

From Policy to Practice - Building a Culture of Disability Inclusion

[00:00:00.48] KIM NELSON: Thank you for joining today's session, From Policy to Practice, Building a Culture of Disability Inclusion. My name is Kim Nelson, and I am on the marketing team at 3Play Media. I'll be moderating today's webinar. And my pronouns are she/her.

[00:00:17.96] I'd like to welcome Donna Bungard. Thank you so much for joining us today, Donna.

[00:00:23.36] DONNA BUNGARD: Thank you, Kim. It's great to be here.

[00:00:26.20] KIM NELSON: Yes. You are the director of accessibility at Indeed. Can you talk a little bit about how you came into your role?

[00:00:34.96] DONNA BUNGARD: Sure. Hi, all, Donna Bungard, pronouns she/her. I have been in the digital space pretty much my entire career. I spent more than 20 years working at various agencies. I had the opportunity to work on hundreds of websites in various sectors, industries, verticals, whatnot.

[00:01:00.80] And my journey into focusing on accessibility kind of started and restarted in that time, meaning that my entire life, I grew up as the only person without a disability in my household. But I was learning disabled. I am what I'm calling mysteriously neurodivergent, because we don't technically know-- I have my suspicions-- but we don't technically know what type of neurodivergence is going on in here. But even at a very young age, it was very obvious that I wasn't processing information like everybody else.

[00:01:36.12] But that said, within my household, we had visual impairments, hard of hearing, mobility barriers, chronic pain that not only was chronic pain, but it also created instances of fatigue and obvious distraction, confusions. There was a whole lot going on. And with it, disability was always normal-- or it is always normal. But I always knew it was normal because every part of my life was infused with it.

[00:02:09.00] And then after many years of agency life, I was talking to a friend. And she's like, it's the right thing to do. And I'm like, no, no, it's not the right thing. It's just normal. This is what we do. And we had this ongoing conversation, which made me realize that other companies weren't understanding that disability is normal, that it's already out here, that we're already part of the workforce. We're already part of society. We're already here. And it's normal. And people are going to move in and out of it their whole lives.

[00:02:46.20] And when I realized that not everybody knew that, I started getting the certifications. I had already moved from a development and design role into management and strategy. And I started getting the certifications and the other pieces of that puzzle to help make me a well-rounded expert, not only on my own experiences with disability, but with how disability impacts, whether it be our technology, our societies, or our workforces.

[00:03:21.63] So fast-forward, I had the opportunity to join the fantastic group at Indeed. And yeah, I've been here a few years. And I'm absolutely loving the opportunity to bake it into how we help people get jobs-- that understanding, that education, helping people with disabilities not only talk about their worth, but helping employers to recognize where barriers might be that they are just unaware of, because things were always done a certain way. And there's an opportunity to make that a little better.

[00:03:58.87] KIM NELSON: Wow. Thank you for sharing a bit of your personal journey and how your own experiences have led you to where you are today. Indeed is a large company, which presents certain challenges when it comes to creating a culture of disability inclusion. When we talk about disability inclusion, what do you think gets misunderstood or left out most often by large organizations?

[00:04:25.27] DONNA BUNGARD: I think that a lot of companies out there are coming at it from the compliance perspective. And that makes sense. We have laws. The EAA, European Accessibility Act, coming out last month was a big push in the legal sphere. But there's been laws in the US, Canada, throughout the world for much longer too. And I think a lot of companies come at it from the compliance. But very often-- and I'm not going to say this of all companies-- compliance tends to keep coming later in the process.

[00:05:04.95] One thing I really wish more organizations recognize is that when we build it into our culture, it not only supports the people internally, but it helps them recognize the barriers that are being put up along the way, lowering remediation, improving the ability of-- it's called shifting left in the development world-- of bringing disability and disabled voices into the ideation process and not just at a compliance level later on.

