LILY BOND: Thank you, everyone, for joining us today for the panel discussion, a Media Accessibility Mindset, Key Learnings from Enterprise Organizations. I'm Lily Bond. I'm the VP of marketing at 3Play Media. And I'll be moderating today.

We have a wonderful panel today. I'm joined by Marissa Munoz, the senior manager of business strategy and operations at Yahoo; Eric Madsen, the learning solutions manager for T-Mobile HR learning and development; and John Menich, the global head of animation and motion graphics at BlackRock. Thank you, Marissa, John, and Eric, for joining us today.

I'm really excited for this panel because all of you have a really interesting perspective on media accessibility and are implementing it in very exciting and unique ways across your organizations. To start, I'd love to learn a little bit more about each of your professional backgrounds at your individual organizations and how media accessibility became a part of your role. John, why don't we start with you?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. Sure. So yeah, I head up the global motion graphics and animation team. I also head up the EMEA broadcast media, as well as the AV group. We connect with the-- we supply video and animation content to the global business. We only work for BlackRock. Obviously, we're in an in-house creative team. And we make video and animation content for the BlackRock business.

We've got studios in San Francisco, in New York, as well as Hong Kong and London. And there's about 30 of us making video and animation content around the clock. If you'd asked me two years ago, what's our accessibility content like, I probably would have looked at you and not really understood what it was we were talking about. And then around about a year or so ago there was a conversation around how BlackRock needs to get better at this, about its accessibility.

It's a visual element that we weren't adding to our content. And I put my hand up and said that I was quite interested in helping with this and putting it through. And then I pretty much took on the project of adding accessibility content to all the BlackRock content that's made, particularly the US-facing content, but also making sure that our European partners and global partners were adding accessibility content to their videos.

LILY BOND: Thanks, John. And we have a quick question for you already. Someone is already commending you for the exceptional quality of your webcam. Maybe you could--

JOHN MENICH: Oh, wow.

LILY BOND: --share the brand of what cam you're on.

[LAUGHING]

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. Definitely. I'll add it to the chat at the end of it, the quality of the cam.

LILY BOND: Perfect. Eric, why don't you give us a little bit of an intro next?

ERIC MADSEN: Oh, sure. Thanks. I apologize for the quality of my webcam. I'm Eric Madsen. And I work for T-Mobile. I've been with Sprint and now T-Mobile for about 20 years.

My background is in animation, video, multimedia. I used to manage one of the production teams in Kansas City. And for the last 13 years, I've been working remotely out of Portland, Oregon. And my team develops a internal video content management system. So the majority of our learning, video, communications, all of our internal-use video is hosted on a platform that my teams developed.

Probably have about 15 years' experience working with accessibility, mostly closed captions, transcripts, and some other web accessibility standards. Yeah.

LILY BOND: Amazing. And Marissa, do you mind giving us a quick intro as well?

MARISSA MUNOZ: Absolutely. Thank you for having me here today. So actually, my background started working in a startup selling art from around the world via the internet by directly connecting with artists that made the items. Through the years, I actually evolved from an e-commerce person to a content and media person.

I became part of Yahoo via Verizon and moved within different parts of the org, first in merchandising operations for a content app that no longer exists, and then moved into programming the actual content for the app itself. And then now moved into the Yahoo side of the business. I'm working on business operations and strategy, which led me to dedicate a lot of my time towards communities of other, as well as me becoming the lead for our Latinx ERG called SOMOS.

I've actually personally always been invested in intersectionality of communities and what unites us. And I genuinely want to be an ally to those that may not represent as such. This opportunity to take on accessibility here at Yahoo came to me via an interim project as the lead from the team, which I'm sure a lot of you are familiar with, Mr. Larry Goldberg, was semi-retiring. And so now my job is to ensure that I carry on the torch for him and others and keep us striving towards our goals of 100% of new user-facing content, including partner content, to have closed captioning. So that's how I ended up in this area of the business. Thank you for having me here today.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Marissa. Larry will actually be joining us a little bit later today for a presentation as well. So anyone who wants to--

MARISSA MUNOZ: Amazing. I now miss him.

LILY BOND: Yeah. He's incredible. Anyone who wants to hear about his presentation on the evolution of captioning, he's really seen it from the beginning through today. So I know that media accessibility takes a lot of organization and coordination across teams.

We've already learned that some of you kind of stumbled into accessibility as it was an opportunity at your organization. Can you describe what accessibility looked like when you first joined and how it's evolved since you got involved in the project? John, why don't you kick us off with that?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. Sure. So first of all, I mean, I've been at BlackRock for 17 years, which is ridiculous but true. And in all that time, pretty much accessibility for us was maybe we'd add some captions to a video if it was going to play somewhere where it's going to be silent and you couldn't hear the video. Maybe it was going to be-- if there was languages, then we'd add more subtitles and captions. We really weren't thinking about it at all.

