

# Transcription Essential: The Dangers of Playing 'Telephone'



## PLAYING 'TELEPHONE'

Whether you recall this game from your childhood, or have played it as an icebreaker at a training event or consulting retreat, the game of telephone is very simple to play. Players can sit in a circle or stand in a straight line, just as long as they are close enough to whisper a word or phrase from one to another without the next person in line hearing them. As the word or phrase passes from player to player, the assumption is that miscommunication will eventually produce a phrase that bears no relation to the original, often with hilarious results. However, for the [transcription](#) of professional material, such miscommunication would be anything but hilarious.

## A SERIOUS MESSAGE

Telephone can certainly help a group of former strangers to relax and work together at a training event, but the

underlying message of the game is far more serious. Simple miscommunication, whether it's a phrase that's misheard or a word that's misunderstood, can change the intent of a phrase and produce far-reaching consequences. The larger the circle, the greater the likelihood that the final phrase will bear no resemblance to the original. If we consider this in terms of [business transcription](#) or [academic transcription](#), the real danger is that a misunderstood phrase can produce a ripple effect as that phrase then permeates the rest of the audio or video file being transcribed.

## **ACCURACY IS CRITICAL**

For any overworked and under resourced manager, the temptation to get such transcription done as quickly and as cheaply as possible is understandable. Assessments as to the relative importance of the content remain with the client. Rushing to get the presentation notes from a recent user conference onto the web as quickly as you can, may lead you to value availability and price over accuracy. You may be successful in delivering on deadline, but any mistakes in industry-specific terminology, colloquialisms, or local vernacular, could come back to haunt the company in the future. Question and Answer sessions are especially susceptible to this. One wrong word can transform a phrase from speculative to definitive, and if actions are taken and budget dollars committed on the basis of that response, complications will definitely follow.

## **GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR**

The old adage: "you get what you pay for," is often used to compensate for the poor quality and performance of an inexpensive item. The same can be seen to apply to low-cost [freelance transcription work](#) from someone who was transcribing a podcast on vegan diets this morning but is available to transcribe your IT Conference presentation notes this

afternoon. Without the relevant industry experience, proven transcription capability, and in-house quality control processes that professional transcription services offer, you run the risk of having to settle for 'good enough' instead of 'accurate.'

Being cost-effective and offering quick turnaround times are definitely important criteria in selecting a professional [transcription service](#), but the accuracy of the work and the security of your corporate information must also be taken into account. Once that transcription is posted to your website or distributed to clients or prospects, it carries the official stamp of your company. Is average really going to be good enough?