

11

“MUST HAVES”

Characteristics to Consider

————— When Hiring a —————

TRANSCRIPTION COMPANY



Accurate Transcription Services at Affordable Rates

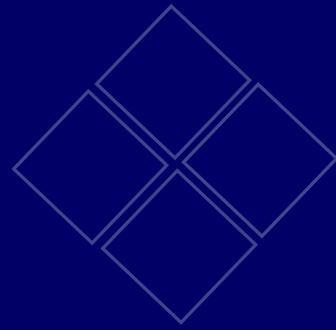


A common mistake when [selecting a transcription service](#) is assuming that the relative cost, transcription options, and features offered by each company are the only major differentiation factors. In fact, there are several other characteristics you should actively look for before committing to any transcription services provider.

The following are the “must have” characteristics of a good transcription company:

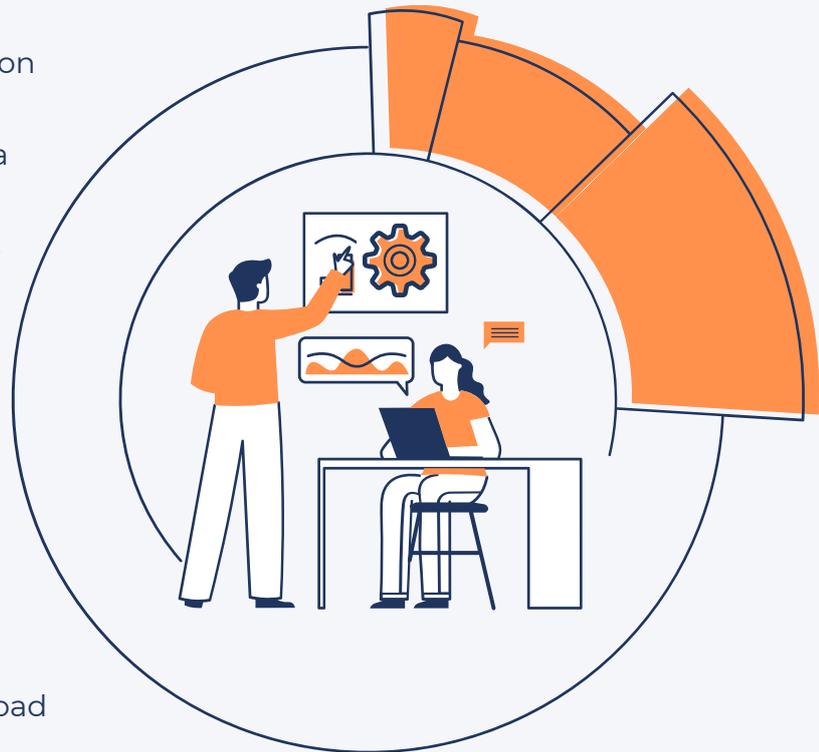
01

A clearly explained transcription process



You want to make sure that the transcription company has a well-defined process for receiving your file, assigning it to a transcriptionist, and sending you the transcript. A good transcription company will have the following as part of its process:

- ✓ **Secured FTP for file upload** – Submission of audio files for transcription and the return of finalized transcripts occur in a secured environment. The process should be as simple and convenient as possible.
- ✓ **Your own file folder that stores your voice files and transcripts** for easy access and reference.
- ✓ **Well defined file assignment for transcription** – find out how the file is assigned, how the company protects your privacy, and how transcribers upload your transcript. The system should be secured so that transcriptionists cannot see your real name or any other personally identifiable information.
- ✓ **Secured and easy process for sending you the transcript** – the company should inform you when the transcription is complete and let you pay for it to receive and download the transcript.
- ✓ **They check the quality of the transcripts received from transcriptionists** – good transcription companies will conduct a thorough, quality review and evaluation of each and every file before sending it back to you.
- ✓ **Accuracy and the correction process** – look for a process that guarantees accuracy (98%+ is the industry standard) via extensive proofreading prior to delivery of the final transcript.