And I think it's one of those things that we almost sleepwalked for a while, where we should have been doing it, and we weren't. And it was only when there was suddenly that spark of internally looking at what we're doing and the fact that we're not supporting it. Certain legal requirements were out there as well that we needed to address and that we weren't.

From a standing start, it was like, right, OK, we need to go out there. And we did a search on who the players were out there who could offer a platform for accessibility for us, who we could partner with, and then to bring those guys in and then start looking at adding the accessibility content to all the videos that we're making. I'm talking about all the video content that we make and publish in our .com or in our social media.

But there was also a very much introspective look at all the internal townhalls that we do that didn't have accessibility content, all the webcasts and the Webex meetings and all our internal TV, BlackRock TV that didn't have accessibility and how we could really look at the whole spectrum of what the digital video content that's being made and start adding accessibility to all of that so that it's suitable for all the folks that need to watch it.

LILY BOND: And John, how did you get buy-in for that level of centralization at BlackRock?

JOHN MENICH: You know what, I think the message came from the top. And I think the buy-in came pretty quickly. I report into a wider technology team division of the business. And very much, it was like, this is something that needs to be done. And we need to look at it and get it working pretty quickly.

I think I looked into the projects in the mid 2021, 2020, and it was very quickly finding the right partner, bringing that partner on board into BlackRock, and then pretty much finding a budget available to cover it, and then start to adding accessibility content to all of our projects, even live events. Like I said, it was literally looking at everything we do and going, right, OK, we need to ramp up really quickly and start making sure that we're adding accessibility content to everything.

LILY BOND: That's awesome. When the buy-in comes from the top down, it definitely makes a huge difference in centralization.

JOHN MENICH: Nothing speeds things up more than the top boss saying this is something that we need to get done. And people do take attention. I feel for anyone who's trying to do it from the bottom up and trying to get-- I think that's probably a longer, harder slog to convince people that they want to do it, but very worthwhile, of course.

LILY BOND: Absolutely. Eric, I would love to hear your perspective. What did accessibility look like at Sprint and then T-Mobile when you joined? And how has it evolved?

ERIC MADSEN: Well, yeah, I've been around for a long time, 20 years or so. And I'd say it didn't really exist probably, 20 years ago. It was an afterthought, for sure. We probably did start from the bottom up in the early days, and just trying to take-- getting feedback from users. But also especially back then recognizing that people were on different devices and browsers and in situations where maybe they didn't even have audio.

So we had to have alternate ways to get the content to them. And closed captions became a really good solution for that. I mean, up until I'd say maybe the last couple of years since our merger, we haven't had a lot of executive buy-in and leadership there.

So a lot of what we've done has been more about compliance. And I would say now it's more about inclusion. So that's been the change.

LILY BOND: I love that shift. What do you think made that shift possible?

ERIC MADSEN: Well, I would definitely say the merger with T-Mobile. The leadership team there is a lot more involved with inclusion. It's just a bigger part of who we are. Now, we have a number of different challenges and newer challenges, but we've made a lot of progress in the last couple of years.

LILY BOND: That's great to hear. Marissa, how about you? I know that you kind of are feeling like you inherited a lot of the accessibility initiatives. What does that look like for you? And how has it evolved even since you've taken ownership?

MARISSA MUNOZ: So I joined Yahoo in an official capacity in 2018 via the Verizon acquisition. But I know that accessibility was already front and center because of Larry and another ex-colleague, Margaux Joffe's work since 2015. I have seen an evolution into how we make both our internal and our external content accessible in many ways. There's always, of course, work to be done.

To me, the way I think of this, even though I inherited this project, it's very much a big part of my DNA. But I also recognize that as part of this, it's always a team effort. And we have a group of people that are working behind the scenes to ensure that everything is happening.

We have an accessibility lab. We also produce our content internally and external consumption at a-- we're trying to make sure that everything is accessible. We have live captioning for a lot of our internal events as well. And so some of those team members, which I'd like to shout them out right now, it's Gary Moulton, [? Dennis ?] [? Garnan, ?] Julio [? Barrientos, ?] amongst others. And they work behind the scenes to make sure that we continue to forge ahead.

And I'm just here to help move those rocks out of the way if there's anything that they may need. I do see that there's definitely a lot much more of an interest in thinking about inclusion. I think about intersectionality a lot. But I always also want to think about who's not able to access this, regardless of whether the barrier to entry is language because that's a big one too.

