

I'd like to welcome  
our guest panelists today, Louanne Rawls.

Louanne is going to talk a little bit  
about her digital reporting business,  
some recommendation she has  
for getting the business started,  
and other insight she can provide.

Before we get to the next slide,  
I just would like to offer Louanne  
an opportunity to introduce herself.

Louanne, can you tell us a little bit  
about yourself and your background?

Hi. Thank you, Tony.

I'm Louanne Rawls and

I have been a digital court reporter  
for about 15 years now and I just love it.

Every day I wake up I have a different job,  
something different every day.

I've been doing it and I have  
enjoyed the respect that  
you receive in the legal community.

Digital court reporting has just been able to fill  
a gap that the court reporting industry  
has needed for quite some time.

I'm glad that I had the opportunity to  
start 15 years ago.

It's really been an asset to me

and to my family and it has really just increase my confidence in myself being a digital court reporter.

I just enjoy the people that I work with, the attorneys, the judges, it's just been a blessing honestly and I've really enjoyed it.

I am a mother of two daughters and I was a stay at home mum doing medical transcription for a long time and then I decided I wanted to get out of the house and be able to meet people instead of waiting for my husband to come home and thinking of a conversation that we could have at dinner time.

I decided to become a digital court reporter and I've been doing it for 15 years now and I still love it.

Great. Thank you for sharing that. Next slide.

From my perspective, digital court reporting is court reporting and there are different methods to do court reporting, stenographic voice, digital recording with transcription.

From your perspective though, what is it about digital reporting that makes it important for the industry today?

Well, there's a few reasons why I think digital court reporting is

important in the industry today.

First of all, it is

a reliable method of doing court reporting.

You have different audios,

multiple, and it's always reliable,

it's something that you

can proof with a transcript to make

sure that the ultimate outcome

is to produce an accurate transcript.

Number 1, is reliable.

Having multiple audio makes sure that nothing just

has a glitch or it has something goes wrong,

a battery dies or something, even multiple.

That's number 1, is very reliable.

Number 2, it fills

the gap of the demand for court reporting today.

Stenography schools have closed throughout the nation,

leaving a deficit of

court reporters compared to those that are retiring.

I know that there's voice writing

and that's another option,

but I will tell you digital court reporting is

a reliable method and it's cost-effective.

That's another reason why

digital court reporting is

important in the industry today.

It's cost-effective meaning if stenography schools were

thousands and thousands of dollars and it took years  
in order to be trained to go out into workplace and right  
now with the shortage that is in the nation today,  
digital court reporting allows someone to be trained  
quicker at a fraction of  
the cost of what it would cost to become a stenographer.

That's another reason why it's important.

There is a national certification that is  
available so it's not just okay,

I did a class and I can be a digital court reporter.

There is a national certification through the AAERT,  
the American Association of Certified  
Electronic Reporters and Transcribers, and  
that allows you to pass a test

in order to be certified and it really is important.

I encourage all of my students to be certified.

It not only teaches you,  
but it just gives you that title that you are certified.

I think it gives everyone,  
meaning the attorneys that you're working with,  
just assurance that you

are trained properly and they will have a  
professional that we'll be working with  
them to provide that accurate transcript.

Great. Thank you very much for that.

Next slide please. You also  
decided to launch a course to

help others learn to be a court reporter.

You've been doing it for 15 years,

you mentioned certification and

the important thing I think for

those in the industry is

that digital court reporting is court reporting.

They're trained how to be court reporters,

it's just a methodology that's different where they're

using digital recording equipment,

multi-channel recorders, backup audios in transcribing.

Can you tell us a little bit about

why you decided to launch

the course and what your course provides?

Okay. I decided to launch my course pre-pandemic.

I had no idea how important it was

going to become after or

post-pandemic or during pandemic because of the need

for more court reporters to fill positions to cover jobs,

so that is the great thing I'm excited about is that it

was actually thought of before the pandemic.

