

LILY BOND:

Hi, everyone. Happy Global Accessibility Awareness Day, or GAAD for short. We're so glad you're joining us to celebrate, and we're excited to have you here for this presentation, "GAAD with 3Play." Please ask questions throughout the presentation using the Q&A window in the panel. If you'd like to live-tweet this presentation, feel free to do so @3PlayMedia with the hashtag #A11Y and #GAADwith3Play.

I'm Lily Bond. I'm the VP of marketing at 3Play Media, and I'll be presenting today. I am a white woman in my 30's with short brown hair. And in my background is a bookcase with a whale bookend, some pictures of travel, and a guitar. Those are many of my hobbies.

Today, we'll be covering the three different components of GAAD-- global, accessibility, and awareness-- and doing a deep dive on what each of these means in the space of disability and why each is so critical to inclusion. First up, we're going to cover disability as a global experience. People with disabilities are the world's largest minority group, and any one of us can become a member of the disabled community at any given time. In fact, around 15% of the world's global population lives with a disability.

Of the roughly 7.9 billion people on the planet, that's over 1 billion people. And this number is increasing through population growth and medical advances that prolong life. And now more than 46% of people over 60 years old have a disability. And almost everyone is likely to experience some type of disability at some point in their lives, whether temporary or permanent.

On the last slide, we said 15% of the global population lives with a disability. But statistics such as these aren't quite as simple as they seem. Around the world, estimates range from 10% to 20% with the World Health Organization, or WHO, landing at 15% of the global population living with a disability. Across countries, these numbers have an even broader range and depend on a lot of factors, including data collection methods and survey methodology, a country's perception of disability, and a surveyor's definition of disability. And survey purposes and potential consequences of reporting and disability as well.

So breaking these factors down, it actually matters a lot how questions are worded and whether surveys rely on self-reporting. The more narrow the definition of disability, the smaller the percentage will be. And if the definition is broader, more people will identify with a disability. If reporting a disability results in a negative consequence or in discrimination, people are going to be much less likely to report being disabled. And if the survey is anonymous or used for government benefits, people may be more likely to report having a disability.

So statistics and surveys on disability measure many aspects, such as population size, employment, types of disabilities, access to health care, and more. But one aspect that we want to touch on here in the context of the global nature of disability is disability as an emerging market. Around the world, the spending power of people with disabilities is enormous.

According to the 2020 Annual Report on the Global Economics of Disability, people with disabilities constitute an emerging market the size of China. Their friends and family add another 3 billion potential customers who act on their emotional connections to people with disabilities. And together, the report states that disability touches 73% of consumers. And this translates to the disability market controlling \$13 trillion in annual disposable income. So if you fail to make your content accessible, you're missing out on a huge market.

As we've already discussed, the number of people with disabilities is only expected to increase. And as this market increases, it will become even more imperative to add economic value by creating the most accessible products and services, ones that people with disabilities can and want to use. Without prioritizing the spending power of people with disabilities, businesses around the world run the risk of negative brand impact and loss of potential revenue.

For the last portion of our global section, we're going to touch on international legal protections for people with disabilities. There are many laws and standards, but for the sake of this presentation, it's important to note that it was only relatively recently that people with disabilities have been protected in international human rights law. First, we have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This was adopted by the UN General Assembly as a result of World War II. And while people with disabilities are not explicitly protected against discrimination under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it's an incredibly important document because it's known to be the first of its kind to establish fundamental human rights. It serves as the foundation for many international human rights laws, including accessibility laws.

In 1975, the General Assembly of the UN passed the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons. This was a resolution of the assembly and not a convention. So it wasn't binding on member nations and only provides a framework and recommendations. However, this declaration was an important framework for international and domestic accessibility laws.

In response to concerns that there was no legally binding convention on protecting the rights of people with disabilities in existing human rights declarations, the UN passed the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is the most important political expression of the will to grant and guarantee equal rights to people with disabilities on a global level. Parties to the convention must promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy full equality under the law. The convention resulted from a paradigmatic shift from viewing people with disabilities as objects of charity and under the medical model to viewing them as full and equal members of society.

Sometimes it can be difficult to understand exactly what accessibility means for your organization or your audience. Making up 15% of the population, there's a wide variety of disabilities that people live with worldwide. Diving into our next section of GAAD, accessibility, we're going to break down what access means for a diverse audience and how universally inclusive design can solve for many different accommodation needs right from the start.