A lot of times a lot of organizations focus on English language. And I'm a Spanish speaker. Spanish is my first language. So it's like, how do I make sure that I also represent other communities that may not have access? And if we are really to be global mindset, then how do we make sure that we include everyone in that conversation?

LILY BOND: Yeah. So this is a really interesting conversation. Accessibility is becoming a big part of DEI inclusion initiatives. And inclusion is taking a broader lens to the question of accessibility. Marissa, at Yahoo it sounds like you're involved in a lot of this intersection. How do you feel like these groups intersect with each other? And when you look at accessibility for these different employee resource groups, how do you connect all the needs for different groups among the organization?

MARISSA MUNOZ: I think there's a different approach. And again, I look at this from a holistic point of view, that we have the team of people that are actually working on the things, all the things. It's their job to make sure that our content is produced.

We make sure that our new content is 100% accessible from a closed captioning perspective. Internal open houses are also accessible. And we provide captioning in multi-languages. But from a ERG perspective, we have a couple of groups that work internally.

So we have our neurodiversity ERG, as well as our ally group. And then on top of that, we've also-- as of last year, we launched our accessibility council, which is made up of a group of members throughout the company that speak to the needs of the organization as a whole and help elevate some of the things that we may not be considering. We also from each side of the business-- if we think of Yahoo as media and product, et cetera, we have-- part of the accessibility council includes how we design our product, everything that we do, not just the content we produce.

We really treat it as-- it's as important as cybersecurity. Each new product that we make has to undergo rigorous security vetting, test it for accessibility compliance. And we have groups of people that are charged with making sure that that happens as best as possible.

LILY BOND: Wonderful. And then, John, you similarly talked about the shift from compliance to inclusion. What would your advice be for people who want to move past thinking about media accessibility as a compliance problem instead to think about it through the lens of inclusivity?

JOHN MENICH: You know, I think it's important to-- part of my job when I was bringing this to the team and to the wider business and doing education around this is that there was a certain amount to begin with, if you think about it, of like, oh, it's like-- especially working from an investment bank, it's like, oh, it's like compliance, right? Everyone has to do it. You just got to get through it. And then you'll be fine at the end of it.

And it is changing that mindset for it to be more like, it's about reaching everyone. It's about making sure that we're connecting with the whole community. It's about making sure that everyone's being treated on the same level and without denigrating it to a financial perspective.

But there's groups of people that are probably-- if you can reach them and you can have an impact with them, they're probably quite a loyal group. They'll get buy-in with your brand, or they'll get buy-in with your company if they feel that they're being represented and that you're offering them accessibility to your content that they're not getting elsewhere. You'll probably find that they will actually-- it's a group that are very interconnected.

It's a group, I think, that are sharing their ideas and sharing people that are doing it well. And they talk a lot with each other. And I think you can make an impact by doing it this well, doing accessibility well and reaching those folks, and then that you reach those parts of the business that I think probably have been left out in the past.

LILY BOND: Yeah. I think the brand impact of doing the right thing and being on the forefront of accessibility for the purpose of inclusion and having a great user experience is something that is really difficult to argue with the impact of. It really is so profound.

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. One of our core principles here at BlackRock that we talk about is helping more and more people with their financial health. And you can't have the phrase "helping more and more people" and not recognize that accessibility and inclusivity is fundamental to that belief, as fundamental as treating everyone as fairly and respectfully. And this is part of that, right? And it's about once you do that and people are aware of that, you're doing that, then it means that people respect you as a brand more, I think.

LILY BOND: And Eric, you had a very specific shift from a compliance-focused organization to an inclusive-focused organization. What advice would you give to organizations that are falling more into the compliance focus now that you've kind of experienced both of those perspectives?

ERIC MADSEN: Well, I don't know how I would answer this other than-- I would say, if you can make the move to viewing it as an issue of inclusion, you're going to be more successful. When it was compliance, it was always about doing what was required, or the minimum, or meeting certain obligations. And it was spotty. And so people would ask the question, is this something that we have to have closed captions for? Or is this something--

And then you'd have to get approvals. And it was always moving up the chain. And it was very spotty. You would have people that would feel excluded because when-- maybe that you didn't know that this audience needed to have access to it, and then you'd hear about it later.

So when we made the switchover, I would say it's just been generally a lot easier because there's never really a question about it. It's just something that you do because it's part of your culture. So I would say if it's not part of your culture today, you should look at how you can move that into it.

LILY BOND: That's good advice. John, next question is for you. What was the biggest hurdle you overcame in your accessibility efforts?

