Making Friends-Accessibility at Scale

[00:00:00.20] KELLY MAHONEY: Thank you, everyone, for joining us for today's session on "Making Friends-- Accessibility at Scale," presented by Donna Bungard. Today's presentation will examine the culture of disability inclusion at large organizations, including ways that you can network in-house, meet teams where they are, and really promote accessibility within your organization.

[00:00:20.88] My name is Kelly. I'm on the marketing team here at 3Play. I have long brown hair. And I'm wearing a black sweater today. So with that taken care of, I'd like to introduce today's speaker, Donna Bungard. Donna is the Senior Accessibility Program Manager for Marketing at Indeed. And she holds internationally recognized certifications in accessibility and project management.

[00:00:42.86] She spent over 20 years working in digital agencies. And she's currently pursuing her master's of science in global technology and development. So without further ado, I'll pass things off to Donna who has a wonderful presentation prepared for us today. Welcome, Donna.

[00:00:56.54] DONNA BUNGARD: Thank you so much, Kelly. And thank you for such a lovely intro. Well, yes, today we're going to be talking about accessibility at scale because when we're looking at large companies, big problems, all of that, it can get a little bit hard. It can get a little confusing on how do we make impact. How do we measure impact? And who do we talk to?

[00:01:19.14] So let's just dive right on in. Who am I? I'm Donna Bungard. I am a 40-something Caucasian woman with long, dark hair, dark glasses, and bright red lipstick. I have, as mentioned, a whole bunch of certifications but I've also a lifetime of experience as part of the disability community.

[00:01:42.12] Growing up, I was the only one in my household without a profound disability. Later on, I was identified as learning disabled. It was the early '90s. I was born female identified. They didn't really know what to do with me. They just kept me under that and said, go, team. So I usually identify as mysteriously neurodivergent. It sounds way more interesting.

[00:02:08.76] And because of this upbringing, combined with my professional experience, I tend to look at all of these disability inclusion practices as, well, normal. It's just how it should be. And it's about having these conversations to really elevate how everyone can upskill or uplift the work they're doing-- forgive me.

[00:02:38.84] So today, we're going to rethink and redefine accessibility that's going to allow us to move it from a tactical to a strategic initiative within your organization. You're going to make friends and find allies. And we're going to nurture these relationships, be nimble, and hopefully make a whole lot of impact.

[00:03:00.50] So let's redefine and rethink strategically. So, yes, I'm quoting myself on this slide. It's accessibility is the tactical arm of disability inclusion. It's how we reach our goals. It is not

our goal itself. That's me screaming from a rooftop somewhere that accessibility is tactical. What we really-- our goal is disability inclusion.

[00:03:29.24] Why am I really driving this home? Because we can't be 100% accessible. We can't be 100% compliant or conformant. We're one code push, edit mistake, or just technology enhancement away from being accessible at any time.

[00:03:50.54] There's too many variables to be 100% conformant for any real meaningful length of time. But if we change our framing as accessibility is how we practice disability inclusion, we can get rid of that elusive end goal of 100% compliance that really can't be met. We're going to be able to set goals that allow ourselves to have better strategies. Forgive me, I'm going to keep my very sparkly water bottle right with me so I can keep talking during our time together.

[00:04:32.25] So now that we have redefined what accessibility is, as being that tactical piece, we can start setting diversity inclusion-focused goals. So some goals-- just examples we could use-- would be to increase the number of people who have taken some sort of disability awareness training, improve the disability inclusion expertise throughout the organization. And I make note of here, and I want to strongly emphasize, this is not only technical. If we really want this work to be grown, we need managers and senior managers to understand these concepts, too.

[00:05:13.00] Increase disability representation in our media, in our websites, in our advertisements. And when we're talking about all of this, this includes behind the scenes. This is don't just pick somebody. Have people with disabilities involved in the process of creating the media.

[00:05:36.73] Make sure we're asking everybody, hey, what are your access needs-- on all of our forms, whether it be hiring, an event, or anything. If you are inviting people to engage with you, ask them what their needs are because access needs are just human needs. We're going to try to track the downward trajectory of technical issues and remediation, or maybe you just want to improve results with user testing. These are just examples but these are meaningful ways we could make an impact.

[00:06:14.11] And these goals, once you identify what those goals are, you can bring them into pillars so that way you have set areas of focus where you can build up your resources. So example pillars would be education and awareness, representation and inclusion, and technical conformance.

[00:06:36.11] So if we work from the these are our goals, so therefore our strategies from this ground-up approach, we're being realistic. We're being realistic of what are we thinking we can achieve and what strategies can we build to achieve those goals. And then-- and this is really important for all of us-- we all want to start and aim for the ideals. But we need to start where we are. What's realistic for your organization, for your team?