The reason why I decided to do it was

I absolutely love my job and

I think it's an excellent opportunity

for females and males.

It's a profession that's not really talked about.

A lot of people don't even know what it is.

I just felt the need to share it with others.

I thought that it's a great career.

I love it, after 15 years,

I still love it and

that was the one thing that I wanted to do.

Also, I felt like if anybody is going to be teaching it,

I wanted it to be me.

I have been well-respected throughout

the legal community for 15 years.

I have worked with

a lot of attorneys and judges over these years

and I've never had an issue with

anyone not respecting me for the work that I do.

I thought whose better than to teach it myself?

I really enjoyed putting the course

together and so far so good.

I realized also that

this was going to be

the solution and that was pre-pandemic.

I've just had this vision

that digital court reporting was going to be the solution

for the lack of court reporters in the industry,

the shortage that we're all experiencing.

I'm excited about it,

I get calls all the time from

agencies looking for court reporters.

Honestly, when I started it,

I thought the biggest challenge was

going to be placing my students.

I thought, well, if I get a lot of students,

I want to make sure that

they are going to have a position for civil.

Well, it actually turned out the opposite.

I have board agencies

calling me looking for digital court reporters,

then I can actually fill.

I haven't been one tip that really advertise my class,

I go by word of mouth mostly

and it's been very successful.

I am excited that it's

flipped because I assure my students now

have somewhere to go and work

and enjoy the career that I've experienced.

Great. This workforce development

is an ongoing topic and every state you're in.

I know I participated in that here in [inaudible 00:09:02].

We just talked a little bit that

on the previous conversation

with Jim and Steve and the fact that

you're offering a class that can give people

employment opportunities where it

didn't exist previously before and

particularly how it's accelerating with digital.

I think it's fantastic. Great.

Yes.

We go to the next slide, please.

One aspect of digital reporting,  
there's a couple of aspects to it,  
which is the capture and the recording  
of it. There's the transcription.

There's the assembly of the transcript itself is  
utilizing technologies like speech-to-text in AI,  
and you have experience with that.

Can you tell us a little bit about  
incorporating speech-to-text AI,  
how you've done it in your practice and how you  
see it evolving in the industry,  
and the benefit it may provide to digital.

Sure. I have had the benefit of  
using artificial intelligence or AI for a few years now,  
and I want to tell you that just technology has become so  
advanced nowadays that it's just incredible.

For me, having a transcript being  
transcribed as a proceeding is  
happening is so advantageous.

Number 1, it takes  
the hard work out of actually doing the transcribing.

That's number 1, but number 2,  
being able to produce a transcript in  
a rough draft shortly thereafter,  
if somebody is in need of a transcript right away  
or expedite a delivery overnight,

I already had the hard work done,  
so Artificial intelligence has really been an asset to  
digital court reporters and it's just amazing.  
Now, we're always going to have to be having  
human eyes to proof it,  
but just like stenographers have Scopus and proofreaders,  
there's always going to be  
additional eyes on a transcript to make  
sure that the final product is an accurate transcript.  
That's the goal of a stenographer,  
of a voice writer, and a digital court reporter.  
We can all achieve that goal  
and the way we do that is different,  
different methods, but the final product is the same.  
Artificial intelligence is just really incredible.  
Now there are items available or products available that  
actually can turn around  
transcripts within hours like a final transcript.  
Just like a real-time stenographer,  
we are able to provide  
pretty much the same type of service using that product.  
In short, artificial intelligence is our friend.  
I'm glad you brought this up because  
there's a lot of misperception about.  
People understand speech-to-text.  
AI has a lot of misperception around it. It's new.  
It can be scary.

People sometimes have false expectations about it,  
but what you said was just exactly the point.

It's an augmented technology,  
it helps you get skilled.