JOHN MENICH: I think it was perception was the biggest hurdle that we overcame. I think it was the perception that this is-- and it probably connects with what we were talking about before, about the compliance feel of it-- the perception that it's going to slow down my project. Oh, it's going to cost some money. I'm going to take days-- I want my video on Friday. I'm not going to get my video until the next Wednesday.

All these things are going to sort of slow us down and cost us more money. We want our videos done now. We need them done at this time. And I think it's a thing of educating the clients about the fact that this isn't a thing like compliance. This is a thing about making the content available and reaching everyone and getting your message across.

And it doesn't need to take a long time. And it doesn't need to cost a lot of money. And the benefit of doing it outweighs those two things. And once you get in that mindset of actually putting it as part of your production planning so that you know it's built into that workflow-- people don't plan-- especially for us and our content. You plan for projects. And you plan for the fact that there's some LNC the end of it and that you need to do the LNC before it can go out the door. And you just can't put it out there until it's gone through that LNC process.

Once we'd educated clients and told them about it and told them how it works and how it's supposed to be seamless and told them that it's not going to impact the timeline, but we need to build in a little bit at the end, pretty much very quickly it felt like the resistance ebbed away until now we've been doing it for the last year and a half or so. And it's just the routine, right? You just do it as part of the normal routine of a project.

LILY BOND: Yeah. The shift from reactively adding accessibility on at the end to building it into the process and baking it in is a very critical step in making accessibility something that is easier to implement. Marissa, I'm wondering what the process for baking accessibility into the process looks like at Yahoo. Can you talk a little bit about that?

MARISSA MUNOZ: Similar to what John was just saying, I think it's become part of our DNA. I think Eric mentioned it being part of our culture. So I think everyone accepts their responsibility and their part that they play. But from a content perspective, obviously we're news organizations, so there's things that are happening just in time. And so what makes this process pretty great is that we do have a timing perspective.

We're bringing in things through a feed. Things are getting turned around rather quickly. That fear of things taking too long, that barrier to entry has been removed because they're seeing-- and live, when content is getting closed caption added shortly after their content is published. And so I think all of those factors help us become much more of a reliable source to them, as well as allows us the opportunity to implement this in other areas of the business that may not have been considered before.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Marissa. Eric, I know you work on internal content at T-Mobile. Can you share how your organization supports employees with disabilities in terms of accommodation?

ERIC MADSEN: I'll do my best there because that's a pretty wide question. I mean, first of all, I'm part of a learning development organization. Human resources, all of our stuff goes out to all employees. Frequently, our content also goes to contractors, dealers, service partners. So it's really baked into our process that we make sure that our courseware goes through accessibility reviews, that all video and audio is transcribed and closed captions are available.

Occasionally, we produce videos that include descriptive audio or audio description. We also have other ways of providing accommodations. A lot of times I think it's closer to the actual employee that's requesting it and their manager. But I know that we have people that can support things above and beyond what's technically possible right now. For instance, translation and sign language and some things like that. Yeah.

LILY BOND: So starting to think about accessibility, I think we've been talking a lot about captioning, but translation and sign language interpretation, audio description are all becoming really critical accommodations for media access. I'm curious how your organizations are each approaching those. John, maybe you want to kick us off thinking about media accessibility as a whole.

JOHN MENICH: I mean, I think a lot of the focus at the moment for us is on this closed caption area. I know for our live events we do employ, obviously, live translators. I think there's definitely been a move to try and bring in live sign language for it as well. So those are available for events and things like that.

We've done work, especially with animation content, around audio descriptions and adding that sort of content and that layers. Definitely, there was a real shift within the company. We use MediaBin.

I think it's a internal streaming server. And that didn't have any infrastructure in place for handling the captions, not just in the classic English, but the multi-language. And they very quickly ramped up the speed. Now we can add captions in one file and multiple captions in multiple languages so it's available to any folks who want to choose those different languages.

LILY BOND: What about you, Marissa? I know you spoke a little bit about starting to really think about translation. How is Yahoo approaching this?

MARISSA MUNOZ: I think in a very similar fashion that internally we have our live events, our open houses with closed captioning, with translations available, ASL interpreter and a lot of our ERG events as well. I think as we think about external use, I personally am an advocate for ensuring that there are no barriers to entry. I was thinking about this. I'm like, I want to live in a world where everyone has access to the same content. And what does that look like to you?

And so that means that we have to be able to translate different languages as well as transcriptions and closed captioning. And so that's kind of how I approach this work. And again, this is relatively new to me. But ultimately, that is my goal, to ensure that everyone has access to the information that is available.

