reporter, so my writing completely changed. I got out my Taber's Medical Dictionary and sat there for four hours inputting medical suffixes and prefixes. I suggest getting a prefix/suffix dictionary or website and input them into your main dictionary.
2. I offered to read one of the young court reporter's transcript before it was scoped or edited. I figure she will put in proper names and do some light editing on the fly, but the majority of the transcript won't be edited at the end of the day. The plan is she is going to send me the ASCII file to look over and see if there are any obvious globals or briefs that would save her time and be easy to incorporate into her writing.

I wish for all young court reporters to have someone they can ask the favor of to read a raw transcript for some ideas on writing smarter.

3. The latest versions of many CAT software systems give court reporters suggestions on what to brief during a deposition. If you are writing the same phrase over and over again, it is time to brief. Plus if you have created a brief for a phrase in the past, the CAT software will remind you



DISCOVERY
CONFERENCE CENTRE

of your old brief. For instance, I report quite a bit of securities litigation and have a lot of briefs that I might not need for six months or a year – and then voila, the phrase comes up (i.e., audit committee – AUBK), and I find myself trying to remember my brief. Let your CAT software remember your past briefs for you.

4. Get to depositions really early – 45 minutes early. Most of the time you will be allowed into the deposition room, and you will get a caption. Go through and start putting in the proper names. Then if you get a notice with the caption, look through the notice for other proper names, the type of litigation you will be writing (wage and hour or trademark, et cetera). Work on your job dictionary and create briefs for the type of litigation you will be writing that day.

Have a strong desire to be great. That is my best advice to young court reporters who want to become realtime court reporters. Don't hook in too early. Build your dictionary. Be methodical and patient. Your day will come, I promise.

Please leave any comments and/or advice for being a great realtime court reporter.



DISCOVERY

CONFERENCE CENTRE