[00:07:07.44] We're not going to get anywhere if we set such high goals that people are discouraged because we're all humans. The last few years have been interesting. I'm doing air quotes around interesting because they have been. And we need to be really, really, well, clear,

and kind, and realistic with our goals and our strategies, so that way they're attainable, and we're actually helping people, and we're making impact.

[00:07:36.57] So how can we translate some of these pillars into systemic inclusion? We could build out that education and awareness pillar to be more learning opportunities, mentorship programs, cohorts, just generally meeting with teams, and learning about what they do, and how we could bake more inclusion or more accessibility best practices into their work without disrupting it.

[00:08:08.04] When-- we have a pillar under that representation and inclusion pillar. Look at resource groups and review panels. Have conversations with creative teams, and their brand guidelines, or their other processes they're doing, and share the insights about how this is working in practice. What is this doing for people? What is the response? And look at that data. And together, again, working on ways to infuse more inclusion into the process.

[00:08:42.50] And then, of course, technical conformance, where you want to review testing processes. We want to look at accessibility tickets. We want to encourage native user testing. I don't have it on here, but maybe you have goals set around ACRs. That's Accessibility Conformance Reports based on the VPATs, Voluntary Accessibility-- oh, my gosh-- Template. I'm going to forget what that stands for. I can look it up after or some kind person can put it in the chat, whichever works.

[00:09:16.56] But basically, have those accessibility conformance report goals. There's all sorts of areas under each of these that you can build out a program, a goal, a series of moments of content, of areas that you can work with. So identify, first, our goals.

[00:09:39.22] Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. Thank you, Kelly and Amanda. I cannot believe-- there's only 93 people here. There's no problem. I'm, of course, going to blank on what that acronym was. Huge gratitude.

[00:09:53.56] So back to these pillars, though. When we start with the goals, assign the pillars, and then look for systemic inclusion opportunities. Now, if you notice about these opportunities, what we see here is there's nothing here that impacts only one or two things. Each of these is designed to go up a level and hit multiple groups or multiple problems at the same time and address those issues at that systemic level.

[00:10:23.37] But no one can do this alone. We're talking about working at scale. These are large organizations, which brings us to landscapes and alignments. What is your environment? What is the landscape of your organization? And how can we create a path forward for you that's going to be effective given based on resources or just general thoughts, opinions, and needs?

[00:10:53.12] So the questions I always ask myself are, what other teams are facing the same challenges? Where are resources located and who owns or is responsible for those resources? And what teams do you know of that would benefit from some support, but might not know that you're there in offering support? The idea is to bring together cross-functional teams, so that

way, you can each lean into the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, different parts of what you're doing.

[00:11:35.26] So how do you do this? It's time to introduce yourself and start asking questions. So I love Slack. It is an easy way to look around your organization and see who else is doing the work. You go into different channels. You see who's talking about what. You can kind of sometimes see where in the organization they are. And just send a direct message saying, hi, I'm Donna. I'm an accessibility program manager over here. And I would love to just chat with you and see if there's an opportunity for me to support you.

[00:12:18.37] Lunch and Learns or other internal training programs, whatever they are called. Go ahead and see who's presenting. This person's obviously cool to share or happy to share information. So see who's presenting. And if it's relevant or if there's an opportunity you see that they may not to improve the inclusive nature of their work, reach out to them privately after saying, I loved your webinar. I loved your Lunch and Learn. I found this piece really interesting. I wondered if you've ever considered ways to build more disability inclusion into it. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

[00:13:03.48] Make friends with your internal resource groups, employee resource groups, business resource groups. These are called different things at different companies depending on some of the logistics of how they function, but, essentially, your internal resource groups of fellow employees. There's often one focused on either people with or allies of people with disabilities. Go ahead. Start the conversation.

[00:13:29.95] And if you don't have a group like that yet, that's OK. Look at your other resource groups or ask if there's a way to start building out that group for the rest of the teams. And then help someone. Look for opportunities to mentor people, to volunteer, to set up that learning cohort. What can you do to help other people gain better perspective about this area and how it applies to their work?

[00:14:04.50] Now-- excuse me-- I'm an extrovert. And I walk up to people saying, hi, have you met me? But not everybody is. And I totally respect that. And if all of this is sounding a little too extroverted to you, that's OK. There's other ways also.

[00:14:26.87] So the way I see this is maybe like a four-step process. First, you do some homework. Hop on social media, your internal organizational charts. Go ahead and, without talking as much, look who's in those Slack channels. Look who's doing those webinars. Go ahead and just get a clear picture of who you feel would be easiest to talk to or to find an alignment with. Start small.

[00:14:58.69] And then prepare yourself some questions. Some of the most inspiring people in my life are deep, deep thinkers, but that also means that they don't usually have something off the top of their head to ask or that is going to answer the question they really want answered. So prepare some questions ahead of time. Ask yourself, hey, is this product-based?