LILY BOND: Awesome. So these three organizations are quite mature in your media accessibility efforts. I think a lot of groups are still really starting to figure out how to implement accessibility in a centralized, focused way. And a lot of times that starts with an edict saying, we are going to implement an accessibility policy, or we are going to target WCAG compliance. That's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, acronym WCAG.

So with that said, in organizations that have made a lot of headway here, how would you suggest those organizations start? You get the edict. What do you do first to make this a priority at your organization? Eric, why don't you kick us off?

ERIC MADSEN: OK. Yeah. I would say that if you were getting started-- if I was getting started all over again things that I've learned is that it's probably-- this is a specialization. So picking some people to focus on it and to do research and to come back and bring best practices back to the organization is a good way to get started. Look for platforms that are already accessible.

If you're putting RFPs out there with vendors, make sure that you have really detailed accessibility requirements that are in there. Ask them. Because a lot of companies, at least in my space, there can be a wide range in what they actually support. So you want to make sure that all of the platforms are there.

Same thing goes with your development tools. So if you're developing learning content or communications, et cetera, make sure that they have accessibility options built in. And then I think you need to decide, too, if you're going to be closed captioning content, is this something that you want to do yourself? Is it a good use of your time? Or is it something where finding a partner like 3Play or another solution is important? then just generally get into it because there's a lot of stuff to learn.

LILY BOND: There's certainly a lot to learn. Marissa, where would you start?

MARISSA MUNOZ: I mean, if I were to start over, if I didn't have the Larrys and the giants that I'm standing above now, I would say the same, kind of like what Eric was saying. I would really think about who are the people, the key players that I want to bring into the fold. I would never assume that I know things that I don't know, so I always come in with a learner's mindset. I'm like, who do I need to invite to have this conversation? What are the needs of the business? How do I make sure that I create a strategy that involves everyone as best as possible, recognizing that I might not get it right the first time?

But it's really, I think, things as being a dedicated team and really having people that have a passion for it. Because I think sometimes these start off as passion projects, and you kind of have to escalate to the top till you get the buy-in from the leadership. In our case, we were lucky to have Larry. And we were lucky to have our leadership buy-in.

And so I think from that perspective, that's where I would start. I would start thinking about who are the people that need to be there. Who's been missing up until now, which is when I came in with this new lens. It's like, OK, what's missing? What value can I add to this project for however long I may have it for? And I'd like to continue as much as possible to make sure that everyone has access. There's really no reason not to at this point in time, in our juncture of where we are technology-wise.

LILY BOND: Yeah. I think the point about it often starting with people who are passionate about it is very true. And that can really go a long way in making it happen. Yeah. At 3Play, that's where we started with accessibility, was a lot of people who are passionate about the topic, sharing our expertise, doing research, figuring it out.

And I actually took a card out of Yahoo's hand. I was always so impressed with how they onboarded employees by having everyone go through an accessibility lab when they began to have every single employee in the organization start with a baseline understanding of accessibility. And we took that and we added an accessibility section to the onboarding for every employee so that everyone starts with a baseline understanding and everyone has it as a priority for the organization. And that went a long way at 3Play in making it a company-wide priority. So that's another thing that I think Yahoo does really, really well.

MARISSA MUNOZ: Yeah. And I think, to your point, that a lot of this is really now built into our DNA. And so it's not even a question of do we need to, but how do we do it. How do we make it happen? And so I like that type of response better because that creates a cooperative landscape versus having to try to convince people that it's important. We know it is. But how do we make it happen for everyone?

LILY BOND: Absolutely. John, what about you? Where would you start if you were giving someone advice?

JOHN MENICH: Well, I mean, I don't have to imagine it. I think we did pretty much start from a standing start and the things we had to put in place. And again, it was finding the right partner. For us, it was 3Play.

It was getting the budget in place so that we knew that we had it covered from a budgetary perspective. And then it was getting the education in place. So making sure that we were educating not just the people that were creating the content or the content creators within this sort of business, but their clients as well, who they're creating the content for. And putting in place a infrastructure, some best practices.

And it was a lot of learning for us of what is the best practice here. What is the process? What is the costs? How do we structure this?

But pretty quickly, we were able to-- especially if there's a lot of-- again, pardon the plug. But with 3Play there's a lot of learning material that you guys have got there. And it was like we were able to go out there and get that learning material and start to put some docs together around this is how we're doing it. This is the structure. This is what everyone has to follow. And then educating everyone on this is the process, and this is how to do it.

