AT2030 Venture Spotlight Series

Scaling assistive technology innovation

This AT2030 Spotlight Series profiles growth-stage assistive technology businesses developing practical technologies and business models to meet unmet access needs at scale. Each case study explores the problem they are addressing, the model they are building, the evidence behind their work, and how AT2030, GDI Hub and GDI Accelerate are supporting their growth trajectory.

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Global Disability Innovation Hub

GDI Hub Accelerate

DeafTawk

On-demand sign language interpretation, enabling real-time communication across everyday contexts

30 Average connection time	**1,100+** Interpreters on platform
90% Revenue from human interpretation	**3** Disabled co-founders

DeafTawk operates a platform for real-time sign language interpretation, designed to make communication access more immediate and reliable. Operating across multiple countries, the company connects Deaf users to qualified interpreters via mobile video, reducing the need for advance booking and enabling access in situations where support is often unavailable.

Their work focuses on addressing the gaps in how interpretation services are delivered today, across healthcare, employment, and public services, while building toward a model where technology can extend access alongside human interpreters.

The Problem

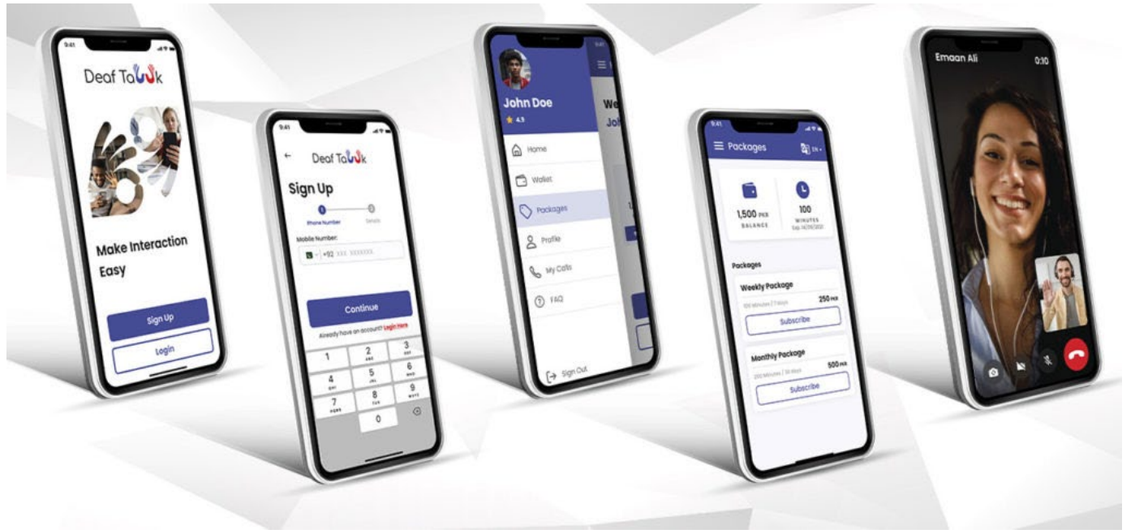
For Deaf people, access to everyday interactions often depends on sign language interpretation that can be difficult to arrange, costly, or unavailable when needed. Traditional models rely on advance booking and are typically concentrated in major urban areas, meaning access is inconsistent across contexts and locations. These limitations create barriers across critical areas of life. In healthcare, they can affect the clarity of communication; in employment, they can shape participation and progression; and in public services, they can mean navigating important interactions without reliable support.

At its core, this is a systems issue. Communication access is not consistently available at the point of need, making it harder for Deaf people to engage fully in everyday activities on equal terms.

The Innovation

DeafTawk provides on-demand sign language interpretation through mobile video, connecting users to interpreters in approximately 30 seconds across multiple sign languages. The platform includes domain-specific expertise in areas such as healthcare, legal, and education, where accuracy is critical. Alongside its core service, DeafTawk is developing AI-enabled sign-to-text and sign-to-voice capabilities. These are intended to extend access in situations where human interpreters are not available, and to support a model that can scale beyond the constraints of interpreter supply.