[00:05:37.39] By bringing the voices into the room, and bringing the perspectives into the room early, and building that culture where it's not only OK to need accommodations, but it's actually just considered another-- well, again, it is-- but it's understood to be another just human need, you're saving money, saving time, streamlining processes. You're baking it into the core of who you are. And it improves the customer experience later down the line.

[00:06:08.35] And I think that that's the biggest challenge companies have, is they're working backwards. And though that compliance piece is vital, the cultural piece is what's going to make the change.

[00:06:21.43] KIM NELSON: Yeah. You're completely, totally right. Baking accessibility and inclusion into the processes is what helps build a culture. You mentioned the idea of awareness and how you've had to educate others about disability inclusion along the way. Is there a phrase or maybe a buzzword you hear that you'd love to not hear anymore? And what would you replace it with?

[00:06:46.91] DONNA BUNGARD: There's a couple. I think one of the biggest-- and I won't call it a buzzword, but I think one of the biggest vocabulary words that people get tripped up on is the idea of compliance. We can be compliant. But very often, our compliance is a snapshot-- a Polaroid, if we'll forgive my aging myself-- a Polaroid or a snapshot of the moment.

[00:07:11.39] Our technology is constantly changing. People are constantly making updates to materials, whether they be digitally or in a build environment. People are constantly moving and iterating and changing, which means at any point, something that might not be compliant-- or you might realize there's a barrier that you just weren't aware of before, that maybe technically falls outside of compliance but makes the difference between inclusion and exclusion.

[00:07:39.91] So compliance alone shouldn't be the goal. Again, vital-- I am not taking away from the legal aspects. Please work with your legal teams, everyone. This is a very important piece of it all. However, compliance as the goal takes away that whole experience. And again, it keeps things further along the lines and not back in the ideation process.

[00:08:12.83] KIM NELSON: Yes, compliance is just one piece of the puzzle. That's so true. Christie called out in the chat that compliance doesn't always meet the needs of the user, and there's always room for improvement. I love that.

[00:08:28.31] DONNA BUNGARD: Yeah. Lizzie mentioned it's the baseline, not the ceiling. And I can't stress that enough. Absolutely.

[00:08:34.75] KIM NELSON: 100%. Let's talk next about representation in the workforce. Where do most companies unintentionally lose disabled talent before they've even applied?

[00:08:48.91] DONNA BUNGARD: Oh, in terms of representation, it's often in the materials. At some point or another, we want to know, if we're applying at a company, am I going to be a fit? Nobody wants that Sunday-night feeling of, oh my gosh, I've got to work tomorrow. We want to know that we belong there.

[00:09:10.22] So when an organization is talking about themselves or their clients and their customers, they need to show people with disabilities throughout the website, not just on an accessibility statement page or an accommodations page, but on their websites, on their career pages-- or we offer company [INAUDIBLE]-- throughout, whatever that media is, disability is normal.

[00:09:38.34] Nearly 30% of the US, Canada, and the EU have all self-identified as disabled. And those are the people who identify. We have individuals who are neurodivergent and colorblind and whatnot who don't identify as disabled, but they are still covered legally under the definition of disability. So we have, I would estimate, far more than 30%. A poll by-- I think it was Business Insider-- said 53% of Generation Z identified as neurodivergent.

[00:10:18.94] We're not talking about a minor part of the org-- population. I am going to trip up words, people. Forgive me.

[00:10:26.90] KIM NELSON: That's OK. You're doing great.

[00:10:28.60] DONNA BUNGARD: We're talking about a large percentage of individuals. And when they're not represented in our media, that just immediately says, I don't know if I belong

here. If everything you say-- pass a phone screening-- well, that's going to immediately cut out the hard of hearing, the non-verbal, many neurodivergent identities immediately.

[00:10:55.08] And there's a bunch of other reasons why somebody would not be comfortable with a phone screening. I'm not discounting those. But I'm just saying, in terms of communities, that's a huge group of people right there immediately gone, screened out before you even apply.

[00:11:11.98] So there's a lot of opportunity to rethink how you show up and rethink that job description, which I know we'll talk about a little later, but rethink how we're talking about work and how we're showing up as a company.