[00:15:24.64] Do I need to ask a question about a technical process? Do I need to ask about marketing and casting procedures? Do I need to look at HR, or business solutions, or procurement questions? Whatever the area you're focused on, go ahead and try to write down what are possible questions that you may have that are relevant to both your work and that work of those people that you identified.

[00:15:58.24] And then ask for an introduction. There's a quote I learned years ago. I love it. It was you don't need to know everybody. You need to know two people who know half of everybody. Now, I wouldn't necessarily go quite that far, but we don't need to know everything. We do not need to know all the people. We do not need to know all the organizations.

[00:16:20.97] There is no problem saying, hey, so-and-so, I am trying to-- person you're comfortable with-- maybe your manager, maybe a mentor, maybe just a colleague or a friend-- hey, I am trying to learn more about such and such a part of the organization. Do you know anybody over there? And chances are, if you ask around-- and it might not be a direct line. It could be, but it might not be-- but you can get an introduction to somebody in the group that you're wanting to speak to so that way you're not having to introduce yourself.

[00:16:56.02] And then finally, play to your strengths. Listen deeply. Show that interest. Think deeply. And don't be afraid to say, hey, I love all this information you've given me, but I really need to process this. Can I follow up next week with you via email, via Slack, whatever your communication choice is. But ask for that follow-up. Spend most of your time listening, and taking it in, and processing the information on the way that's comfortable for you. You're an active piece of this, and your needs need to be met.

[00:17:36.30] Now, the key is you have to be authentic. You have to care. You have to understand-- not understand. I can use a better word. You have to appreciate that these relationships you're going to build are going to be of benefit to you only when you're in service of others. So you need to have that authentic interest and investment in others for this to work.

[00:18:12.56] I love Adam Grant's quote. "If we create networks with the sole intention of getting something, we won't succeed. We cannot pursue the benefits of networks; the benefits ensue from investments in meaningful activities and relationships." This is a more eloquent way of me saying, we have to be of service of others, genuine service of others, before we're going to be able to reap the benefits ourselves.

[00:18:41.86] So we've got to be patient. And we need to find ways to work together where other people are in their process. In large organizations, it's very common for different groups to be at different levels of maturity in terms of disability inclusion or accessibility. And those different ways of working, those different places where they are, that's OK. No large organization is going to change overnight. That's OK. That's actually a strength of a larger organization. It just may not be to the benefit of what you're trying to get done but that's OK. It's important that when you're reaching out to people, you are open and willing to meet them where they are.

[00:19:28.49] "A rising tide lifts all boats." I love this phrase because when we do well for others, everybody is going to win in the long run. So ask yourself, after you've had these

conversations and are looking for these alignments, what are the overall arching goals that you have and that they have, and what synergy is naturally occurring? Just go for the low-hanging fruit. It's OK.

[00:19:55.37] And then after that, though, take a closer look of where things aren't in alignment. Maybe the alignment isn't the goal. Maybe some of the elements that you each need to make towards your individual goals can find some overlap or some use.

[00:20:14.19] And then ask yourself, is there work you can do to maybe advance one of their goals that will raise the organization up, even if it's not serving yours. And because, again, as we build these pieces together, as we build up these internal communities of supporting each other to make more inclusive spaces, we need to be able to provide crossfunctional support as openly as we hope to receive it.

[00:20:48.35] And then we have to nurture these relationships. Meeting with a person on a Tuesday is lovely, but you need to keep in contact. So whether it be in Zoom or real life, maybe every month or two, get together, whether in Zoom or real life, for coffee, or tea, or whatever. And sit down, and ask, and schedule it. Schedule it to be repetitive on your calendars. Don't try to remember, oh, yeah, I'll get to that. Before you're off the phone, if you don't have a reoccurring meeting set up, ask if you may set one up and ask what cadence works well.

[00:21:28.44] There's some people I meet with every other month. There's some people I meet with much more frequently, some people a little further off until things get busy and then we speed it up. It depends on the individual and how closely you have the opportunity to work together. But schedule it.

[00:21:46.29] And just as a side note-- and I didn't write it there-- make sure you get to know the person. We have to stay human-centric. And we're not going to be able to meet each other's needs or the needs of the disability community if we fail each other. So get to know the person a little too.

[00:22:07.33] And I'm not saying you need to know the name of every one of their goldfish, but take a minute at the start of your coffee together and ask how they are. Share information freely, whether it be relevant articles, social media, or whatnot. I work very closely with somebody who, early in our relationship, we were talking and that person has a passion to help address food insecurity.

[00:22:37.83] And in my research about the disability community, I found a study that was explaining how older adults with disabilities are more likely to experience food insecurity than those without. So I made sure to share that because I knew that that wasn't necessarily relevant to what they did in their everyday life but I knew it was a shared passion. And I wanted to make sure that I helped nurture this interest in this shared relationship.

[00:23:08.85] Ask for feedback. None of us grow without finding out some feedback about what we can do better. None of us are going to get it right 100% of the time. So ask for feedback

frequently, openly. And finally, respect someone's safe space. Everyone is busy. I appreciate that.