02

Qualified pool of transcriptionists



A trustworthy transcription company will have a large number of qualified transcriptionists. Any company with less than fifty transcriptionists is a red flag. Find out more about their transcriptionists:

- ✓ **Experience** – Do they have experience in your area of business? Does the company employ transcriptionists with a depth of knowledge on subjects for which they are transcribing?
- ✓ **List of Clientele** - Examine each company's list of clients to be sure that they are working with other businesses in your field.
- ✓ **Transcriptionist Hiring Process** – Selective hiring and in-house training ensures that the transcription company has a pool of qualified transcriptionists. Many transcription companies simply outsource your work to other low-cost transcription companies.
- ✓ **Location** – Insist on U.S.- or Canada-based transcriptionists for the highest levels of accuracy.



03

Turnaround time options



A good transcription company will offer several options of standard turnaround times for transcripts, as well as custom turnaround needed by you.

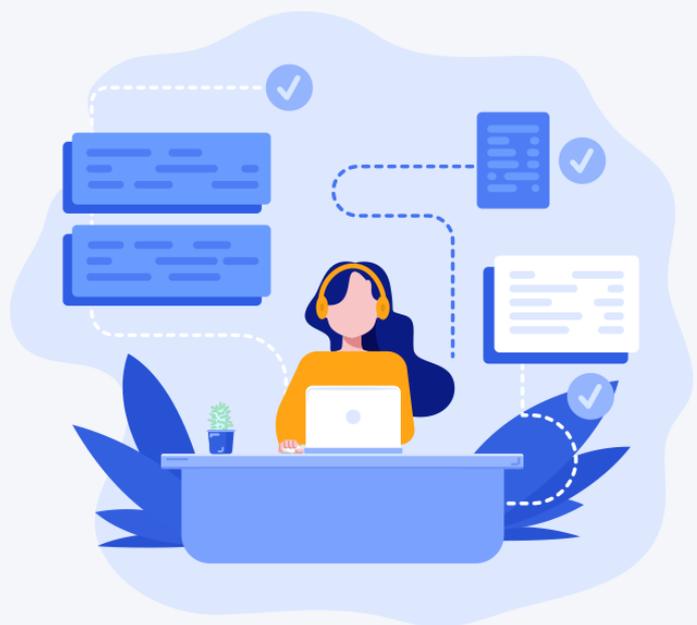


Typical standard turnaround times are:

- Same day
- 24 hours (next day)
- 3 to 5 days
- 1 to 2 weeks
- 2 to 4 weeks (for bulk orders)

Be sure to work with a transcription company that can deliver on short notice as well as offer discounts for extended deadlines. Be sure to inquire about lowering the standard fees for larger quantities of transcription work. Both of these types of discounts can save a lot of money in transcription costs over time.

It's not a bad idea to give a potential transcription company a test rush order to see how they will perform. You'll pay a little extra for it, but if rush jobs are common for your business, you'll know ahead of time whether the service can deliver quality transcriptions in a crunch.



04

Transparent and easy-to-understand billing



You should know the exact cost of transcription before you submit your voice file. A good transcription company will let you know the exact cost of the project immediately after you have uploaded your voice file into their system.

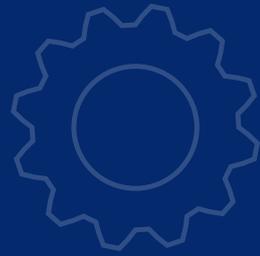
The most transparent billing systems charge by the minute on the recording to be transcribed. The client selects a delivery time, multiplies the minutes in the recording by the transcription rate, and knows in advance how much a transcription is going to cost. Knowing the cost of transcriptions beforehand eliminates surprises, allows for price comparisons, and helps with project budgeting.

Many institutions are used to paying by the line of transcript. If you want this option, then make sure that the company is clearly defining the number of characters per line and make sure that you are not charged for a line with 1-2 words. A well-defined fee would eliminate the standard transcription company trick of using larger font sizes to increase the number of lines of transcripts.

