

Language Line Services

Over-The-Phone Language Interpretation

Forks, Washington
www.language-line.com



Pura Carlson works for a major international enterprise headquartered in California and serves clients around the globe. She lives, however, in the rural Washington town of Forks, on the Olympic Peninsula. Pura is one of a growing group of teleworking language interpreters who are the skilled backbone of Language Line Services (LLS), a company that provides language interpretation for worldwide client organizations. She works from her home office using a separate phone line dedicated exclusively to calls from company clients. Calls come in to a centralized number and are routed to interpreters all over the country.

As the leading provider of over-the-phone language interpretation, LLS employs professionally trained and tested interpreters who are far more than just bilingual speakers. Successful applicants (proficient in English and at least one other language) are trained in the business concepts and terminology of the clients they serve, which allows them to interpret meaning-for-meaning and not just word-for-word. Since the inability to communicate effectively can sometimes lead to challenging or stressful situations, LLS interpreters are also trained in techniques of personal interaction designed to ease that stress. It's demanding work and only one in twelve LLS applicants is accepted for employment. Dale Hansman, Internet Marketing & Public Relations Manager, explains that the high standards of professionalism required at LLS are the primary reason for its policy of recruiting and training teleworkers. Dale explains, "Language Line Services is committed to providing the most highly qualified interpreters available and they live all over the country. We could insist that our interpreters work in a facility or hire only those who are geographically close, but then we would be sacrificing our ability to work with the very best."

This arrangement suits Pura very well. When she and her husband decided to leave Seattle for a more rural lifestyle, her husband found the perfect job waiting for him in Forks as the town pharmacist. Pura had the same good fortune in her new job with LLS; it allows her to be the hands-on parent she wants to be, spend quality time with her family and still be a productive professional. She couldn't be happier with the balance she has achieved in her life.

She says, "It's been wonderful to be with my children every day and still use my language skills to help people and provide an income for my family." Pura works a part-time schedule and has separate office space within her home. During work hours, she has help with the care of her small son and daughter, who have become experts on the dual roles she takes on at home: Mom in her office means Mom is at work.

The deep confidence at LLS in the business benefits of teleworking is an innovative policy even today, but was cutting edge 20 years ago when the company began. It started as a volunteer organization in 1982, evolved into a for-profit business that was purchased by AT&T in 1989, and was acquired by ABRY Partners in 2004. The relationship with communications giant AT&T helped develop the critical technology capability that LLS needed to grow.

Powerful and reliable telephone service is essential for a company whose products and employee training are 100% phone-based. Pura and her colleagues offer interpretation from English into more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They provide assistance to clients in industries from finance, manufacturing, and healthcare to government agencies and emergency services. And they do it from their own home offices. This synergistic combination of global reach and home-based talent feels like the perfect business fit to Dale. He says, "It's worked well for us for 20 years, and we wouldn't change it. If you want the best, you need to find them and allow them to live where they want to live."

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