The approach combines immediate service delivery with longer-term technology development, allowing the platform to meet current needs while building toward broader accessibility.



Why it Works - Delivery Model

The platform is primarily delivered through a network of human interpreters, who handle the majority of interactions today. Enterprise clients, including employers, institutions, and public service providers, contract with DeafTawk to provide accessible communication as part of their operations. This creates a model where organisations pay to meet accessibility and inclusion requirements, while Deaf users gain immediate access to interpretation when needed.

The service has been deployed across different markets, demonstrating that the model can adapt to varying regulatory environments and levels of demand. AI-enabled capabilities are being developed as a complementary layer, intended to extend reach and improve scalability over time.

Evidence and Traction

DeafTawk's revenue is currently driven primarily by human interpretation services, which account for around 90% of total income. This reflects consistent demand from both enterprise clients and individual users who rely on the platform for real-time communication across everyday and professional settings. Adoption has been shaped by the reliability and speed of the service. The ability to connect with an interpreter in seconds has made the platform usable in situations where traditional models fall short, particularly in time-sensitive or unplanned interactions.

A key challenge is how to represent this impact in ways that resonate with institutional buyers. While the value to users is clear in practice, converting those outcomes into structured data that supports procurement and long-term contracts remains an important step in scaling the model.

GDI Hub Support and Engagement

Engagement with GDI Hub has focused on clarifying DeafTawk's pathway to scale, particularly in balancing its current service model with its longer-term technology roadmap. This has included defining where human interpretation remains essential and where AI-enabled tools can responsibly extend access.

The collaboration has also supported the development of a more structured growth strategy, identifying priority use cases, required capabilities, and the partnerships needed to support both service delivery and product development.

Wider Implication

DeafTawk highlights a broader challenge in accessibility services: demand is immediate and well understood, but scaling solutions requires translating impact into forms that institutions can act on. It also illustrates how regulatory and compliance requirements can create viable commercial pathways. Services like DeafTawk can become embedded as part of standard operations when organisations are required to provide accessible communication

The model points toward a blended future, where human expertise and AI capabilities work together to extend access, combining reliability in high-stakes contexts with greater scalability over time.

GDI Accelerate is GDI Hub's platform for strengthening the systems that help inclusive innovation reach scale. The 'GDI Accelerate Growth Sprint' supports high-potential growth-stage assistive and accessible technology ventures through diagnosis, strategy refinement and investment-readiness planning, generating tailored support plans within GDI Accelerate's market-access and enterprise-strengthening model.

Addressing the gaps in how interpretation services are delivered today, across healthcare, employment, and public services.

Bios

Ali Shabbar
CEO

Ali Shabbar is the Co-Founder & CEO of DeafTawk, leading the company's vision, business development, and global expansion. With 15+ years of experience across corporate and development sectors, he has been a driving force in building inclusive solutions at scale. As the founder of Pakistan's first Mobile App Awards, Ali has consistently championed innovation and accessibility, growing DeafTawk into a multi-market, impact-driven tech company.

Wamiq Hasan
CTO

Wamiq Hasan is the Co-Founder & CTO of DeafTawk and a pioneering deaf computer engineer. He leads the company's technology vision, including AI-powered sign language translation solutions. With experience working alongside global tech ecosystems and contributing to innovations like smartphone-based hearing solutions, Wamiq combines deep technical expertise with lived experience to build truly accessible technology.

Abdul Qadeer
COO

Abdul Qadeer is the Co-Founder & COO of DeafTawk, responsible for operations, execution, and scaling service delivery. With over a decade of corporate experience, he has worked on inclusive banking systems and digital financial solutions, ensuring accessibility for underserved communities. At DeafTawk, he plays a key role in optimizing operations and building sustainable, scalable processes for global growth.