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Signapse: Ein Stopp-Recht, formuliert für ein einziges Produkt

Heather Grizzle · October 7, 2026

Signapse antwortet NCG zu seiner Bahnbeschilderung und der Deaf-Freigabe: Ein verbindliches Stopprecht wird für SignStudio festgelegt, nicht für dessen Echtzeit-Ausgabe.

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An investor's congratulations, three questions, and a line Signapse drew in its own words

KURZ GEFASST

- Signapse's rail system generates British Sign Language from live journey data in rail information systems, not from spoken announcements. Information that exists only as speech would not be signed.
- Das Deaf Advisory Board kann an den Vorstand eskalieren. Der Vorstand, nicht das Advisory Board, kann eine Einführung stoppen.
- Signapse sagt, jede SignStudio-Übersetzung benötige vor der Veröffentlichung die Freigabe durch gehörlose Muttersprachler der Gebärdensprache. Dasselbe hat das Unternehmen nicht über seine Echtzeit-Ausgabe gesagt, einschließlich der Bahn- und der SignStream-API, zu der die eigene Produktseite erklärt, es gebe keine menschliche Qualitätssicherung.
- Käufer von Echtzeit-Gebärdensprache sollten schriftlich nachfragen, welche Ausgaben diese Freigabe durchlaufen.

Stellen Sie sich eine gehörlose Reisende auf einem Bahnsteig vor. Der Bildschirm über ihr zeigt einen digitalen Gebärdendolmetscher, fließend und unaufgeregt, der ihr mitteilt, dass ihr Zug verspätet ist und auf ein anderes Gleis verlegt wurde. Dann knistert die Lautsprecheranlage, und ein Mitarbeiter sagt spontan allen, sie sollten deutlichen Abstand von der Bahnsteigkante halten. Die Menschen um sie herum treten zurück. Der Gebärdendolmetscher auf dem Bildschirm macht mit dem Fahrplan weiter, denn die Warnung wurde gesprochen und nie in irgendetwas eingetippt.

That scene is an illustration, not a reported event, and NCG knows of no case in which it has happened. It is drawn, however, from Signapse's own account of how its rail signing works, which the company gave NCG on September 28, 2026, in answer to a question that began with an investor's congratulations.

On September 4, Raw Ventures, a London venture capital firm, posted the kind of announcement investors write when they are pleased with a bet. It had joined Signapse's latest growth round. "What we like most," the post said, "is that it's already out in the world," and it named the places: UK rail, starting at Huddersfield with Network Rail; US airports, including Cincinnati; live broadcasting, through a partnership with SyncWords; and next, German Sign Language with G&L Systemhaus. It ended on the peo-



ple. Around a third of the Signapse team, it said, "are Deaf or use BSL themselves, which is a big part of why the product actually works for the people it's built for."

An investor's post is written to celebrate, not to brief a buyer, and this one deserves to be read in that spirit. Two of its sentences, though, landed on the questions NCG had spent September putting to Signapse: how the rail system actually works, and who inside the company can stop what its systems put in front of Deaf people. So NCG asked again. The answers, published here in full, put something new on the public record. They also draw, in Signapse's own words, a line between the output that Deaf signers check before it ships and the output they do not.

Eine bereits abgeschlossene Überprüfung

By the time NCG saw Raw's post, its review of Signapse was finished. Chief Executive Sally Chalk had given what she called the company's final comments on September 24, and NCG published "Signapse: on the roadmap, not yet shipped," two days later. Reopening a review every time something new surfaces would leave a vendor answering forever, so NCG follows a simple rule: material that appears after a vendor's final comments is recorded separately, the vendor is offered a chance to respond, and the vendor may take it or leave it. On September 27, NCG wrote to Signapse, set out what this piece would say, and asked three questions, with a deadline of 5:00 p.m. UK time on September 30. The answer came back the next day from Ben Saunders, Signapse's co-founder and chief scientist, who picked up the thread while Ms. Chalk was out of the office. NCG said it would publish his answers as given, and it has. Nothing here alleges misconduct by Signapse or by Raw Ventures.