Yeah. And got there pretty quickly. And I'm amazingly impressed with our team here at BlackRock, how we rose to the challenge and really took it on board, and from a very standing start managed to start to add this content to all the video content that we're making around the globe.

LILY BOND: Awesome. So I am very curious. Three people who are very involved and mature with media accessibility would love to hear where you think the industry is going. What media accessibility trends do you think are headed our way in the future? Marissa, why don't you start us off.

MARISSA MUNOZ: Giving me the hard question. I really do think that-- well, actually, let me take a step back. My hope is that more organizations will continue to strive to make their content more accessible in all ways.

I see barriers to entry, like I've stated earlier, not just from a closed captioning, but also from a language-use perspective. Again, Spanish is my first language. And so I lead with that mentality. And I think about, OK, if I did not speak English, how would I access this content? What would that look like for me?

And again, I'm coming at it from an ally perspective. And so I welcome the opportunity to speak with others to learn a little bit more of some of their learnings. I think about content in terms of how-- from a production perspective, is the content that you're producing accessible to all or everyone? Are you looking at it from a global mindset, or is this just US-centric?

Again, I've said this earlier, until everyone has access, we're not done. And I think that's the trend. We need to be thinking globally, not just from a US-centric perspective.

LILY BOND: Definitely a great point. Eric, what about you? Where do you think the future of media access is headed?

ERIC MADSEN: Well, I think that continuation of some of the things I've seen, which is better documentation, better standards, tools. So browser auditing tools, things that will look at your page and give you feedback. So I think there's going to be a lot of that. I think automation.

A lot of web services like AWS Transcribe and Translate, they do a lot of heavy lifting. And those things, I think, are going to just continue to improve with better AI. And I think the automation will help reduce the amount of time it takes to do certain things. And it's just going to make it part of your normal process. So I see a lot of that coming.

LILY BOND: What about you, John?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. I come at it from a technology perspective. I think this is an area that is ripe for the technology and AI come into the fore. The more the user has control of the way that it receives the information from the places, the more ways that you can adapt that content. And you can change it to suit your particular requirements for your needs.

The beginning of it is obviously-- the simple version is that the captions have been out and standardized their captions so that it can be high contrast, or big font, or black and white, or anything like that. And just a continuation of that through automatic speech, even to sign and things like that, of being able to develop all these ways that are more unautomated, to Eric's point. But it's more like a automated process of an inside platform that's accessible to anyone and infinitely adaptable and customizable so that everyone, depending on what their disabilities might be, can sort of tweak the requirements so that they can receive the same amount of information on the same par with everyone else.

LILY BOND: I love that. I think three really great visions for the future around a global mindset for accessibility, better AI, and a lot of adaptable customization for the whole slew of different user types that might need to access content. We have several attendee questions coming in. I want to get to these. And I'm going to encourage people to continue asking questions in the Q&A or chat. We will get to as many as we can.

The first question here is "I'm curious about finding vested stakeholders. There are both visible and invisible disabilities. If the culture isn't supporting this, as these organizations do and have, what are recommendations to help find these individuals and bring them to the table so their voice is represented?" Marissa, do you want to kick us off there?

MARISSA MUNOZ: Yeah. I was just going to jump in and say, I think one of the key things I would seek out is if the organization has employee resource groups. I would start there. I think that is really one of the best areas, I think, of the business that you should be tapping into, from a DEIB and culture perspective.

Of course, I'm a lead for one of our own. But ultimately, they are your experts. They have a vested interest in the community that they represent. They are best able to give you resources.

Acknowledge that you can't expect them to, but however, appreciate when they do. That's something that's super important. So I would start there.

And then I would also look and see what do you have in terms of DEIB&C, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Culture, within the organization. Do you have an accessibility counsel? Is there somebody in legal? So these are all areas of the business that I'm always trying to tap into.

And then just sometimes word of mouth comes into play as well. If you also have a UX and research team as we do, I would also tap into that group and see if they have already a group of people that they're working with that can help you and assist you in getting more visibility and more passionate players into the mix. Because I think the more people you have-- there's a safety in number. But there's also an ability to push that passion forward.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Marissa. Eric and John, anything to add?

ERIC MADSEN: I would say that Marissa nailed it on that one. Everything she said was 100%. I mean, as a developer, too, I make connections with people. So if I find somebody that has a disability, and they're consuming my content, I want to reach out to them and pick their [INAUDIBLE] whenever I can.

So I can read about this a ton, but there's nothing that's going to replace actually listening to a person and observing them and how they interact with content. Because you're going to learn so much more about their experience than just us talking about it or reading about something on the internet. So I would say make those personal relationships and leverage those.