First of all, I want to cover the three major categories of disabilities, each of which requires different accommodations. So the three major categories are physical, sensory, and cognitive. Physical disabilities-- some examples are paraplegia, loss of motor control, MS, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, and brain injury. Sensory disabilities include deafness, blindness, and other vision disabilities. And cognitive disabilities are the largest growing category of disability.

A lot of these are considered invisible disabilities, meaning you wouldn't be able to tell from someone's physical appearance that they have an express disability. These are things like autism spectrum, dyslexia, anxiety and mental health conditions, ADD, ADHD, and Down syndrome. As I mentioned, each of these categories of disability requires different accommodations. And it's critical to ensure that you're providing access for all of the different types of disability that people may experience.

Accommodations for physical disabilities are things like wheelchair ramps, mouth sticks, handrails, and keyboard accessibility. For sensory disabilities, you may need to provide closed captions, audio description, sufficient color contrast, and keyboard and screen reader accessibility. And for cognitive disabilities, accommodations may include clearly organized documents and websites, using proper heading structure, universal design principles, closed captions, and audio description.

On the screen is the persona spectrum from Microsoft. This image distinguishes between examples of permanent, situational, and temporary situations in which a person may need some kind of accommodation. So in addition to the different categories of disability, there are different ways in which people may experience disability throughout their lifetime. These are also categorized by the human sense affected, including touch, sight, hearing, or speech.

Permanent disabilities cannot be changed. Examples of this include someone who is blind, deaf, or non-verbal, someone with paraplegia. Temporary situations will eventually change. Some examples here would be an injured arm that will eventually heal, cataracts, an infection, laryngitis. And finally, situational scenarios change circumstantially.

For example, a new parent holding a child has limited arm mobility, a distracted driver may have limited visual mobility, or there may be difficulty in communication with a bartender in a loud environment or with someone with a heavy accent. All of these permanent, temporary, and situational disabilities will benefit from the same accommodations. The difference is whether this is a permanent effect or not.

With all of this in mind, Microsoft says the best approach is to solve for one, extend to many. This is the universal design approach. This is Microsoft's inclusive design philosophy. If we focus on creating a universally inclusive experience from the beginning, we can simultaneously create a better experience for everyone involved.

For example, providing closed captioning on video content for deaf and hard-of-hearing accessibility would also benefit someone watching the same video in a loud environment, or who natively speaks a different language, or for people listening to a video where the speaker has a heavy accent. In all of these scenarios, captions are considered a universal design experience. By baking accessibility in from the start, you're improving your product and service for all audience members alike.

So what are the actionable concrete steps you can take towards ensuring access for your audience? As we slowly return to in-person events, physical access is a critical consideration up front. You need to think about your venue.

Is it wheelchair-accessible? Are there wide aisles and spacious bathrooms? Do the doors have functioning access switches? How is the transportation to and parking at the venue?

Given our world's dependence on technology, digital access is also paramount. We've learned a lot about that over the last couple of years as the world has gone completely virtual. You need to ensure that your website and any registration materials are accessible by keyboard and screen readers, as well as mobile-responsive.

Considering this is probably how your audience will sign up for any kind of event-- in person, virtual, or hybrid-- this registration process is critical to present access as a priority for your event. Of course, we also recommend providing accessible video content, whether it's live or pre-recorded. Video accessibility services like closed captioning and transcription benefit anyone interacting with your organization.

Speaking of accessible forms and registration, be sure to include space for accommodation requests within your form. While most of your bases will be covered by the access basics that we just went over, accommodation requests give your audience the opportunity to tell you exactly what they need. This way, you know which accommodations will be most valuable and how they should be prioritized.

You should also make sure that your sign-up includes information about what accommodations are being provided without needing to make a request. For example, stating that this webinar will have live captioning and ASL interpretation will make people feel confident that their needs will be supported and that access is a critical priority for our business. Your commitment to inclusion will make them more interested in your event. We also recommend a public code of conduct that incorporates disability.

Diving into the third component of GAAD, awareness, we want to talk a little bit about how to be a better ally for the accessibility community. Accessibility is often shortened to the shorthand A11Y. There are 11 letters between the A and the Y in accessibility. And it also reads as being an ally.