[00:11:28.58] And where is your leadership? Is your leadership talking about disability? Are people sharing their own stories about it? And is that only internally, or sometimes is it public? What is that conversation about disability? And if you're silent, people are going to notice that too.

[00:11:49.10] KIM NELSON: Yeah. I love how you mentioned that people with disabilities not being represented in the media is a bit of a red flag. There are other examples of red flags in job descriptions that might signal to a disabled candidate, this workplace isn't for you. Can you share what some of those might be? And if other people in the chat can share other red flags that they've come across as well, that would be awesome.

[00:12:18.46] DONNA BUNGARD: Well, I like that Paul mentioned how disability is not just neurodivergence. You see a lot of organizations have neurodivergent training programs and hiring programs, which are awesome. But they are not the entire community. Absolutely.

[00:12:38.82] I think what we can talk about for red flags involve the boilerplate templates that people sometimes use that go, lift 15 pounds, stand a long time, sit a long time. Basically, they cover all sorts of things.

[00:12:59.48] I one time scoured the web, and I found one-- on a different platform-- that literally said, stand long periods of time, sit long periods of times, travel, stay back, lift things, use tools for lifting. Like, they covered every possible physical expression of work and said you have to do all of them. And looking at the job, it was an office coordinator role.

[00:13:34.62] So I'm not saying I've never had to lift a Poland Springs bottle at a small office. Many years ago, I had to do that a few times. Nobody wanted me to after the second time when I spilled most of it. But I did technically need to be able to lift. But throughout the rest of my career, I have not needed to. And yet, many-- not as much in the last 10 years-- but many, many of those templates are out there still that say all of these things.

[00:14:07.82] I'm sorry. I'm checking out the things-- driver's license requirements, lifting requirements, not taking mental health seriously. Oh, the hiring managers not understanding how to do accommodations-- that's a great one. Offices, wheelchair access-- I think older offices without accessible bathrooms is a huge red flag. You won't know that 'til an interview process, likely. But I know that there's a couple of them. Return to office is problematic for many.

[00:14:45.41] Yeah, there's a lot of them out there. And I think what it really comes down to employers and hiring managers is to identify, really, what is needed for the job? This is part of why Indeed leans so heavily on skills-first hiring. Because at the end of the day, the disability community-- for those who don't acquire it later in life, the disability community has faced barriers in, frankly, being told what you cannot do and defined what you cannot do their whole lives.

[00:15:25.33] Somebody's coming to the job thing-- me not being able to think in straight lines, as I say, means I had people looking at me funny for not being able to spell the simplest words as a small child, and as a teenager, and as a college student. Though by that point I had technology supporting me. But in my own experience, I was told at a very young age-- not in my home. My home, I was told, heck with that. Figure it out, but in a very positive way.

[00:15:57.01] But in schools, I was always told what I can't do. People come to these things told what they can't do. And we need to strip that away and talk to people, what we can do. So if there were educational barriers, that doesn't matter if you've acquired the skills elsewhere.

[00:16:11.73] I know individuals who have had to manage, frankly, assistance programs, caretaking programs, all of these things. They have more management-- time management, people management, scheduling, management, project management, and even sometimes program management skills-- just from that lived experience than they could have ever learned in a scrum class or the like. So those skills are there. So we're leaning into skills-first hiring so that we can start defining people by what they can do.

[00:16:45.45] And if we also do that, we are challenging employers to rethink their job descriptions to focus on what they can do. Does that person actually need to be in the office? There are some jobs that you need to physically be there, but not all of them. Does the person physically need to lift something? I one time had a job-- it was lift 20 pounds. Can I tell you, yes, my coffee mug was large, but it was not a 20-pound coffee mug. These things were not required for the role.

[00:17:20.49] So our challenge is to just rethink, how are we writing our job descriptions? What skills are actually required? What presence is actually required? Does the person even need to be on camera? There's a lot of roles who never need to have somebody on camera. And that's a huge barrier for some for a variety of reasons.