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. I would only add to that as well, to look up as well in the organization or find a champion who's willing to fight for your cause as well. Because they're there, and they're happy to support, especially a cause as worthy and as necessary and just as vital as this. They're willing to get behind it. And they're willing to help support.

Until someone comes to them with a proposal or with an observation and to highlight a requirement, sometimes people are unaware. And it takes someone to make a stand and highlight it and say that with a little bit of work, a lot can be done. And you'll be surprised at folks that will get behind you and bring some weight to it.

LILY BOND: Absolutely. Another question here is a little more technical. "Wondering how you ensure your products and services comply with WCAG and other legislation. Do you conduct testing? And do you conduct testing with people with disabilities?" Eric, do you want to kick that one off?

ERIC MADSEN: Sure. We use a wide range of things to test content. So we have some front-line tools. We have a checkbox, essentially. So making sure you have closed captions for your video is one. But usually our solutions involve lots of HTML and CSS, JavaScript, et cetera. So browser plug-ins are a good way to get a first line of auditing on those.

And then we also have experts that will review projects, especially major projects, things that are going enterprise-wide. Those will go through that type of review. And then we also have ERGs. And we have these partners that are experts that have the screen readers, for instance.

And so we make sure that especially large initiatives go through them to get validated. And then we learn from that as well. And so we try to apply those things to the next work we do. And hopefully there's fewer things for them to catch.

LILY BOND: What about you, John and Marissa? Anything to add there?

MARISSA MUNOZ: I'd say very similar to what Eric said, definitely we have, obviously, our ERGs that we leverage, our ally group who works very closely with our accessibility team. We also have the accessibility council, which helps. And we have a team of people that are dedicated to, from a product design perspective, ensuring how things are designed, are accessible. And we leverage an external partner to help ensure that we're compliant in all ways.

We also have our UX research and design team. So we have, I think, a lot of arms to this octopus to bring us and to make sure that we're doing all the things that we should be doing and hopefully getting it right.

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. The same here. We have a team of people that we work with who oversee our corporate website, our corporate space, obviously our channels that we publish to and make sure that we're keeping to our promises and making sure the content has accessibility and is of good quality and level. So we definitely have a partnership there that we work with.

LILY BOND: Great. Another question here is, "how do you account for ASL users in captions where English is not their first language? Sometimes English can be a challenge. They're like other second-language speakers." Do any of you have experience with that, want to speak to that challenge?

MARISSA MUNOZ: I'm currently working through that a little bit. We faced that a couple of times from an ERG perspective, as the lead. A lot of the content that we put out virtually will sometimes be Spanish speaking first, which will require-- [INAUDIBLE] we need to first be able to translate it. We also need to be able to caption it to ensure that everyone has access. And so I can't say that I found a perfect solution yet.

But it's something that I'm working towards on, especially as I think about this year. I have a panel in particular that I'm worried about. Thinking about, OK, how do I make this accessible to one of the speakers is Spanish first. And so I want to make sure that I cover her as well as our audience at the same time with as little interruption as possible. So it's definitely a work in progress. But it's definitely something that I'm constantly thinking about because it is a challenge that I've faced in the past few years.

LILY BOND: Thanks. Eric, did you have something to add there?

ERIC MADSEN: We've had some experience with multilingual captions or subtitles. I mean, my audience typically for learning content might be 250,000 people. So that would include people that are T-Mobile employees, but contractors, dealers, partners, national retail. We have a huge presence in Puerto Rico. We have a offshore call center in the Philippines. So sometimes English is a second language.

I've started seeing a lot more videos that are produced in Spanish. So we've made sure that we've included options for multiple languages in subtitles. And so our platform supports that. It's not always used. But I think that is the future, especially as there are better tools and better solutions for getting those quality transcriptions.

It's a complicated thing. And you don't just want to rely on machine translation, in my experience, because there's cultural differences and a number of things. I've worked with Japanese translation in the past and now it's mostly Spanish. But yeah, it's a big thing to take on.

MARISSA MUNOZ: I'd agree with Eric on that, on the translation part. That's the biggest, I would say, challenge, that when you do try-- there's a lot of nuance to language. And sometimes it's not quite right. So as a Spanish speaker, I'm always thinking of like, hey, who do I bring into the fold to help me with that.

ERIC MADSEN: Can I say one more thing? Going back to another question that was asked. But also this I think is important. It's important that your team is diverse, that you have people that speak Spanish or that have disabilities, et cetera. So when you have openings and you can bring somebody in, think about bringing in an instructional designer that has a different perspective.