[00:23:31.34] And sometimes when you're looking at someone's calendar, you can be like, look, I happened to notice that we're meeting today, but it looks like you're really booked up. Do you want to move this or just shorten this to 10 minutes because I don't have anything really precious to talk about? Make sure you're free to give people their time back. Just because you have that time to nurture the relationship scheduled doesn't mean we have to fill up every minute of it.

[00:24:01.94] So let's pull this all together. Now, as you started with your beginning goals, as you built those pillars, as you started building the strategies and those systemic initiatives, and as you've tried to apply them to partners you're building throughout your organization, something's going to have changed.

[00:24:26.30] Things have shifted. A goal might have shifted. The strategic where that pressure point is that you want to make that systemic change might have been moved. That's OK. This is OK. Your planning is a process. It's going to develop. And this work is supposed to evolve. And if it didn't evolve in these first few months of work here, it's going to.

[00:24:53.84] This work is always, always evolving. We're learning more. We're learning ways to build more intersectionality into it. We have to understand that Donna, a mysteriously neurodivergent woman in the northeastern part of the United States, will not have had the same experience as somebody who maybe identifies as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, maybe of a different racial or ethnic background, maybe of somebody of a different religious background, or somebody who, being female, lives in an area where being female presented additional barriers.

[00:25:36.20] Maybe it's somebody whose geographic or economic social economic situation created more barriers. Maybe we're looking at this differently of how can we appreciate the intersectionality of the community we're helping to bring them up. What are ways are we looking at? How is this impacting our strategy, that when we're looking at our materials, are we really being inclusive to people with disabilities or are we segmenting out disability away from everything else in a way that's harmful?

[00:26:14.09] So this work is going to change as you start seeing these bigger, and bigger, and bigger pictures because you're talking to people in different parts of your organizations and growing your perspective. And that's good because it gives you the opportunity and the privilege to rethink your goals and figure out where collaboration and alignment is going to allow you to create greater impact. Then you can develop a roadmap, set yourself up for success, be honest with yourself and with your stakeholders-- I'm sorry. I don't know a better term for that one yet-- your partners, I suppose.

[00:26:51.58] Develop a roadmap, but be honest and set appropriate expectations. And if you can do more, fantastic. But set yourself up for success with your roadmap, with your must dos. And then all your nice to have or want to dos, you can put those in there. But again, it's expectation setting. So that way, when you're working with partners, they'll know what to prioritize, too.

[00:27:16.99] And be nimble. Inevitably, something won't go to plan. It's being human. Something is not going to go to plan. That's OK. There's no point of stressing yourself out about it. Feel your feelings in the moment, of course, but, overall, a little big picture speak, it's not worth the energy to be upset if something doesn't go exactly to plan.

[00:27:45.01] You do, however, need to know how to pivot. You need to take what you have left, who you have to work with, what resources you can pull together, and figure out how to get either close to that goal or a similar goal that's going to make the changes you're wanting to make within your organization, because, in the end of the day, none of us can do this alone. It is going to take a village. It is going to take crossfunctional teams throughout your organization working together to make disability inclusion and accessibility just part of our normal operating procedures.

[00:28:24.44] So you're ready for what comes next. You redefined accessibility into disability inclusion and set strategic goals based around inclusion. You've explored your organization, the landscape, and you're starting to nurture relationships with partners throughout your organization who can help you achieve your goals and to whom you can contribute and add value to the work they're doing.

[00:28:53.53] And you've made that roadmap. You've made a plan to make impact with the understanding that you're going to have to change and grow with it because growth is change and that's a beautiful thing. So at the end of the day, it really doesn't matter the size of your team or the size of your organization. If you can learn to work crossfunctionally and understand the different needs and pitfalls throughout, you break down silos, create a better community within your working environment, and permit yourself to have greater impact.

[00:29:31.17] So that's been about a half an hour. I believe we have a few minutes left, Kelly, to just talk it out. I can even stop sharing.

[00:29:39.38] KELLY MAHONEY: Yeah, we absolutely do. Yeah. I've got a couple starter questions for you. Got one from the audience. And then, like you said, we'll just use the remaining time to talk it out.

[00:29:47.48] This was great, first of all. Thank you very much. I'm a huge fan of the human first approach because I think that is something that's very easy to forget, especially now we live in a digital world, remote work. We all know the vibes at this point.

[00:30:03.84] You mentioned that things aren't always going to go to plan. That's just the reality of life. In your experience, what are some sort of common misconceptions-- do any come to mind-- about creating an organizational culture of accessibility? Do people think you can just do it with the snap of your fingers? How would you address these sorts of things? Let's start there.

