

## SignVideo Case Study

(1) Name - Ben Fletcher

(2) Age - 29

(3) Where do you live - Winchester, Hampshire.

(4) Are you married? Do you have any children?

I am married and have no children.

(5) Describe your disability - I believe you're visually impaired as well as being deaf?

I have Ushers Syndrome. I was born deaf and in my late teens I lost some of my sight in my right eye. My sight has since progressively deteriorated. However, it's been stable enough that I have achieved straight A's in A levels, a first class honours degree in Computer Science at University of York with awards, as well as excelling in my career at IBM.

My personal experience of Ushers Syndrome at the workplace has bolstered my belief that diversity and inclusion make for greater creativity and innovation at work.

(6) You've got a great job title. What does a 'master inventor' actually do?

I have several titles including IT Specialist, Consultant, and yes, IBM Master Inventor.

Master Inventor means that I am responsible for encouraging employees to be innovative, remove barriers to innovation, and help people through any challenges they could face in trying to implement ideas. To date, I have about 20 patents filed.

On a day-to-day basis I am a consultant in IBM's Software Services Lab. My role is split between delivering technical solutions to customers, with the help of the labs, and developing intellectual capital back in the labs. So, how did I progress? I was, at the time, championing social networking tools such as IBM Lotus Connections, blogging, Twitter, Facebook, Linked.in etc. These actually helped to remove all barriers as I was very much on a level playing field globally. With virtual communities, you don't know if someone you're engaged with has a disability. "Diversity grows innovation, and social networking empowers disabled people through the use of the Internet".

(7) And I believe you've also won some pretty prestigious awards in the field of inventions.

Yes, it's been a lot of fun. I was the winner of the RADAR Young Persons Award, 2008 and I have appeared on the BBC show 'SeeHear'.

(8) How important is SignVideo to you? How often and how do you use it at work?

SignVideo is very important. My job can be very technical, and meetings can be very intense. If there is only one interpreter, then there can be a challenge with the interpreter becoming tired. This means the best communication is not taking place. It's also not fair on the interpreter.

Ideally, you'd need and book two interpreters but this isn't easy to arrange as interpreters often need booking with notice. It's also quite costly. Interpreters are great for specific tasks such as short meeting.

SignVideo can act as the "co-interpreter" and enable the onsite interpreter to have breaks. It also enables me to network and have additional conversations.

As IBM is a global firm, I'm working with colleagues around the world. SignVideo also comes into its own in situations where interpretation is required outside what some may see as 'traditional' hours of working.

(9) Do you use the service away from work?

Yes. I use the service away mainly when I need to make quick phone calls. For example, I'd use it to organise a meeting point with my wife before catching the train. My wife is of hearing ability.

(10) Describe some of the everyday problems and difficulties deaf workers face.

Communication is the obvious one. It's hard to describe how frustrating many deaf people find communicating in the work place.

Emailing or instant messaging aren't suitable formats as it takes so much longer to effectively communicate what you want. It seems obvious, but a phone call obviously reduces this amount of time. Without access to a workable 'phone service', deaf workers are at a disadvantage. Access to interpreter services is important.

(11) How difficult would it be for you to continue to do your job if you didn't have access to SignVideo?

Interpreter technology, such as SignVideo, is a very important service in my work. It provides me with greater opportunities for wider communications.

(12) Why should a service like SignVideo receive a subsidy? What benefits does the wider, hearing public get out of deaf workers using SignVideo?

Services like SignVideo enables deaf people to take part in instant communications. Having such services can also benefit interpreters, as pressures can be removed from them. People of all abilities should be able to communicate with each other.

If deaf people are equipped with the right communication tools, they can support their relatives and their BSL communities better.

The wider public can also benefit from such interpreter services as it makes it so easier to communicate with deaf people. If the tools are there, and the desire to communicate is there, then this fosters an environment of inclusion for all.