Abbildung 1. Wie der Austausch verlief. NCG identifizierte den Beitrag vom 4. September nach Signapses abschließenden Stellungnahmen.

Was das Regelwerk sagt

Signapse publishes more governance than most companies in its market, and it rewards a close reading, because the documents say plainly where authority sits. In its AI Governance Framework, as retrieved on October 7, 2026, the escalation paths climb through customer support and a moderation panel to the chief executive, who gives "final sign-off for high-risk deployments (legal, medical, safeguarding)." The Content Moderation Policy ends in the same place, with the chief executive and chief technology officer signing off "on final decisions for major incidents (e.g., service suspension, regulatory notification)." The Deaf Advisory Board does appear in the framework, in a list of roles, where it "provides oversight on community impact and cultural/linguistic accuracy." It does not appear on either ladder, and the easy-read version of the framework does not mention it at all. Nothing in either version makes sign-off by Deaf signers a condition of release, and the Translation Quality Assurance Policy says of the company's fastest output that "Instant AI is reviewed post delivery." Read as written, the rulebook gives Deaf people a voice in Signapse's governance and gives two executives the last word.

Signapse's answers, in full

NCG asked three things. Does the rail system translate spoken platform announcements into BSL, or does it generate BSL from information entered into rail information systems? Is NCG's reading of the escalation paths right, and does the Deaf Advisory Board, or any Deaf role at Signapse, hold a binding right to halt a deployment? And

is there anything about the Raw investment, or Raw's description of the company, that Signapse wants on the record? Mr. Saunders replied on September 28, 2026:

> 1. Rail deployment. Raw's wording is correct, as our rail system does turn live announcements into BSL, but it does not listen directly to spoken announcements. It generates BSL by processing the live journey information already held in rail information systems, such as departures, platform changes, delays and cancellations, and shows it on platform screens. The BSL then gets translated in real-time, the same way the tannoy processes live announcements.
>
> 2. Eskalationswege. Ihre Lesart unseres AI Governance Frameworks ist korrekt. Das Deaf Advisory Board bietet Aufsicht und kann Angelegenheiten an den Vorstand eskalieren, und der Vorstand kann eine Einführung stoppen. Zusätzlich wird jede SignStudio-Übersetzung vor der Veröffentlichung von gehörlosen Muttersprachlern geprüft, und eine Übersetzung kann ohne deren Freigabe nicht veröffentlicht werden. Das gibt gehörlosen Mitgliedern unseres Teams ein bindendes Recht, die Veröffentlichung von Ausgaben zu stoppen.
>
> 3. Raw Ventures. Wir freuen uns, dass Raw Ventures unserer Wachstumsrunde beigetreten ist. Ihr Beitrag ist ihre eigene Zusammenfassung für ein allgemeines Publikum, und Punkt 1 oben gibt die zutreffende Beschreibung der Bahnarbeit. Ihre Aussage, dass rund ein Drittel unseres Teams gehörlos ist oder BSL nutzt, ist zutreffend.
>
> Damit schließen wir unseren Beitrag zum Nachtrag ab.

What follows is NCG's reading of those answers against the public record. It is interpretation, labeled as such, and Signapse may respond to it.

Das Bahnsystem liest Daten, keine Sprache

Mr. Saunders defends Raw's wording, and in one sense he is right: Deaf passengers on Signapse's platforms do see live journey information in BSL. But the description he gives in the same breath is narrower, and far more useful to anyone buying the system. It "does not listen directly to spoken announcements." It reads the structured data already sitting in the railway's information systems, the departures, platform changes, delays and cancellations, and turns that into signing. There is a sound engineering case for building it this way. Structured data is predictable in a way that open speech

is not, and a system that signs only what it can parse cleanly is less likely to sign something wrong.

The same design sets a boundary, and the boundary is where the platform scene at the top of this piece comes from. On Signapse's own description, anything that exists only as speech, the improvised warning, the request to move along, the explanation for a delay that never makes it into the feed, is not signed. That is not a failing peculiar to Signapse. It is what a data-driven system does. But it means a rail operator buying the product is buying signed timetable information, not a signed public address system, and it should know exactly which announcements reach Deaf passengers and which still do not.