[00:17:45.01] So our challenge is to go skills-first, rethink what's required for the role. And in doing so, you'll be removing those red flags that our community is talking about. Because not everybody's a fit for every role. Don't put me in a finance department. You talk about not thinking in straight lines. Nobody wants me there. It's fine. I'm not a good fit for that role. But I'm a great fit for certain other roles.

[00:18:13.65] So putting the skills, thinking about what's needed means that everyone succeeds more. And it's just better for our community as well as the general public. Because reality-- nobody's good at everything.

[00:18:30.17] KIM NELSON: Yeah, thank you for that answer. You've spoken a lot about, and so well about, the impact of job descriptions and representation. I'd like to ask specifically about the interview process. Yes. How can hiring managers be trained to conduct interviews in ways that are equitable, inclusive, and mindful of both visible and invisible disabilities? Maybe you have some tips for hiring managers attending the session today.

[00:19:00.29] DONNA BUNGARD: Oh, absolutely. The first thing is, you're going to get it wrong. I'm just going to say that straight out. I've been a part of the disability community all of my life. I have been doing this almost exclusively for the last 10 years. I still get it wrong sometimes. So I need to ask people, what support do you need? What access needs do you have? And I'm going to say the wrong thing or get it wrong. And I'm going to say, thank you for teaching me. I didn't realize. And I'm going to move on with my life.

[00:19:36.96] So the very first, best thing hiring managers can do is not dance around things because they're afraid to get it wrong. Assume you're going to get it wrong at some point. Figure out the skills to keep going. It's OK. Nobody's going to get it right. There's more than a billion people on the planet, each with slightly nuanced differences in how disability presents, not to mention the way their other intersecting identities have impacted that in their life. You're never going to get it right. It's OK.

[00:20:06.24] So with that, also start educating yourself on what disability is. It's a part of the human experience. It's a difference in how things are either mentally processed and/or physically interacted with in the world. And those differences are ways that the individual is going to offer brand new perspectives and insights into the work you're trying to do.

[00:20:38.80] So start understanding. Start reading up or following disabled voices. And listen to them. Listen, listen, listen to what's happening. You don't need to always have somebody come in to talk to you about it. You need to get out there and follow voices, read the books. Listen to the books if that's your thing. But just get disabled voices in your head so you can start recognizing what you might not know.

[00:21:09.76] At the end of the day, nobody's going to know what to anticipate, especially if the person hasn't disclosed. Some disabilities are more likely to need to disclose than others. But either way, you need to understand something so you can create the safety.

[00:21:32.60] One of the first things I do when I'm talking to people is talk about my inability to think in straight lines and how I've personally compensated for that. I don't overcome anything. It's still me. I haven't overcome myself. Who knows? Maybe after I retire, I'll figure out how to do that. But in the meantime, I've compensated.

[00:21:56.84] So with that understanding, with that knowledge, you can ask people what their access needs are. And if you can't accommodate their specific request, ask them to work with you to find a solution. And it's going to have to be a bit of a give and take. Because, like any access need-- maybe somebody has a parent with a sick kid. And they don't care if the kid's screaming in the background, they need them on a call because they're the subject matter expert in X Y Z. That is meeting someone halfway sometimes. We all have to do it at some point.

[00:22:35.92] But talk to them, and ask them. And don't give half a solution, but ask them for support in finding an alternative if you can't meet the specific requirement. There's so many variations. There's so many different technologies. There's so many options. Somebody doesn't need to show up in an office in order to be able to do X Y Z. There's just options here.

[00:23:04.28] KIM NELSON: Yeah. Reshma and RJ called out in our chat something important that I would love to call out. The access needs of one deaf person may not necessarily apply to another deaf person. And you had talked about, if those accommodations do not apply to that other person, then working with that person is so, so critical. So yes, I think that resonates well with everyone here, too. That is important.