Ask for rates by minutes of recording to avoid surprises.

05

A clear explanation of how the transcription service handles difficult recordings



A difficult to transcribe recording includes speakers with heavy accents, multiple speakers talking over each other, or a low quality audio recording. Any of these issues can slow the transcription process and require additional charges.

The [best transcription services](#) will have a pre-set list of charges for difficult transcriptions as well as in-house methods for dealing with these issues, such as a pool of transcriptionists possessing familiarity with a variety of accents.

What Makes Audio Good or Difficult?



GOOD AUDIO	BAD AUDIO
Good Quality Microphone	Low Quality Microphone
Microphone in Proximity	Rapid/Unscripted Speech
No Accent	Thick Accents
No Jarring Noise or Music	Foreground Noise or Music
No Background Noise	Background Noise
Adequate Volume	Low-Speaking Voice
No Crosstalk	Crosstalk
No Specialized Terminology	Specialized Terminology
Quiet Setting	Muffled/Quiet Recordings

06

Well defined security and privacy policies



A well-run transcription service will have strict privacy policies across their platform to protect their clients. Policies should include:



- Legally binding Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements signed by all transcriptionists and anyone else that might have access to client files.
- A transcription service should also welcome NDA's created by clients and delete audio files after transcription is complete.
- Detailed security procedures, especially in light of HIPAA requirements.
- File and transcript database security through encryption via Secure Socket Layer (SSL) is an absolute necessity.

07 No contract requirements



Contracts for transcription services are not nearly as common as they once were, but there are still companies that offer lower rates in exchange for a contract with dollar, per line, or other minimums. Typically, there is no need to get locked in a contract since price shopping will turn up competitive rates without the obligation and risks inherent in signing a binding agreement.



08 Compatibility with different recording formats



A good transcription company will be able to transcribe your recording in any format. Some of the common formats are digital recording (mp3, wav, wma, etc.), analog-based audios such as those found on cassette tapes, video recording on tapes & DVD, etc. Make sure that the transcription company you are planning to use offers transcription of your recording format.



09 An online document management system

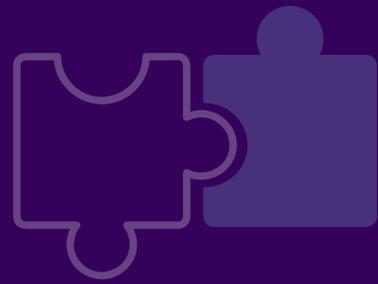


Find out how a transcription company stores your voice files and transcripts, how often you can access it, and when the company deletes your files from their system.



10

Check for references, reputation, and clients



Make sure that you check references to make sure the transcription company can deliver consistent results. Talk to their clients (if possible) or research what kinds of clients they have worked with in the past. An easy first step is to go to the Yelp or Facebook to check for ratings and reviews.

If you anticipate that your transcriptions could be determined as “difficult” due to accents, multiple speakers, complicated terminology, or other factors, find out in advance whether the prospective company has experience in dealing with these issues. Ask for some references and check the site for testimonials. Many services will list some of their clients as well. A list of household names, Fortune 500 companies, and businesses in your company’s field can provide assurance that a transcription service has been vetted by, and completed work for, a lineup of demanding customers.