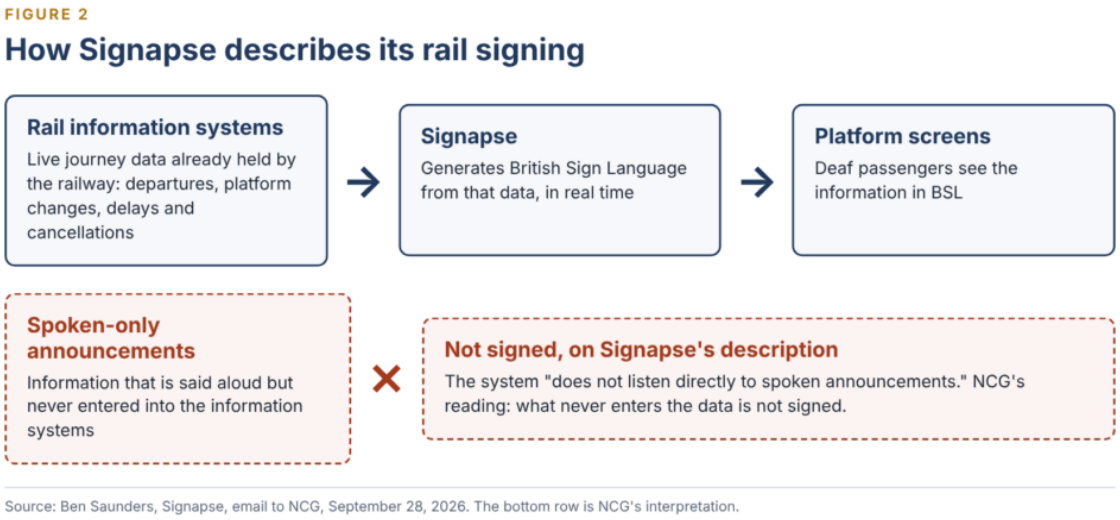


Abbildung 2. Wie Signapse seine Bahn-Gebärdensprache beschreibt. Die untere Zeile ist NCGs Lesart.

Das Advisory Board kann Alarm schlagen; der Vorstand zieht die Bremse

In Bezug auf die Entscheidungsbefugnis bestätigt Signapse, was seine Dokumente zeigen. Das Deaf Advisory Board bietet Aufsicht und kann ein Anliegen an den Vorstand eskalieren, und es ist der Vorstand, der eine Einführung stoppen kann. Das Advisory Board kann mit anderen Worten Alarm schlagen. Es kann nicht die Bremse ziehen.

That matters more than it might seem, because of how the alarm currently travels. NCG's September review recorded that the route from the Advisory Board to the investment board depends on a single person who sits on both, with no written rule guaranteeing it. Signapse has promised a charter, due this month, that would attach the right to escalate to the Advisory Board chair rather than to whoever happens to hold both seats. Until it is adopted and published, and until the published escalation paths are amended to include it, the Advisory Board's line to the people who decide runs through one individual.