LILY BOND: Absolutely. That's a critical point. John, anything to add on your end?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. No. We cater to the European market. We look as much to Europe as we do to the US and the multiple languages that we work with, their European partners. And definitely there's no automated service. The thing that we use at the moment is very much captions.

To Marissa's point and Eric's point, it needs that human touch. It needs that human eye to make sure that the nuances are captured and the right inference is captured. So it's definitely a process that we do and we sort of supply. But it's still catered in a longer-form way, and then added to the content when we share it out.

LILY BOND: Great. Another question here is talking about captions historically being an accommodation for deaf and hard-of-hearing users but now as something that's more universally used. And wondering if your organization saw an influx of requests for captioning as the pandemic hit and everything started going virtually and how you handled that as an organization. I don't know if any of you want to kick that off?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. I mean, I've got loads of kids. And they all watch TV with captions on all the time. And it's really interesting to see. I'd never would have thought that. But the first thing they do when they put the telly on is they put the captions on. And I see more and more people do that. In the organization everyone has captions on all the time.

I think because you're in an office environment, and it could be noisy. And you might be multitasking. And you might not have your headset on. And you're just using it just to get more out of the content. So I think it's almost like the captions has moved away from being just something for those with disabilities, and actually it's something that everyone uses. And I think everyone gets so much from it.

MARISSA MUNOZ: Absolutely. I can add to that and say from a news organization it works in the same way for us, especially if you think of social media and content like YouTube and the Instagrams. A lot of that has the captions on. And with schools, obviously you're not supposed to have your phone. I get it. But they do. And they're able to watch content without having to actually interrupt.

The rest of that question that I was looking at was they're asking if we have identified how many deaf and hard-of-hearing employees each of our companies have. And one thing that I'd like to call out and mention is that at Yahoo we did do a self ID. And so there is a lot more information that we know about our employees. And of course, it's self identification. But I think it's super helpful to know where you're at so that you can know how you can reach those audiences that may not have the same access, especially in a virtual environment that we've been in for the past number of years.

LILY BOND: Absolutely. Eric, anything to add there?

ERIC MADSEN: Well, I would just say that, maybe somewhat surprisingly or unexpectedly, our number one audience for closed captions is our retail audience. So these are retail store employees that are primarily using a managed iPad device. And the reasons are that they may not want to have that noise going on in a sales environment.

So they're taking training, or they're looking something up, or they're researching something on an iPad on the floor with other people. And they're reading that content. So it makes it more usable for people.

LILY BOND: Absolutely. I saw an interesting stat today from the head of accessibility at Netflix saying that 80% of Netflix users watch video with captions at least once a month, which is a new stat that I hadn't seen before, but a big number. And I'm not surprised to hear it, particularly in the post-COVID world where we're even more adept with digital experiences.

So we only have a few minutes left. I would love to end with just a little tidbit from each of you. If you could share a quick elevator pitch for prioritizing accessibility or a single thing that you want to share with people that are thinking about prioritizing accessibility, I think that would be a great way to end. John, do you want to start us off there?

JOHN MENICH: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. It's easy to do. It's not expensive to do. And it's the right thing to do. Simple. It doesn't take any more than that. And once you put it in place and everyone gets used to doing it, it then becomes second nature. And it's part of the workflow. And then it doesn't become much more simpler than that, really.

LILY BOND: I love that. Eric, what about you?

ERIC MADSEN: So I'm not that involved in content creation anymore. In my platform, we have about 250 or so people that are uploading various types of media. My focus now is really on the what, the why, and the how. So just empowering other people to do this, and why it's important, how it can be easy, and just what they need to do. So I would say for me, that's what's become important, is educating other people.

LILY BOND: I love that. Marissa, what about you?

MARISSA MUNOZ: For me, I take a very simple and direct approach and say, hey, I want to live in a world where everyone has access to the same information, don't you? And appeal to their heartstrings. Because I think it's important. Ultimately, education is important. But I think sometimes we don't think about others.

We have to get people in that mindset to think about everyone else and the privilege and the opportunities that we have and what others may not have. And so I always try to get people in that mindset, to come along the journey, whatever journey I'm on. Whatever cause I'm may be approaching for the day. It's like, how do I get you to come with me along this journey?

LILY BOND: I love that. So we have it's easy. It's the right thing to do. Empowering people to do the right things. And prioritizing equal access and getting everyone on the journey with you. I think those are fantastic notes to end on.

Thank you all so much for being here. This was a really great conversation. I really value and appreciate all of your perspectives. Thank you to the audience too for some great engagement and questions. Thank you all again for being here. And have a great day.

ERIC MADSEN: Thank you.

MARISSA MUNOZ: Thank you all.