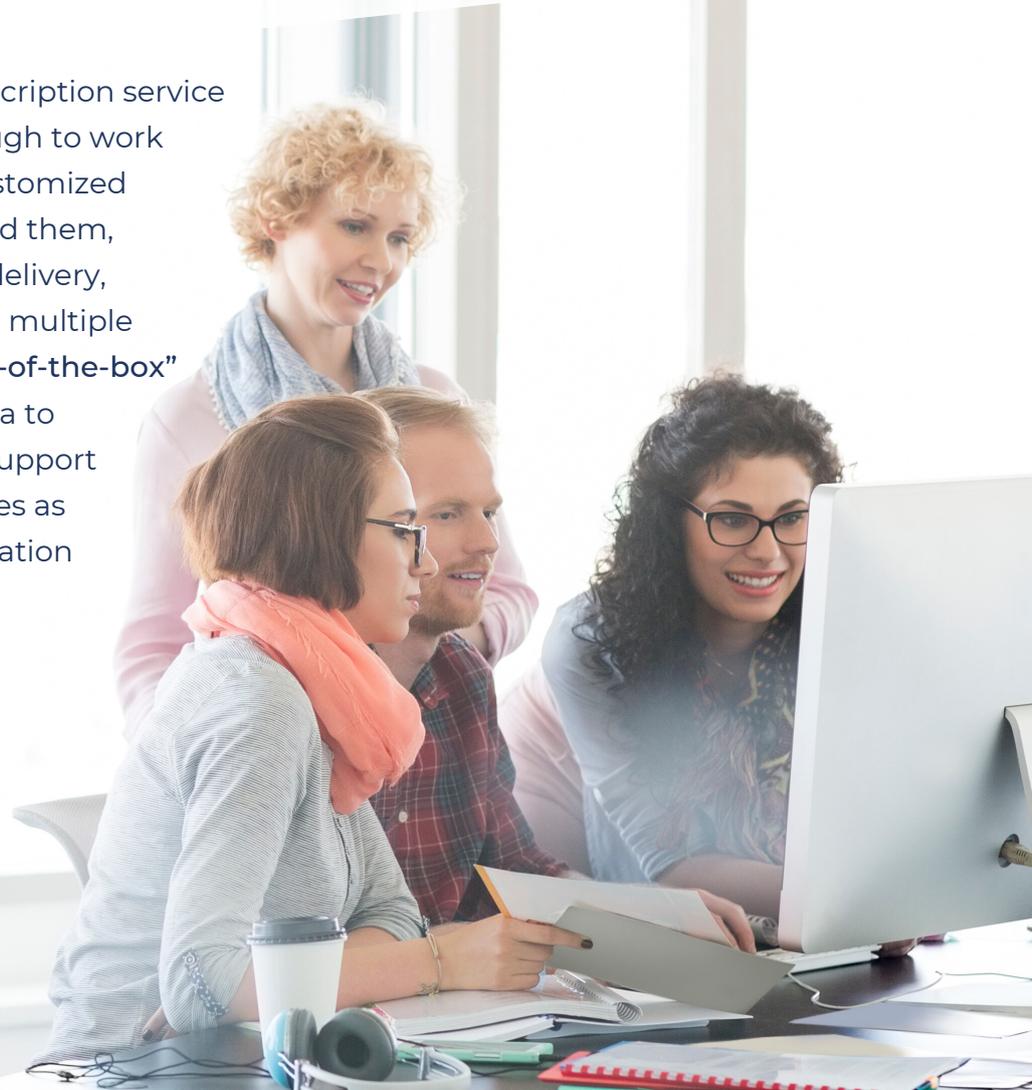
Additionally, a transcription service with a list of clients in the same field as yours can provide assurance that the service has transcriptionists who have a background in the field and are familiar with its associated terminology, jargon, acronyms, etc.

11 Versatility and other extras

The more flexible your transcription company is, the less likely will be that you'll have to hire a different firm for a specific type of transcription.

Having a transcription service that has access to a broad expertise of transcriptionists and carries a vast list of services in addition to your regular transcription work will keep everything organized, in one place, and accessible within the same document management system.

Additionally, your transcription service should be flexible enough to work with you to provide customized answers when you need them, such as a customized delivery, document access from multiple locations, or other “out-of-the-box” scenarios. Another extra to require is 24/7 phone support from live representatives as opposed to communication via email or “live chat.”



CLOSING THOUGHTS

The transcription company you choose must be predictable, accommodating, flexible, and – most importantly – delivers on its promises. Doing your due diligence will go a long way toward creating a mutually beneficial relationship that caters to your needs, protects privacy, and most importantly, delivers high quality transcriptions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Worthy is the **President** of *GMR Transcription Services, Inc*, which provides highly accurate transcription and translation solutions.



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