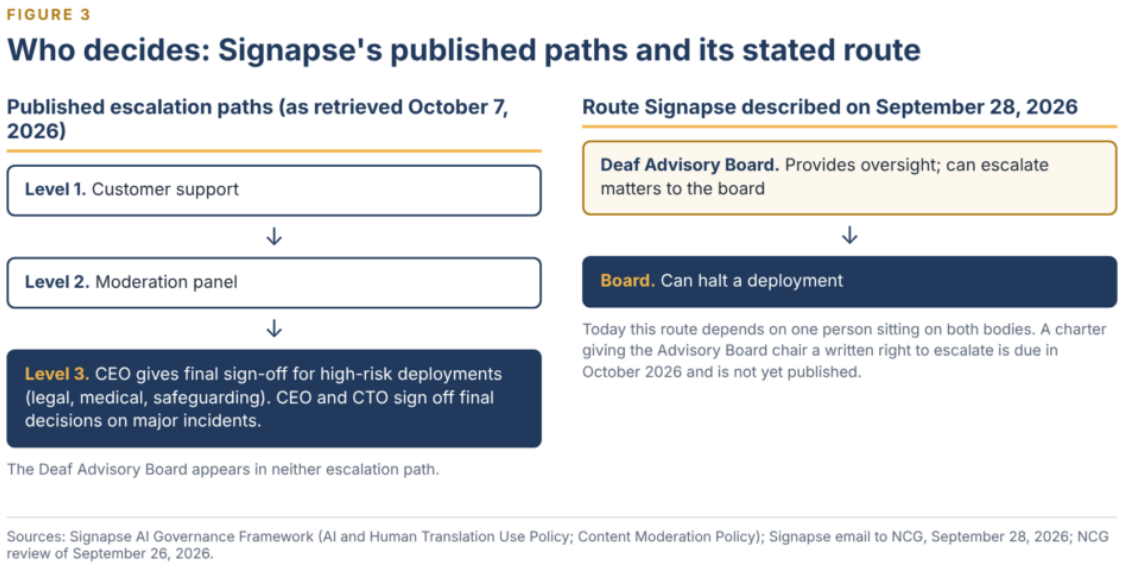


Abbildung 3. Signapses veröffentlichte Eskalationswege neben dem Weg, den das Unternehmen am 28. September 2026 beschrieben hat.

Ein Stopprecht, festgelegt für ein Produkt

Then comes the most interesting sentence in the response, and the newest. "Every SignStudio translation," Mr. Saunders writes, "is checked by Deaf native signers before release, and a translation cannot be released without their sign-off." That, he says, gives Deaf members of the team "a binding right to stop output from going out."

If SignStudio works that way, it is a real control, and a stronger one than anything Signapse's published policies describe. A right to stop output before it ships is exactly the kind of Deaf authority most of this market lacks. NCG has not seen the procedure, and the framework as retrieved on October 7 speaks of Deaf staff reviewing output

against scoring, not of a sign-off without which nothing is released. Signapse would do itself a favor by publishing it.

Read the sentence again, though, and notice its subject. It is SignStudio, the company's reviewed product. Signapse's own SignStream API page describes its real-time product in very different terms: "entirely AI-generated, with no human grammar checking or quality assurance," and "not suitable for formal, legal, or official use." The quality policy says instant output is reviewed after delivery, and Mr. Saunders describes the rail output as translated in real time. Signapse has not said whether the rail screens, or the live broadcast signing Raw celebrated, pass through the sign-off he describes. NCG traced the same boundary in September, in "Where We Have Control," from the other direction, following a downloaded file out of the company's reach. The picture from both sides is consistent. Where Signapse can slow down, Deaf signers check the work. Where the product is fast, on the record as it stands today, nothing shows that they do.

FIGURE 4

Where the pre-release Deaf sign-off is shown to apply

Product or deployment	Pre-release sign-off by Deaf native signers	What the record says
SignStudio	Stated Every translation, before release	Stated by Signapse on September 28, 2026. Not yet described in its published policies.
Rail platform screens	Not stated	Described as translated in real time. Signapse's quality policy says instant output is reviewed after delivery.
Live broadcast	Not stated	Named in the Raw post. No statement on pre-release review.
SignStream API	No	Signapse's page: "no human grammar checking or quality assurance"; "not suitable for formal, legal, or official use."

Sources: Signapse email to NCG, September 28, 2026; Signapse SignStream API page and AI Governance Framework, retrieved October 7, 2026.

Abbildung 4. Wo nachweislich eine Freigabe vor der Veröffentlichung gilt, gemäß öffentlicher Aufzeichnung und Signapses Antwort vom 28. September.

"Deaf or use BSL"

The response also confirms Raw's figure: around a third of Signapse's team are Deaf or use BSL. NCG does not dispute it. A company in which a third of the staff are Deaf

or sign is uncommon in this market, and it is to Signapse's credit. It is worth noticing the "or," though, because it joins two groups that are not the same.