[00:23:40.24] I like how you've talked about accommodations. And I'd love your take on how we can shift the mindset from accommodations as a burden to accommodations as a design principle.

[00:23:54.88] DONNA BUNGARD: Yes. Mike Bedford has absolutely done away with the term accommodations in his world. He talks about success enablers. Huge fan of that phrase. I think the power of that phrase comes down to, an accommodation, by definition, is often something extra. And meeting human needs is not extra.

[00:24:26.44] I think what we need to do is take into the account-- we all talk about the curb-cut effect. For those who are not familiar with it, sidewalks didn't used to have little cuts down to flat. They did that for wheelchair users. Suddenly, everybody with a cart, rolling suitcase, stroller-- maybe you just prefer it-- heels, anything like that, you're going to go ahead and use that. The curb-cut effect means everybody had the benefit because they had a disability consideration.

[00:25:07.88] So that teaches me that whenever we can deploy accommodations at scale, or these success enablers at scale, we are therefore going to help not only people with disabilities, but the overall company ecosystem perform more effectively. So there are things-- for example, many of us use Zoom. Many companies have the auto captions and auto transcribing automatically enabled now.

[00:25:42.19] That didn't used to be a thing. That used to be, even when they had it, you to manually add it at admin level and all this other stuff. Now it's just part of life. That is an example of an accommodation deployed at scale. And people can choose to use or not use them as needed.

[00:26:02.43] With that, we're going to see a lot more of that kind of things come out. We have various technologies of voice to text, text to voice. We have a lot of different technologies that can be-- mind dump a bunch of stuff in AI, and please give me an ordered list from this, things of that nature. We have opportunities to deploy technologies at scales that can support various people.

[00:26:31.55] And you're going to find that doesn't only help people with disabilities, that has the potential of helping anyone who needs a productivity enhancer-- or the very fact that people

move in and out of disabilities their whole lives. I went-- and I'm actually still healing from it-- I went eight years with a mobility barrier. I actually had a full leg brace, metal brace, for many, many years.

[00:26:58.75] I moved out of that. Reality check-- I'm going to move back into that at some point with the other leg. It's just going to be my reality. There's no fixed definition of disability. There's no you are or you aren't. Disability is dynamic. The same person can experience different disabilities throughout their lives or throughout the day.

[00:27:21.27] So when we take into consideration all of this work, when we put things out at scale, we're helping everybody, no matter what stage of their life or access needs they have at that time. We're enabling them for success.

[00:27:39.99] KIM NELSON: Yes. I need to call out the curb-cut effect-- such a great example of accommodation benefiting everyone. And I love that mindset shift to success enablers. It's a great term to shift accessibility to being people-first versus checklist-first. So I love that.

[00:27:59.39] You've said before that inclusion should be proactive, not reactive. What does that look like in a real-world application for large organizations, where they do need to scale inclusive processes?

[00:28:13.91] DONNA BUNGARD: That is going to be a challenge. I'll just say it outright. Because again, you're looking at, everybody's going to have slightly different nuance needs. So I want to acknowledge that if an organization isn't there yet, that's OK, because it's not easy.

[00:28:35.03] I think one of the first steps is-- well, there's a couple of first steps that I would suggest. Excuse me. We just got a torrential downpour outside with thunder--

[00:28:45.85] KIM NELSON: Hopefully it helps that humidity we've been having.

[00:28:48.35] DONNA BUNGARD: I know. I'm sorry. The rain in the window next to me just went sideways. That was fun.

[00:28:53.75] KIM NELSON: We can't hear it. Don't worry.

[00:28:55.27] DONNA BUNGARD: OK, good. Well then, forget I said that. OK.

[00:28:59.21] Anyway, so some of the things that they can do is, again, deploy success enablers at scale. That makes it so people don't need to disclose in order to get the support. It means people who move in and out of it, and it means those who know that they need X Y Z will have it available right from the onboarding process.