It's basically functioning in the same capacity  
that you would use using scoping, for example,  
as you said, but most importantly that,  
you're a CET, so you're  
a Certified Electronic Transcriber.

It's the people, it's  
the human eyes and the trained people,  
regardless that the ones  
take it up to that 99 percent level of accuracy.

I'm glad you brought that up,  
and that's the benefit of  
the CET certification as  
well along with being able to capture.

Thank you. Next slide, please.

You and I had actually talked about this previously,  
and we all know it.

Any type of disruptive technology,  
any type of change is going  
to cause some ruffled feathers,  
so to speak, and because change is difficult  
and you have long-established ways  
of doing things that are quite good.

Have you received negative feedback from the field,

peers and how would

you encourage people to deal with that?

That's true in any industry and

it's not just unique to court reporting.

Change is tough and doing things new does

draw some legitimate questions, but others that are not.

How have you handled this in

this past that's been an issue for you?

Yes. There has been an issue, I guess,

within the past couple of years with a lot of

negativity surrounding digital court reporters

or digital court reporting.

But I will tell you it

isn't just this industry, it's every industry.

Anytime innovative technology advances,

there is going to be that pushback.

I always have been very well-respected and I

remember people telling me years ago, "Louanne,

we don't think of you as a digital court reporter,

we think of you as one of us,"

and I appreciated that at first,

but then I started thinking,

"I'm proud of my position.

I'm proud of my job. I am proud that

I can move with technology and

produce an accurate transcript

just like everybody else in the industry.

I want to be considered a digital court reporter.

I'm proud of that." There is negative feedback.

There was a campaign a couple of years ago and there would be signs hanging up in the courthouse like,

"Don't hire digital court reporters.

They're only recording."

We do more than record.

We take notes, we identify speakers.

Our software records as we are doing this.

It's definitely something that

we should be respected for.

There is that negative feedback.

A lot of people think that we can't read back.

We can read back.

We can read back and we can play

back by just a push of a button.

There is no question what was said.

An attorney can hear themselves if they

want to or it can be read back.

It's very simple to do that,

so I did have an issue one time where somebody said,

"Well, we heard that you can't

read back so we're going to have to use a stenographer."

In 15 years, that's happened one time.

I just assured them, I was like,

"I am certain I can read it back for

you and I will promise

this transcript will be as accurate  
as what a stenographer will produce for you.  
I will assure you of that."  
Then at the same time,  
I had a judge that  
actually backed me up on that. I appreciated that.  
They ended up sticking with me,  
which was very flattering  
because it is a pushback and it is a challenge,  
but I decided,  
especially when I decided to create the course,  
that I have to do what I do and do it well.  
I can't worry about  
any negative feedback and what  
other people are thinking about what I'm doing,  
I have to stay in my lane and do my job,  
which is produce an accurate transcript.  
There is going to be that negative feedback.  
Agencies probably realize that they are  
going to have to turn to  
digital court reporting to fill the gap,  
and they will probably get negative feedback.  
But if they're not going to move with technology  
and fill that gap and be able to cover more jobs,  
they're really going to be hurting  
themselves in the long run,  
because if they're not going to be covering

those jobs, somebody else will.

That's how I've handled  
that negative feedback in the industry.

That's a great answer and I think you  
illustrated a couple of good examples  
on how you've plowed through it.

From what I'm hearing at the end of the day,  
you just still have to be a  
professional regardless of how you do it,  
and that's how you built your reputation.

You have to know what you're doing regardless.

It's interesting enough though you talked  
about playback and readback,  
even within traditional means  
of court reporting, stenographic,  
they are capturing video records,  
and they do have speech-to-text in their software tools.

It's a misnomer to say that using  
alternative means is not  
necessarily as accurate or you can't do readback.

Obviously it's there and you admitted to it,  
but I appreciate you sharing that.

I'm glad you did. Next slide, please.

The other side of this,  
is the professional side is when you just addressed  
is the business considerations,  
the operations considerations.