[00:30:26.38] DONNA BUNGARD: I've seen-- in my experience, just speaking as Donna, the biggest misconception is everyone thinks it's, oh, my gosh, everything's legal, everything's huge. Oh, my gosh. If I test this and I find there's a problem, everyone's going to be mad at me and this is going to derail everything. When the truth of it is that, inevitably, when we do an audit,

everybody finds a problem. There's, again, 100% compliant is not something attainable forever. That's why continuous improvement.

[00:31:04.34] But the idea that it has to disrupt everything and be this disruptive force I think gives it a negative. And again, we're dealing with humans. And humans get fearful when they assume it's going to be a disruptive negative force to their work. And it really needs to be reframed as something that we're building this into your processes.

[00:31:35.99] One of the things I'm really proud of at Indeed in our teams is that I've had the privilege to work with our creative team about our brand guidelines. And there's a lot of inclusion that's not actually called out as an accessibility feature. We just put in because it's part of our identity, and we wanted to document that and be able to share that with people. So it's not this, oh, my gosh, oh, my gosh. It's building it into who we are.

[00:32:05.40] And I think that approach of finding out where people are-- again, their team, their development processes, whatever it is-- find out where that team is in their inclusion maturity. And spend a lot of time just listening, and talking, and saying, OK, where can we build in a touchpoint? And sometimes it's a touchpoint with a person. Sometimes it's with an automated tool. Sometimes it's just documenting what people are already doing to make it happen.

[00:32:41.93] But it comes from really talking to people and learning where they are to take away that negative overwhelming feeling. I feel like-- I mean, it's 2023. The last couple of years, people have gotten very accustomed to being overwhelmed. And I think if we can take away some of the stress and that overwhelming feeling, you're going to get a lot more done.

[00:33:06.27] KELLY MAHONEY: Absolutely. And we at 3Play definitely want to emphasize that point as well. It's all about starting where you can. Related to that point, we had Peter ask in the chat, appreciated this presentation is geared towards larger organizations. Is there any kind of tailoring that you would do to this messaging for smaller organizations, maybe starting out from more of a grassroots-type organization, if you will?

[00:33:34.48] DONNA BUNGARD: For many, many years, I worked at a company that, at our biggest, we were five or six people. I won't lie. I bribed with food a lot. But I also gamified some things. When I had a large scale-- it wasn't an accessibility project but the same approach would apply. Because we were all in a physical space, I used a whiteboard. Online, I might use a Lucidchart, or Miro, or something. I don't know. Those aren't the most accessible tools. I would find something.

[00:34:05.04] And from there, we divvied out certain goals and objectives for each of our team members, because, again, we were a very small company. And we had a competition going. And I believe, for us, it was if X amount was done by a certain amount of time, I would pay for the subs. But if not, somebody else would. And we would do a cheap lunch. It was not a great sub place but it worked. And we'd buy just cheap subs.

[00:34:40.50] But the idea was we gamified it. We played with it. We had fun. When somebody crossed something off, they gave out a yell. Or, in that case, it could be a @here Slack message, whatever works. They celebrated the wins along the way.

[00:34:58.78] So for smaller work, it might be once every quarter, you have a two-week sprint dedicated to this kind of work if it's a technical thing, or every month, you have a day of analyzing your design processes or whatever. But gamify it for a small company. You have that flexibility and the ability to be really nimble when you're small to be able to make these kind of silly things a lot easier than a larger scale organization would be able to.

[00:35:35.70] KELLY MAHONEY: That's great. Thank you very much. We have two points here, which I think are similar related, worth lumping together. One attendee asks, do you have any thoughts or considerations to offer about onboarding and supporting neurodiverse employees? And another person asked, can you speak to the specific touchpoints that employers should consider when attracting talent? So how to address and consider accessibility issues proactively?

[00:36:05.55] DONNA BUNGARD: One of the first things I would recommend-- I'm going to start with the second and work my way back to the first. One of the first things I'd recommend for any employer is to check out your job descriptions. A lot of people-- and I know my past self did the same darn thing-- we grabbed a template. Everybody has to lift 20 pounds.

[00:36:28.81] I have filled out job descriptions. Had to lift 20-- the heaviest thing I ever lifted was my coffee cup. It was back before I had a laptop all the time. It was a PC. Literally, my heaviest thing I carried was my coffee cup. But it said had to be able to lift 20 pounds. Why? Because my employer at the time had just grabbed a template like I had done and everybody else had done.

[00:36:52.42] So look at our job descriptions. Are we asking for what we actually need? Does a person really need a college degree to do the job or do they need the skills to do the job? We focus a lot at Indeed on skills-based hiring. And the truth of the matter is this helps people with disabilities because a lot of people with disabilities are not given the same educational opportunities as people without.

[00:37:23.19] So if we look at the skills people have developed, maybe you don't need in that job description that college degree requirement. Maybe you don't need the lifting 20 pounds. Maybe if you do have a job description that it requires lifting, maybe you don't have to say by themselves.