And that's what we're going to really dig into here. So awareness, while perhaps the broadest of the three elements, should be considered the most critical. Awareness is a necessary first step in advocating for access and in being an ally to the community.

Becoming aware of the issues we've discussed thus far is only the first step. So let's explore allyship 101, the expansion of DEI, or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to include accessibility and cross-disability awareness. The graphic on the screen, courtesy of the CDC, reads out A-L-L-Y, along with a statement for each of these letters, and some images of people with varying disabilities.

The A in ally involves acknowledging and respecting individual experiences and abilities. Educating is the best first step in understanding how important global accessibility is. The first L in ally encourages you to learn about different disability types. We noted previously that there are many types of disabilities, both visible and not visible.

In addition, an individual can have a combination of different types of disabilities. Not everyone chooses to identify the same way. It's important to learn how each individual chooses to uniquely identify themselves.

The second L in ally stands for leverage. Leverage your influence to promote accessibility and inclusion. This begins by considering accessibility in everything you do.

So when you create content, make it accessible. Speak up when you come across ablest actions or behaviors. When you think about accessibility in your day-to-day doings, you'll find ways to make the world a more accessible place for everyone.

The Y in ally stands for yield. Yield the floor to people with disabilities to help identify and eliminate barriers. Work to diversify your social media feeds to include persons with disabilities, and amplify their voices by sharing their perspectives and experiences.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a huge topic of discussion today. It's been a critical component for every business to build into their strategy over the last couple of years. And it's important to recognize that a lot of DEI efforts are limited to race, age, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

When we include people with disabilities into the DEI equation, we get DEIA, or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. There's also a move to include a B for belonging. So you may also see DEIBA, or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging and Accessibility.

Organizations can introduce accessibility initiatives by focusing on accommodations for everyone, resulting in a more inclusive work culture and a safe environment for individuals to express their needs. It's important to note that safe channels for disabled persons to request accommodations must be created. Organizations can support accessibility efforts by normalizing discussions surrounding disability, particularly in the form of workplace training.

Discussions and training can bring awareness to individual unconscious biases that may exist within the organization. And internal biases can result in disabled talent being overlooked for advancement in the workplace. By bringing awareness to these biases, organizations can support disabled talent and recognize their valuable skills. And when disabled talent is recognized and able to work in an accessible environment, they are given the resources they need to thrive, benefiting not only themselves but also their organizations.

Cross-disability awareness is a major theme from Nic Steenhout's podcast episode on *Allied*. *Allied* is a podcast produced by 3Play Media, and he was a guest recently. The quote "nothing about us without us," which came to prominence in disability activism during the 1990s, communicates that no policy impacting disabled people should be decided without the full and direct participation of disabled people.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- When we're looking at the web, we have a lot of accessibility experts who don't have a direct lived experience of disability themselves-- which is fine. I mean, we need allies. But the risk we're running here is that, without a really strong understanding of the lived experience, without the perspective of disabled users, we're going to do things for disabled people rather than with disabled people. And this seems, to me, to be very othering rather than inclusive.

So obviously, it's not because you have a disability that you know everything about everybody's disability. I'm a wheelchair user, I have arthritis, and I don't know what the lived experience of being blind is. But at the same time, I don't know what the lived experiences of any other wheelchair user is. I only know my own. But we have common elements-- cultural elements, lived experiences-- that are shared and in common, and we really need to get that perspective.

[END PLAYBACK]

LILY BOND:

Sorry, I didn't expect it to play immediately when I came to the slide. But that was a short clip from the *Allied* podcast with Nic Steenhout talking about inclusivity and the accessibility community and how cross-disability advocacy can improve allyship. I think his point about doing things for people with disabilities versus with people with disabilities is really critical in everything that we do. We should never be assuming that we're solving a problem without making sure the person affected has the solution.

Some key takeaways here-- disability affects a huge portion of the global population. It's important to recognize the value this minority group brings to the world. Second, accessibility is a universal human right, and it should be acknowledged as such. We all must work hard to ensure that we're building a world that is accessible for everyone.

And finally, becoming a good ally is a journey. We should start by educating ourselves and amplifying voices of members of the disabled community. And along the way, we must be ready to learn and grow from what we learn and to apply those learnings.

