

SCOPISTS

MAKE YOURSELF VALUABLE

By Linda Evenson

I recently received an email from a busy official who is looking for a scopist. In it, she said: “I need a reliable scopist to help me produce court proceedings transcripts.

Scopist must have CaseCAT software, be capable to create auto-indexing for appeals and civil trials. I prefer a scopist who is able to read steno in the event the audio isn’t optimum.”

I am so pleased that all the scopists I have trained have the skills necessary to do this job. Knowing all these skills will benefit the scopists by enabling them to make money, and it will benefit the reporters by saving them hours of time. I think it’s wise to know more than you might need to know, rather than not knowing something you may need.

One of my best and longest-term clients was a reporter I’ll call Joe; he owned a firm and was super busy. He wanted me to do his front and end pages and autoindexing, including checking exhibits for quotes. I could have said, “That’s not my job,” but I was willing to give Joe what he needed because his work was excellent, he was a pleasure to work with, and he never objected when I charged him for the extra time it took. I would have lost money if I would have turned my nose up at his requests and not taken him on as a client.

Joe once asked me to totally noteread a job for him. One of his reporters, who had died, had a job ordered up, and all they could find was her written notes. I trained it against another reporter’s dictionary, not knowing what I would get. It came out fairly well, actually. I was a bit nervous because I hadn’t totally noteread a job in a long time. Joe said the court reporter who had passed away was a good writer, though, and he wanted me to give it a shot. In the 40-page job, I was able to read every stroke but two. One was kind of funky, and he didn’t know what it was either, so he took it out; the other he was able



to figure out. My notereading skills saved him having to tie up one of his busy reporters in rewriting the job. He was pleased, he paid me well, and the attorneys were happy.

Since I took Case CATalyst training years ago and knew my software very well, Joe sometimes referred his reporters to me with questions, rather than having them call customer support. He had me redo formats for jobs referred from other agencies. I sometimes gave him suggestions on how to do things in CC that just made his job easier.

I have done autoindexing for clients who didn't even ask for it. Why? When they were through making corrections, all they had to do was hit a couple of keys and the index would build itself, including page numbers, saving them a lot of time. In the past years, I haven't worked with one reporter who wasn't a good writer. It's one of the few advantages I've found to getting older! I sometimes was a cheerleader for my clients when they took a tough job and felt really beat up. The

problem was usually with how the proceedings were run, not with how they wrote. Sometimes, if they had trouble keeping up, they would apologize to me, saying the job wasn't going to be good. The truth is, they kept up a lot better than they thought and the jobs were usually fine. To me, this is a sign of an excellent reporter.

These are values I always had, and I try to pass them onto my students. I believe reporting to be a stressful, difficult career, and I have always had the utmost respect for those who excel at it. My attitude was to do all I could to try to make things easier for my clients. I didn't

think anything was beneath me or not my "job." As I have often said, the scopist's job is whatever the reporter and scopist agree that it is. That belief has always served me, and my clients, well.

JCR Contributing Editor Linda Evenson is based in Stevensville, Mont. She can be reached at lindae@scopeschool.com.

I didn't think anything was beneath me or not my "job."