[00:37:44.72] I don't care how somebody sends me an email. If they want to use voice to text or to type something, if I get the communication, I'm a happy camper. So think about how you're asking things. If you're asking for people to be strong communicators, does that have to be verbal communication?

[00:38:03.57] Which brings us over to the neurodivergent piece. Not everybody is comfortable speaking in general, neurodivergent or not. If you're neurodivergent, sometimes there's additional

barriers in that communication department. Additionally, some people don't want to be on camera.

[00:38:23.61] I will pull out-- I had hidden it for this, but why not. I fidget. I have fidget rings. I have fidget this, that, or whatever, though I found my favorite fidget lately is an old tape measurer, the best use for a tape measurer, way better than measuring anything on my body. I love it. It is my favorite fidget. I am someone who needs to play with things to think.

[00:38:50.12] Sometimes that means accepting people if they're fidgeting or doodling. Don't assume they're not listening to you. Or maybe they need to look off camera or shut their camera off. For a lot of people, especially neurodivergent identities-- but really, again, there's more time than we have here, a list of reasons somebody might need to turn their camera off for a while. Don't make cameras mandatory unless there is a actual physical I need you to hold something up for me.

[00:39:21.02] Think about what is actually needed. And not just how it's always been done is really the underlying thing of all of this. It's not a matter of how somebody communicates. It's do they really need-- it's not how they communicate. Are they capable of communicating what you need them to? What is the skill you need? What is the thing you need? Does the person need to be on camera? Does the person need to have deadlines? Da da da da.

[00:39:54.18] And the only other piece of the application process I want to really touch on is the screenings themselves. First of all, a lot of companies have default phone screening. That is knocking off a lot of really amazingly talented deaf or hard of hearing individuals as well as a few other disabilities as well. That phone screening is huge. Give an option. It can be a phone screening or-- be flexible with how you bring people in.

[00:40:27.37] And then if someone's interviewing, give them a sense of an agenda. Not saying you have to say every question you're going to ask, but give them a sense of what they're coming into. One of my best interview experiences personally was somebody said, hey, you're going to meet with so-and-so. We're probably going to touch on your experience and what they're hoping for this role. And then you'll have a chance to ask some questions. It didn't tell me every question but it got my head in the right place to lower my anxiety.

[00:41:05.99] My worst interview experience was an in-person one where I walked in and didn't know I'd have six people at the end of a very big table looking at me the whole time. I had no sense that it was going to be that kind of thing. So set your applicant up for success by letting them know.

[00:41:23.81] And that leads into just some other just general practices throughout your company like-- and this is one I sometimes forget. This is my weakness of setting agendas. And it's sending those agendas in advance so that people who are those deep thinkers have an opportunity to think it through.

[00:41:43.07] Really, ask people what they need. And don't put the responsibility on them to say, hey, you know, I need so and so. Say, OK, what are the things you need? These are some of the

options that I usually give. Some of my team members want agendas. Some people want this. Some people want that. Take on the accountability yourself to try to meet people where they are.

[00:42:13.85] And also, just get to know people. Ask them what they're passionate about. I was interviewing an amazing woman once. And she was very, very tight and very uncomfortable. And she seemed self-conscious that she wasn't making eye contact but it wasn't comfortable for her to do so.

[00:42:31.52] And I happened to notice that she had a cat go by. I got her talking about cats. The first 10 minutes of our interview together was about her cat. But in the process, I got to know her. We got to translate to her skills, understand how she was strongest. And in the end, she ended up being an incredible addition to that team and just a wonderful professional to work with. So I kind of went on a circular route there but I hope it helped.

[00:43:02.53] KELLY MAHONEY: That was perfect. And I was actually going to touch on the fact that work now is becoming beyond the onboarding and the hiring aspects. Just regular work is becoming increasingly hybrid remote. And I was going to ask, what are some of the things that you've implemented to make sure that there is accessibility across that experience. And you kind of touched on that, unless there's anything else you wanted to elaborate on. We have some more questions from the audience that we can just keep rolling with.

[00:43:29.56] DONNA BUNGARD: The only other thing I'd mention is that if you're doing a hybrid situation, make sure that you make an effort to include everybody in the room, including virtual. Sometimes people who are virtual are left out because someone will sit back and then halfway through the conversation, the sentence drops off. Just one of those things that at the beginning of your meeting, set the stage that everyone needs to speak into the microphones and be engaged that way so that the remote people have an equitable experience. So yeah, let's keep going.

[00:44:06.14] KELLY MAHONEY: Great. So we have one question from Petra, who's an instructional designer and accessibility lead at a university. And naturally, their faculty tend to be concerned about intellectual property rights and things like academic freedom when they're making online course content accessible to a broad audience. Do you have any pointers on how fears like these can be addressed or how you can make the case for accessibility in circumstances where you have very real constraints like that to consider?

