My name is Adam Lee and I have been with my beautiful (and profoundly deaf) wife Leah since 1998, after meeting during our first year at Loughborough University. Leah lost her hearing in 2003, not long after we’d left University to start building our lives together.

We first noticed a problem with Leah’s hearing while watching the very first season of 24 (with Jack Bauer – Keifer Sutherland). In the beginning Leah could hear everything well, by the midway point of the season we had to route the TV sound through our Hi-Fi system so she could use the headphones, and by the end she could only watch with subtitles. Her hearing loss was very rapid (around 2 months).

Leah has an audio neuropathy, and this was badly misdiagnosed; Doctors first thought she had a blocked euchastian tube and sent her home with a little red balloon that she had to inflate by blowing hard through her nose! We had very little money but decided we had to go private to try and get better medical insight into her situation.

We scraped together £300 for a private consultation and this finally helped us understand how severe the change in Leah’s audiogram was. Unfortunately we discovered that hearing aids were almost useless as the issue was with the hearing nerve rather than the ear.

Leah had experienced significant hearing loss coupled with a very confused delivery of sounds, making it impossible to understand speech. Leah also suffers with constant tinnitus.

Leah was working in sales for a small company in Darenth at the time, and they sacked her almost immediately because she was now unable to use the phone. At the same time the Doctors were unsure how significant her neuropathy was and were concerned that she would also lose her sight as well. These were very dark days and had a huge impact on Leah’s confidence and mental well being (and mine as well!).

Leah has made a remarkable journey to get to where she is now, with a successful career in HR, and 2 wonderful children. She has worked incredibly hard to learn lip reading, basic sign language, finger spelling and has adapted in how she manages meetings and situations with groups of people.

Meanwhile, I set about building a career in product development working in two fantastic multinational organisations, Unilever and BorgWarner, working to become Managing Director of one of the engineering divisions in the UK.

We have really learnt to support each other over the years but not without great personal injury! Many times we would walk along trying to talk together, my wife is 5ft 2 and I’m 6ft 4, this made it tricky and I have walked into many bollards and lampposts over the years (and once disappeared headfirst over a garden wall into a hedgerow!)

We now make sure to stop walking while we talk instead! Even after more than 20years I still find myself shouting up the stairs to see if she wants a cup of tea, before catching myself and going up to see her!

It was my wife who actually found Speaksee around 2 years ago, she was looking for something that could create subtitles that would help her at work with face to face meetings, and she asked that I get in contact with Speaksee to get a quote.

At the time they had not yet launched officially in the UK, so I wrote a brief summary of the UK market and suggested that they accelerate their UK launch. The next week Jari Hazelebach, the CEO, called me back and offered me a job to build the business in the UK!

Jari founded Speaksee in 2017, driven by his ambition to improve life for his mum and dad, both of whom are profoundly deaf. Jari had grown up seeing how tired his parents were after a day at work, exhausted from lipreading all day, and wanted to design a product that could really make a difference.

Speaksee is a Dutch company based in Rotterdam, we are a small, passionate team of product developers, all of whom are either deaf themselves or have someone close to them who is deaf. This gives us a very unique insight into the market through close relationships with our customers.

We have developed the Speaksee Microphone Kit (launched officially in the UK in October 2022). The kit comprises 3 separate mics, a docking unit and a neat carry case and will create incredibly fast, accurate, live subtitles for use in any situation.



In face to face conversations you simply hand out mics to those in the discussion and Speaksee will identify the individual speakers and create captions as they talk, with a different colour for each person (this is a world first and really makes following the conversation so much easier for people to follow). You can use up to 9 separate mics all in different colours.

We have had several independent tests carried out by a prominent audiologist early in 2023, comparing Speaksee against other major Speech to Text providers. In all tests, Speaksee is by far the best in accuracy, noise elimination and speed.

Our software is fantastic at eliminating background noise so it can be used in a busy restaurant with friends or even on the manufacturing floor surrounded by machine noise!

It is entirely portable so can come with you on a picnic or team building day in the woods! Subtitles can be output to any number of devices at the same time and it is compatible with any smartphone, tablet or laptop/PC running an up-to-date web browser.

All data is secure and encrypted making it perfect to use for sensitive conversations (professional, or medical, financial) and it can be used to connect directly to a landline or mobile phone (simply using a standard 3.5mm headphone jack) to subtitle your phone calls.

We have also recently released an update that allows any existing AV system to plug into the dock. This means that any presentations/events can now use Speaksee to create subtitles for the audience. The audience member simply scans a QR code as they arrive and are immediately taken to a window that displays subtitles for the speaker.

We also have a personalised dictionary of 500 words, meaning that you can ‘teach’ Speaksee rare vocabulary, difficult names, or acronyms. All conversations can be downloaded and saved as a written transcript so you don’t have to make notes during the conversation (this is often difficult if you are lipreading.

Finally we support over 60 languages (we are currently selling Speaksee into 8 countries at the moment with more on the way). Speaksee can also be used as a translator! You can select a different input and output language for each separate microphone so you could have someone speaking in SPanish outputting English subtitles and then you can speak back in English and create Spanish subtitles for example.

We are incredibly proud of our product and the massive impact it can have on people. We regularly share inspirational stories from our customers and this is still my favourite part of being with Speaksee!

My personal vision is that Speaksee helps change how people use subtitles in the UK. In particular, the GP surgery remains one of the worst places to go as a deaf person. Made worse when everyone was wearing masks and sat behind perspex protection.

After struggling to communicate at all with the GP receptionist, my wife Leah sits anxiously awaiting her name to be called to see the Doctor. There are no visual clues/assistive tech to support, and no one seems to remember/care to come and let her know it’s her turn.

Finally, when consulting with the Doctor, they are often very poor with communication and get frustrated. Many seem blissfully deaf unaware!

I would love to see a world where devices like Speaksee are mandatory for businesses to have available (just like with wheelchair ramps / accessible toilets.)

Imagine this situation if subtitles were available at the reception desk to support checking in. Then again, when being called from the waiting room. Then once in the consultation room, captions accurately help you understand the Doctor. Finally you walk away with a printout (or email) of the transcript.

For me, true inclusion means stuff is just there for you, without having to even ask for it. I dearly wish that this sort of tech was everywhere!

***Adam Lee is a Business Development Consultant based in the West Midlands, UK. He is a Dad of two and devoted husband. In his spare time he enjoys cooking, playing the guitar, cycling, swimming and golf. Adam loves all animals and can often be found walking the dogs around the local area.***