Its business, it needs to work for you.

If someone's interested in launching or expanding their court reporting or transitioning into it from stenographic or voice what have you.

What are some important considerations?

What did you have to work through from the business side to become as successful as you are?

Well, I would just say if I was an agency, so to speak, and we're all independent contractors pretty much, you need to ask yourself,

how many jobs are you turning away every day?

What's the reason for that?

Is it because you don't have enough reporters?

That's one aspect that you need to consider.

If you're not going to be covering the jobs,

you're not making money,

and reporters aren't making money,

it's just a no win situation.

If you are turning away jobs because you're afraid that your stenographers are going to get angry, that's actually affecting your business itself as an agency.

You can't do that and move and grow.

Technology is going to continue to advance whether people get on the boat or not.

That's what I like to say.

You're either going to be on the boat

and we're all going to row and get the job done,  
or you're going to miss out.

That's one thing.

I did want to point out that,

a lot of agencies have contacted me

looking for digital court reporters, and they say,

"Actually we thought we were going to get a lot

of negative feedback from our stenographers,

but actually our stenographers are happy because they

realize there is just

not enough stenographers out there to cover the jobs."

That's number 1. But number 2,

stenographers have been in the field for a while.

They may choose to not take

certain jobs because they just don't want to

maybe not get several copies

from the actual proceeding or the deposition.

But digital court reporters will be

happy to take those jobs.

It gives them a little bit of relief.

To not move forward

with digital court reporting because you're

afraid that your stenographers are going to

get angry and not like it.

Maybe that's not the case at all.

They actually may very well appreciate it.

The bottom line is that digital court reporting

is definitely the way to fill the gap.

It's here to stay, it's going to be growing.

It's growing every day, technologically speaking.

It's going to be up to the agencies basically,  
of whether they want to accept it or they miss out.

That's my feeling on it.

Great. Thank you. Next question.

You get certified, you become a professional,  
you do it, you open  
your business now you going to go sell it.

You talked about how you've established your reputation.

What are some points you can  
give folks or smaller  
agencies or others about selling your service,  
about marketing yourself as a digital reporter?

Though, I recommend as far as  
digital court reporters that they get certified through  
the AAERT like we described about or talked  
about earlier, and that's important.

I think being certified is great.

When I became certified,

I thought I was in law school.

I mean, it's no joke.

It's not just about pushing a button or recording.

You learn so much about  
legal terminology, just the definitions.

I mean, you will hear them,

but I had no idea I needed

to really know all the definitions.

That's important. I would say I am certified.

I would recommend that

digital court reporters become certified.

As far as an agency to

give the confidence that

when a law firm calls you to cover a job,

whether it be during the day or after

hours or a month ahead,

you have the confidence

that you are going to be able to cover

those jobs because you have a bigger stack of reporters.

That's important.

Some agencies choose to have digital court reporters,

but have their own transcription team.

That is an agency decision.

As far as my school goes, I teach both.

There's a section for

becoming a digital court reporter and

then a section to prepare your own transcripts.

I encourage people to take both.

But some people just really just

want to be the digital court reporter and let

the agency do the transcribing and

do the final product and then they prove

it, so that happens.

Some people choose to do their own  
because they just want to make sure that  
it's their transcript and  
they want only their eyes on it.

There's both ways. But I will tell you it's  
become such a big industry now that agencies  
have found that having a transcription team  
is definitely their solution.

It really depends on the agency.

I know that Verbit has a big transcription team,  
and they produce  
an accurate transcripts, that's the goal.

It's really up to the agency of what they want to do.

But as far as selling myself to lawyers,  
as far as being a digital court reporter,  
my transcripts speak for themselves,  
and I will tell you in 15 years I may have had  
a handful of transcripts that had to be changed.

It was usually because it was  
January and I failed to change the year.

It has nothing to do with content  
because the audio is the audio.

