

Zoom captioning matters: Reporter Dan Hajducky shares his story of hearing loss

Jillian Derscheid
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Have you and your team members activated Zoom captioning yet? It's easy to do (we've included the instructions at the bottom of this article!), and it can make a huge difference for our colleagues who have hearing impairments.

Dan Hajducky, Reporter/Researcher for the Enterprise Journalism team, shares his personal story of the challenges of virtual meetings, transcripts and captioning, and how he began to open up to colleagues and friends about his own hearing loss.

Dan's Story:

It was March 24, 2020. We'd been working from home for just 12 days at that point, still using Blue Jeans as COVID-19 stretched an indiscriminating claw across the globe. Despite the sullen pandemonium, I was immersed in reporting [an oral history for the 20th anniversary of Love & Basketball](#) from the den of my home and had just finished a make-or-break interview with writer-director Gina Prince-Bythewood. I'd grown up obsessed with her film and the barometer for the oral history's success largely hinged on our chat. We'd had technical difficulties, but once we got into it, all was well.

Until it wasn't.

The transcript was kicked back to me. Apparently the file was garbled, hours of conversation just – *poof*. In truth, the audio was barely audible. No exaggeration, I had to put the speaker of my recorder inside my ear to hear it.

There was also a then-little-known fact I'd been trying to cloak: I have a mild-to-moderate hearing loss in both ears. Not only were my colleague, **Ericka Goodman-Hughey**, and I conducting dozens of interviews over a matter of weeks, but we were relying on a transcription service to help with the quick turnaround time.

But the most important (aurally hampered) interview, Prince-Bythewood's, would have to be done manually...by a reporter with a hearing loss. So off I went, turning my laptop's volume up to a stratospheric capacity, going back and forth between sitting and standing, hunched over my computer – favoring my better ear, the left – letting the speaker pour straight into my head.

Hours later, the transcript complete, I had a thought: *Hey, maybe this whole hearing loss isn't something you should keep to yourself anymore.*

It took a long time, but I finally got comfortable with not only telling coworkers and friends I'd (successfully, I might add) hidden it from over the years, but also accepting it as part of my story. I even [wrote about it](#) and got to meet a hero of mine in the process.

In the spirit of accessibility and welcoming, it feels like a good time to remind everyone that we're all dealing with something in one way or another.

With most of our meetings taking place virtually these days, it's good to be up on all the features and options of Zoom.

Now there's something that can make a big impact for individuals with hearing impairments – live AI captioning! Thanks to **Robin Adamowicz** for sharing this tip on the ESPN Enabled Slack channel.

Every Zoom host can activate this in their settings, but the host needs to do it before the start of the meeting. The good news is, **you only have to set it once and it'll apply for all future meetings that you host!**

Let's make this an ESPN standard in our Zoom meetings so we can offer read-along access to all who will benefit from it.

Here's how:

Log in to your Disney Zoom web client settings: <https://disney.zoom.us/profile/setting>

Once you're logged in, scroll down to **In Meeting (Advanced)** and find the Closed captioning section.

Click to allow closed captioning, then click on enable live transcription service, like you see below:

Closed captioning

Allow host to type closed captions or assign a participant/third party device to add closed captions



Enable live transcription service to show transcript on the side panel in-meeting

Categories: [People & Culture](#)

7 Comments

- Robin Adamowicz** Dec 4, 2020 - 12:03 PM
This makes me SO HAPPY. Thank you for sharing!!! People who use captioning may not always feel comfortable disclosing a disability and requesting captioning before a meeting or event, especially if they feel they can muddle through without it. Please turn your captions on and make things easily accessible for anyone who may need it! You never know who could benefit from it 😊

Want to learn more or learn how you can be a better ally to the disability community? Join ESPN ENABLED! We would love to have you – everyone is welcome! Either fill out our membership form (<http://esnapps.corp.disney.com/erg/registration/register.seam?eid=1>) or send me an email and I will get you added!

– Robin Adamowicz, Culture Chair
ESPN ENABLED
[Reply](#) 14
- Tim Larkin** Dec 4, 2020 - 12:22 PM
Thank you for sharing this info and helping to make meetings more accessible to everyone.
[Reply](#) 3
- Erica Vittal** Dec 4, 2020 - 2:05 PM
Done – thank you for sharing this!
[Reply](#) 2
- Alexandra Carlson** Dec 4, 2020 - 2:31 PM
Thanks for sharing and the company's commitment to making meetings more inclusive! If you want to share with non-ESPN colleagues, here is a DTools IT article with the steps: https://disney.service-now.com/dtoolsitsp?id=kb_article&sys_id=9b63a0bbdb40ac140977273a1396191a
[Reply](#) 2
- Melissa Rawlins** Dec 4, 2020 - 3:33 PM
What a fantastic way to keep making ESPN a more inclusive workplace!
[Reply](#) 2
- Scott Pentoney** Dec 4, 2020 - 9:26 PM
Thanks for posting, and thanks in advance to all those who use this very important (and easy!) accessibility tool. ESPN ENABLED continues to make ESPN great! Nice work, folks.
[Reply](#) 3
- Patricia Yanez** Dec 9, 2020 - 11:50 AM
change made! thanks for the directions
[Reply](#)

Logged in as Daniel Hajducky

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