[00:44:38.61] DONNA BUNGARD: That is a fantastic question. And whenever it comes to and intellectual property rights, this is where I usually defer to somebody who understands the legal side of that far more than I. That said, in terms of making the case for accessibility, it really comes down to this. In the United States alone, 27% of the population identifies with some sort of disability.

[00:45:07.34] There's a lot of people, especially those identified female at birth, who are in their 30s and 40s or whatever now that were not diagnosed because everyone was using different methods of diagnoses. So you've got a lot of the older workers who might not have been diagnosed. If they did not have that cookie cutter-- for example, with ADHD, for a very long

time, if you were not a cis white boy running around in circles when you were supposed to be sitting down doing math, you didn't really get a very good diagnosis chance, or you had a chance of being misdiagnosed. So you have a lot of your Gen X or older team members who might not actually identify.

[00:45:57.86] So my point is, if we know that 27% of the population does, and we know that there's a very good chance there's a larger group that's either been misidentified or not identified due to their intersectional identities, if you're doing your class, you're talking about a third of the class might not be able to get your content. As a teacher, do you think failing 30% of your group, essentially, is acceptable?

[00:46:33.65] If I found out that 30% of our attendees here, which is about 30 people-- if I found out 30 people out of our 90 here today could not access our content, I would be real bumming and might even be working with you. Hey, can we post an apology? What can we do? I can't imagine me spending-- I've designed courses-- hundreds of hours designing a course, if it was-- I've done this before for an internal piece. It takes hundreds of hours to design these really complex, multihour, intellectually-engaging and thought-provoking work.

[00:47:19.04] Why would you want to spend that much time on something and have 30% of your group not access it? It hurts your students and it hurts you because you've wasted so much of your time. So that's my argument. I'm sure there is much more. Again, legal, all of those other pieces, I am not an expert there. But I'm just saying, from somebody who's taught-- not in academia-- but taught people, I wouldn't want to think that 30% of my students were not set up to succeed.

[00:48:04.13] KELLY MAHONEY: Absolutely. Thank you. We have a couple more here that I think can lump together. So we have someone asking for any ideas on how to get the highest levels of a larger organization to understand the value of creating accessible products. And we have another person in the chat, Julia, I think asking a similar question, but I really like what she finished with. She said, "Telling the boss what to do without being asked is uncomfortable." I think that's really the underpinning here of how to promote buy-in from higher-ups. Do you have any points there?

[00:48:37.67] DONNA BUNGARD: Nearly everyone I've spoken to has a story. Well, everybody has a story, but I'm talking in terms of management or whatnot. One of the both benefits and challenges associated with this type of work is that everybody has an experience with disability.

[00:49:04.96] It might be an individual themselves self-identifying. It might be a brother, a sister, a cousin. It might just be that kid in elementary school who took that different class but he played basketball in the playground that time. Everybody has an experience.

[00:49:23.89] It might just be that somebody got hurt skiing. I mean, we don't wax up pieces of wood and attach them to this body, but other people I know love doing that. And maybe they-- I'm clumsy. That was a joke on my own behalf. But maybe they only had a temporary disability.

[00:49:44.62] The truth is, at some point, every human moves in and out of disability. This is not a checkbox. It is a fluid experience of being human, of we will have moments of ability and moments of disability. And some things are permanent. And some things are on and off and continuous. Everybody has something.

[00:50:12.89] So if you can make this real to them, if you can make somebody feel it and understand it in the terms that they lived, that they know of, to show the benefit-- and then, of course, you have things like Forbes has this great thing about seven benefits to companies.

[00:50:36.63] There's a greater bottom line because people with disabilities that include-- enhance the diverse workforce and therefore create more innovative results. There's legal benefits. There are sometimes tax credits. There are better company cultures because when you meet some people's access needs, you end up meeting access needs you didn't know existed. And it might be a parent's, or caregiver's, or, I don't know, someone living rurally. I don't know what it is, but when you build that culture, you have better culture.

[00:51:12.90] So Forbes gives all of these really great answers of the business arguments and other companies, too. Accenture just released a report last month, I think it was, saying that companies that open up their talent pools to people with disabilities would get more than 10.7 million new people in the United States alone, because that's how big the talent pool is. So there's a lot of really strong business reasons but there we go.

[00:51:50.03] KELLY MAHONEY: All righty. I think we just had a little switcheroo with our host Casey here but seems like things are still going to proceed as planned, technically at least. We've got just a couple more questions to fill the rest of our time here. Again, I've got two I can lump together. We have people looking for pretty technical recommendations. Can you recommend any organizations that you have worked with for auditing the accessibility of platforms or tools? And then David asks, do you have a recommendation for specifically an accessibility checker? So any sort of names that come to mind?

[00:52:25.38] DONNA BUNGARD: I don't think Indeed officially endorses any. I know we do partner with different groups and use different tools. But I think it comes down to finding a vendor that will work with you and really works well within your processes. So I can't officially recommend anything. But yeah, I think it's a matter of just interview a few and see what works for your company.