If there's a question, you have  
another backup audio from a different direction.

It's really foolproof I should say.

It's infallible. You can produce an accurate transcript,  
and I don't want to say perfect.

I don't think there's any perfect transcript.

I don't care if you're a stenographer,  
voice writer, or a digital court reporter.

I say accurate, and I would say most accurate.

Our goal is to produce  
a most accurate transcript and it sells itself.

That's a great point  
because I think within  
the legal professional whether it's to Pamela's firms,  
the litigators, they're used to certain ways.

Others have adopted to other ways.

At the end of the day it's providing that transcript.

It's going to be impeachable,  
it's going to be handled correctly,  
and with the way you're trained through  
AAERT and your own program is you  
are highly trained professionals to be court reporters.

How you do it is one way,  
but at the end of the day,  
you still have to understand the legal term.

Just don't have enough to know to conduct  
yourself. There's no difference.

It's just the requirement of the profession. I thank you.

Tony, can I just add a little bit.

Absolutely.

I just want you to know that I do  
focus a lot on being professional.

I think that that is the goal in any proceeding.

What we're there to do is to be professional

because it's one thing to

be a professional when you're in-person,

but you need to be professional when you

are behind a screen on Zoom.

We are seeing a lot of Zoom.

But that's not going to go away.

I mean, it may not be a 100 percent,

but it's going to be a great percentage of proceedings.

In my class I've included the Zoom,

how to do everything on Zoom or

whatever video that they choose.

But regardless, if you're on Zoom, in-person,

attorneys aren't focusing on

what machine the court reporter is using.

They're not doing that.

As far as Zoom in a year and a half,

nobody said, "What machine are you using?"

They're not saying that.

They just want their accurate transcript,

and that's what we strive to produce.

I appreciate you. Thank you.

We're going to open up to some questions now.

We have a stop at 11:40,

figuratively about another six minutes for questions.

I think Danielle's back on.

Let me just read through some of these questions.

Let me rephrase this a little bit,

but when this goes back to what you talked about, others,

and navigating through some

of the negative feedback you may

get in this field and some of the concerns it has,

this particular question mentioned,

social post, the rest of it,

I think we all know what everybody's talking about.

This isn't a reason to pretend that's not there.

My take is you can have a hardcore element regardless.

You've got people who are proud of what they're doing,

and it's what it is that's true in any life,

but just if you can readdress that.

Sure.

Go ahead. How do you handle that? That's professional.

It's been on social media,

it's hanging in paper form and

the court house, it's everywhere.

But as far as an individual,

I tend to stay focused on what I'm doing.

I can't listen to the chatter.

When I started my course,

I anticipated a lot of negative feedback

and I had to

make a determination. What was I going to do?

Am I going to basically live

my life based on everybody else's opinion about what I'm  
doing or my profession  
or am I going to do something that is going  
to be an asset to others in the legal community?

I decided it was a big step for me because I knew I  
was going to get negative feedback and I do  
have dear friends that are still  
stenographers I love them all.

They know that I have started this class.

In a year and a half,

I have been called by more agencies  
looking for court reporters and  
my stenographers have called me my stenographer friends.

It isn't that they are upset with me or anything,  
but there's just such a need out there.

I'm glad I didn't just stay focused on  
the emotional aspect of it and really took that step.

I want to help others.

I want to teach people what I know.

I want to teach people how to  
conduct themselves professionally when  
there is negative feedback.

Because there is, there's going to be,  
but it's not just this industry,  
its other industries as well.

Technology triumphs, eventually it's going to be  
moving in that direction.

Another question, I guess just to reiterate the steps to becoming trained.

You are a professional court reporter as you've gone through it if you can just go over that again.

My class, it teaches you everything from A to Z as far as being a digital court reporter.

It basically gives you, you have your equipment that you need and then installing all your equipment and then how to use it.

Then practicing because we want to be trained in everything.