"Deaf or use BSL" counts a Deaf native signer and a hearing colleague partway through a sign language course in the same column. Between them sit hearing interpreters, hearing children of Deaf parents who grew up in the language, and staff at every stage of learning it. All of them may be valuable to the company. But fluency and lived experience are different things, and they do different work. Fluency bears on the quality of the signing. Lived experience bears on governance, because Deaf people are the ones who live with the output when it is wrong: on the platform, in the classroom, at the hospital front desk. A single figure that folds the two together cannot say which of them Signapse has a third of.

Signapse knows the difference, and Mr. Saunders's own answer shows it. When he describes the check on SignStudio, he does not say staff who use BSL. He says "Deaf native signers." That is the precise phrase, used where precision matters, and it is the right one. The team figure is looser, and it is offered by Raw, and confirmed by Signapse, as a reason the product works rather than as a statement about who decides.

Governance turns less on how many Deaf people work at a company than on how many of them hold the pen when the final decision is signed. Signapse's published framework places final sign-off for high-risk deployments with the chief executive, and final decisions on major incidents with the chief executive and chief technology officer. It does not say whether Deaf people hold any of the roles that can stop a deployment, or whether they staff the review of the real-time products. Those questions have plain answers, and a buyer is entitled to them: how many of the third are Deaf, how many are native signers, and how many of them can stop something from shipping.

Was ein Käufer fragen sollte

Signapse hat Käufern damit faktisch gezeigt, wohin sie schauen sollten. Es folgen fünf Forderungen – an Signapse oder an jeden Anbieter von Echtzeit-Gebärdensprachübersetzung – bevor ein Vertrag unterzeichnet wird:

- Which products and deployments pass through pre-release sign-off by Deaf native signers, and the written procedure that makes that sign-off a condition of release.
- For rail, airport and broadcast deployments, whether any output is reviewed before display, how Deaf passengers or viewers report errors, and how quickly errors are cor-

rected.
- For rail, which categories of announcement are signed and which, such as those made only by voice, are not.
- The adopted Deaf Advisory Board charter, with the date of board approval, and confirmation that the escalation right is written into the published escalation paths.
- How many Deaf people hold executive, board or final sign-off roles.

Drei der im September-Review festgehaltenen Zusagen werden in diesem Monat fällig: das Interessenkonfliktregister, die Satzung des Gehörlosen-Beirats und eine schriftliche Standardvereinbarung für die gehörlosen Menschen, die an Feedback-Sitzungen teilnehmen. NCG wird nach dem 31. Oktober auf die Aufzeichnung zurückkommen und jeden Punkt nur dann als erfüllt werten, wenn das jeweilige Dokument selbst veröffentlicht oder vorgelegt wird. Signapse kann auf diesen Beitrag reagieren, und jede Antwort wird zusammen mit ihm veröffentlicht.

Quellen

- Ben Saunders, co-founder and chief scientist, Signapse, email to NCG, September 28, 2026.
- NCG, email to Signapse, September 27, 2026 (notice and questions).
- Raw Ventures, LinkedIn post announcing its participation in Signapse's growth round, September 4, 2026, retrieved October 7, 2026.
- Signapse, AI Governance Framework (AI and Human Translation Use Policy; Content Moderation Policy; Translation Quality Assurance Policy), retrieved October 7, 2026.
- Signapse, AI Governance Framework, Easy Read, retrieved October 7, 2026.
- Signapse, SignStream API, retrieved October 7, 2026.
- NCG, "Signapse: on the roadmap, not yet shipped," September 26, 2026.
- NCG, "Where We Have Control: Signapse SignStream and AI Signing," September 11, 2026.

TIPS

Know something about a sign language AI system that the public should know? Send it to tips@novaracg.com. Every tip is read by me and kept confidential. If you work in the UK, writing to us is not by itself a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, so before you share employer information, check your options with Protect (protect-advice.org.uk), the free whistleblowing advice line.

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Zitierweise

Grizzle, H. M. (2026, October 7). Signapse: Ein Stopp-Recht, formuliert für ein einziges Produkt. Novara Consulting Group. https://www.novaracg.com/de/2026/10/07/signapse-a-stop-right-stated-for-one-product/