[00:53:02.07] Things I would always look for is what version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WCAG, are they following? With 2.2 being released, even though it's not legally required by anyone at this time, I would recommend working with an agency or a vendor that could help you meet those future-looking guidelines so you're not doing a remediation should these things become law. I would look for vendors who, again, have great chemistry, great response time, things of that nature.

[00:53:36.36] And in terms of tools, it's important to keep in mind that tools can only collect about 30%. However, actually a colleague was just telling me yesterday that they were finding that the majority of problems out there are within that 30%. So it's a matter of finding one tool

and continuously using it. And maybe when you find that vendor and everything, ask them what tools they use so you're all using the same testing. Or deliberately choose something different, so that way, if there's a slight nuance, you're at least aware and can make the educated decision.

[00:54:15.06] KELLY MAHONEY: That's absolutely what I was going to reference WCAG as well. Just as long as whatever you're looking at follows the most updated regulations from WCAG, that's, of course, of huge importance. And then also a shameless plug from 3Play, we have some resources up on our site about choosing the right vendor for you. So going through all of those things like weighing budget constraints, which are a very real consideration, as well as the quality that you'd like to see, and the totality of the accessibility that they're going to provide.

[00:54:47.92] We've got a couple more questions here sort of moving back more into the theoretical, the strategic. I think a lot of us probably know here that large organizations often have very decentralized decision making structures. Would you have any tips for navigating that decentralization and making sure that you can continue to prioritize accessibility initiatives even among decision makers being dispersed?

[00:55:16.46] DONNA BUNGARD: Yes. That's where that networking piece really will work for you. So I'm familiar with the concept of some of the decentralization. And we're all always working to break down those silos. I think some of the ways is to create-- we call them loop meetings. And that is bringing together leaders from different parts of your organization every so often to touch base and keep aligned on what the goals are. And how each group approaches those goals is going to have to be different based on their needs, and their OKRs or their KPIs, whatever performance measurement tools they use.

[00:56:04.32] So the individual pieces might have to be different, but if you keep bringing those leaders back together for a loop or a check-in call and give time for people to update at that higher level what are we working towards, you can see the fact that it will start bringing some consistency to the message, and you can look for ways to move forward that way. I hope that answers your question.

[00:56:30.56] KELLY MAHONEY: It does. It does. And I'm just seeing some praise in the chat again about your person-centric approach and how we're really approaching this looking at the humans that are behind all of these large-scale theoretical things that we're talking about. They impact real people in very practical ways.

[00:56:50.08] One last question, which I hope was a good little end cap to everything that we've talked about in this theoretical vein, do you have any recommendations for measuring the success of initiatives like these, any sort of Key Performance Indicators, KPIs, you could keep an eye out for?

[00:57:06.76] DONNA BUNGARD: Some of the things I look for-- again, I go back to those pillars. And if education, for example, is a pillar, maybe it's how many people internally were educated or participated in opportunities like these webinars. No, but seriously, how many people are actively pursuing ways of learning for this is an easy place to start.

[00:57:33.32] When we look at the technical side of it, you can look at remediation. Are you seeing that downward trend in your tickets? You could look at ACR completion as a metric, so on the technical side that way. And then in terms of representation, you can look at what impact you're making in your brand. How much of your content was inclusive? What opportunities have you found for that? What content have you provided others to support them in their needs?

[00:58:10.10] And then if you start scaling outside of your organization, it's really going to be dependent on things like privacy laws, but your HR team, depending on how they work, if you have any sort of DEIB report every year, make sure that's included in your-- accessibility and disability inclusion are included in your annual reporting on these topics. And see what aggregate kind of numbers you can pull together. You're not going to get anything specific and that's fine. But you're going to be able to start pulling data together. And then, little by little, you can work with teams in your org to see what you're allowed to have.

[00:58:54.02] Again, understandably-- and I fully support the privacy laws around people with disabilities, but it does make data a challenge. And that's not Donna at Indeed saying this. I've recently read the United Nations say that because of this is a barrier. The European Union even called out that disability being a social construct-- meaning, yes, even if we all use the same definition, how this is interpreted globally is very different-- it makes it hard to measure. So it's going to be a matter of what works for your organization, but start small and grow your metrics from there.

[00:59:33.50] KELLY MAHONEY: That's wonderful. Thank you very much. I'm seeing a lot of thank yous in the chat, a lot of praise for today's presentation. We are at time. So thank you again, Donna, for this presentation and for the discussion afterwards. It's been wonderful.

[00:59:46.43] DONNA BUNGARD: Well, thank you so much for having me.

[00:59:49.14] KELLY MAHONEY: Thank you all once again. Thank you for all the emoji claps. Really feeling that on this Thursday afternoon. And I hope everyone has a great rest of their day and week. Bye, everyone.