Then actually offering virtual mock proceedings.

By the time you take the class, you have all of your equipment ready to go, you have practiced, you have sat in on mock proceedings, and you're able to go out into

the workforce in a very short period of time with confidence that you are going to be able to manage your role

as a court reporter and manage it well.

That's our goal and so far everybody, all of my students have loved it and they are doing great covering many jobs a day.

In fact, I've tried to get some to

cover a couple of things for me,  
for my personal clients and everybody's too busy.

It's been great and again, it's cost-effective.

Being able to get out into  
the workforce quickly is great because  
you're not stuck in a classroom for years and  
accumulating thousands and thousands  
of dollars in student loans,  
you are able to go out into the workforce,.

Right. The training. I know there's  
two certifications [inaudible 00:32:29] digital report,  
one's for certified electronic transcriber,  
but the training programs available  
also covers utilization of the equipment itself,  
any number of software out there,  
can you tell us a little bit about  
your training and what you've been  
trained on in terms of audio equipment.

I know the courts will probably  
send you a file if you're not going in and setting it up,  
but for depositions and other proceedings.

Could you tell us a little bit  
about getting familiar with  
the audio equipment and how you got yourself up to speed.

We use our laptop computers.

Our program is designed to  
take notes as it's recording at the same time.

Everything has a timestamp.

We're identifying speakers and  
the questions and then the answers.

Or if it say, a court proceeding,  
basically identifying the speakers and then  
typing in our shortcut form what the speaker is saying.

Everything is done like that.

We have a backup audio.

If for some reason something  
whack-ado happens to your computer,  
we have backup audio that is continuously running.

It's really an infallible way to  
capture the audio in order to create the transcript.

It works and it works well.

It's a great method for reporting.

You said something very  
important because this has come up  
a number of times is redundancy.

The program prepares you to have the redundancy.

Most people will practice with  
some type of backup recorder,  
whether using multichannel or not.

You can also do the read back through  
the swap for a system that you have,  
but redundancy, I think is key.

That's very important. Others, panelists we've had in  
previous presentations are really

focused on method technology.

What about notes, you mentioned you take notes.

I've actually seen them as they come

in from various transcripts.

You are recording notes at timestamps,

talk to us a little bit about the note-taking process

in the digital world.

We develop our own shortcuts for words.

When you're texting, a lot of people will use

shortcuts for words that they develop on their own.

That's just the way technology is right now.

We implement that when we're doing our note-taking,

that way we can type with

speed and be able to capture what is being said.

Shortcuts are personal to the digital court reporter.

They develop their own.

Then when that happens,

when you're able to capture

the audio and you need to read back something,

You can read back from your own notes

because you know the shortcuts that you're using.

That is how we're able to capture

what is being said physically with note-taking.

Then again, at that specific timestamp is also the audio.

If there's any question,

you just can double-click and go right back to

the audio and listen to it if you had a question.

That's what our software does for us.

Thank you for that and clarifying it.

We are coming up to a minute.

We're going to end at 11: 40.

[inaudible 00:36:00] Any parting notes?

We just want to thank you very much for this session.

People who have further questions

can certainly reach out to Verbit,

we'll pass them on to you,

including how to contact you

if they're interested in speaking with you.

I thank you for your time and

any parting words you like to

convey to the audience and the rest of us.

I just would encourage any,

if there are agencies that are listening

to this or even individuals that

are wondering if digital court reporting is

right for them, visit my website.

It's [digital-reporting-101.teachable.com](https://digital-reporting-101.teachable.com) and if

you have any other questions you can email me.

Everything is on my website.

Thank you. Just for all the attendees,

I've re-posted the Zoom lobby link for the next session.

If you could please select that,

it'll bring you back into the lobby.

With that said, I thank everybody

in the audience for joining,  
a particular big thank you to Luann and  
we look forward to seeing you at  
the next session. Thank you.  
Thank you, Tony.