That's all for my presentation. I encourage you to continue the journey today. We have some helpful resources to continue the discussion. Later today for GAAD, we have a presentation by the incredible music artist Lachi entitled "Woke Up Blind, Now I'm Here." That's later today at 2:00 PM EST.

And we also encourage you to listen to the full podcast with Nic Steenhout, "Disability, Representation, and Accessibility." Both of those resources can be found on our website at www.3playmedia.com. And I am happy to answer some questions if anyone has them.

Great. OK. So we have a few questions coming in.

I encourage everyone to continue asking, either in the chat or the Q&A panel. The first question is, what would you recommend as the first step in improving accessibility within an organization? This is a great question.

There are lots of ways to approach this, but my best advice is just to start. You don't have to tackle accessibility at the macro level. You can start with something small and let it build. At 3Play, we've worked to build accessibility into our business practices over the last eight years since I've been here. We started with including accessibility training in onboarding.

So every single new hire that came through 3Play went through basic accessibility training, so that everyone in the company had the same baseline understanding of what accessibility is, why it's important, how it applies to their job, and what actions they can take every day to make 3Play more accessible to all of our visitors. So that was a really effective place for us to start. I know other organizations start with individual teams.

For example, starting with the product team, think about where the most impact can be had. Think about where the movers and shakers at your organization are and start building there. And I promise it will start to permeate.

The next question is, how can you get buy-in for accessibility as part of DEI? So again, DEI stands for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. And I think the argument here is, how can accessibility not be a part of that?

As we went through today, disability is the largest minority group in the world. We need to be including accessibility as part of the conversation in DEI, and also thinking about how disability is so intersectional. As we talk about disability, we need to be thinking about disability and race, and gender identity, and sexual orientation.

I think including it in the conversation of all of the different ways we experience diversity and a lack of access and discrimination is critical. And I would just recommend never excluding it. Don't even allow exclusion of accessibility in the conversation in the first place.

Another question here. What accessibility rules or guidelines should I pay attention to? Great question.

I would say, first, understand the accessibility laws impacting you and your organization. There are obviously global laws. There are country-based laws.

In the US, there are three major accessibility laws, for example. And there are also state laws in the US. So understanding the laws impacting your geographic location is a good starting point.

But the global standard for accessibility can be found in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG. WCAG is the best place to identify standards and best practices to make all of your content accessible. And it has guidelines for all of your content to be perceivable, operable, and robust. So I would recommend starting with WCAG. There are different levels of achievement too, so you can start with level A.

Those are the easiest to achieve. For example, with video, that's closed captions and transcripts. Level AA becomes a little bit more challenging to accomplish, but is typically the standard referenced in most accessibility laws globally. For video, that would be an addition of live captioning and of audio description.

And then level AAA gives the most robust accessibility and is often more difficult to achieve. But for organizations striving to be as accessible as possible, they're a great target. For video, for example, that includes sign language interpretation and extended audio description. So those are a few examples of how you can apply the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to a specific type of content.

Great. Another question here. Do you have any actionable tips that I can implement in my workplace easily and quickly?

I think there are a few. Like I mentioned, building accessibility into onboarding is a really great place to start. Also, trainings are great places to start, doing things like bringing in experts to train on how to host an accessible Zoom-- just actionable things that everyone experiences in their everyday work. Trainings on those are great places to start.

Training on unconscious biases around accessibility, particularly in hiring, starting at the top of the funnel, is really, really important. So I would recommend that. And then in terms of starting to make an impact on accessibility in your products on your website, I just recommend taking the reins yourself. Think about what you can impact yourself, and start to make those accessible.

For example, I run marketing at 3Play. We started with our website. How can I, in marketing, impact accessibility? I can make sure that our website is accessible, that we're providing information about accommodations on webinar registrations, that we're asking for accommodation requests.

Think about the little things that you touch that you can impact, that you can make a decision about, and start there. I think that that is a very impactful way to start making progress. And I've found that then other teams look at that and say, what can I be doing in my job to start impacting this as well?

Great. I think those are all of the questions for today. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have other questions. And I really thank you all for being here.

I thank you for celebrating Global Accessibility Awareness Day with us. I hope to see you at Lachi's presentation today at 2:00 PM. And I hope everyone has a great day. Thank you.