[00:29:23.71] Another thing is to get people talking about disability internally. If you have an employee resource group or a business resource group focused on disability, this is a great resource to run things by. Talk to them. Ask questions. What can we do? Work with them to talk to individuals internally about, are the benefits working? Do we have enough mental health

benefits also? Are the offices really meeting our needs? Do we need to bring in consultants, maybe partner with outside organizations?

[00:30:04.35] There's a million different groups out there that will all work with you to look at what you're doing and how it's being done and what works, what doesn't, and what can be improved. But again, I think you need to get people talking. I think you need to get leaders talking. I think you need to make it safe for anybody to talk.

[00:30:27.14] I one time gave a training to a bunch of senior-level leaders. And I was talking about how, because of where my learning disability diagnosis came in my schooling, we actually paused. Because we were waiting for the Americans with Disabilities Act to pass. There was talk of it, but it wasn't passed yet.

[00:30:53.55] And we ended up pausing it because my mother was told I was going to be B-tracked and no longer allowed to take any college-prep courses. I was immediately going to be put in remedial everything if I was coded learning disabled prior to the American Disabilities Act.

[00:31:13.95] If we talk about that, well, suddenly in that room, other people were standing up and disclosing disabilities to their colleagues they never even mentioned. And it wasn't all neurodivergence, but there were some non-apparent disabilities in the room. People were talking about their parents and their siblings and other people in their lives. And I realized, looking at this group of a hundred people, that they all thought they were the only one with a story.

[00:31:49.02] So when people start talking about it, they start realizing that disability is normal and they're not the only ones with a story. So those are some of those things-- that deployment at scale, getting the voices of people with disability who are already in an organization to speak up and have impact, and get the leaders talking. And it doesn't always have to be senior-level leaders. That's great. But it can be throughout the org, helping make these conversations normal.

[00:32:18.98] KIM NELSON: Yeah, I love that. I love how you talked about the idea of sharing stories and the impact those personal stories can have. It can have a very positive experience or impact on others. On the other side, Laura shared in the chat a great reminder-- that many people requesting an accommodation might have had some negative experiences in the past and may now have anxiety--

[00:32:44.78] DONNA BUNGARD: Absolutely.

[00:32:45.50] KIM NELSON: --when going to request another one. So how can HR teams create systems that make requesting accommodations easier and safer, especially for individuals who may be hesitant to disclose that disability?

[00:33:02.98] DONNA BUNGARD: Yeah. If you are someone with the option of whether or not to disclose, it is a deeply personal and scary thing. And it's not always scary because of you're concerned you're not going to get it. It's scary because if you disclose disability, you are suddenly being compared to what the other person thinks of as disability.

[00:33:36.50] So for example, if you were to disclose autism, and they knew their cousin was autistic and presented it a certain way, you're suddenly being compared to that cousin even though you present in an entirely different way. So that's what makes it scary. It's-- I call them the ghosts-- the ghosts of what other people are thinking about.

[00:34:02.90] And if people who are receiving these accommodation requests understand that these individuals are coming to them not only with history, but that they have history too, that's going to make it easier. So the first thing they've got to do is, if somebody discloses that they need an accommodation, you thank them.

[00:34:30.94] And you can either share, this is my only experience, but I don't know if it applies to you. What do you need? Or you can just leave your experience behind. It really depends on you, your relationship, the person. But disclosures are hard because that person's afraid.

[00:34:54.02] You also have to be prepared as the manager to back it up and support the person. And that might mean you're going to have to go to bat and find budget. Companies need to have budget set aside for accommodations. And if you don't have that budget, well, then you're not going to meet the person's needs. So you need to be able to do that. It's prior thinking, prior planning about that.

[00:35:25.56] So organizations have to have that set aside. It's a logistic. It's a reality. Everything costs money, right? Not everything, actually-- most accommodations don't-- but for those that do. You have to be willing to teach managers that putting an agenda-- maybe an agenda on a meeting is a requirement somebody has. That's an absolutely common requirement-- that that's not extra on them. It's not extra work. It's just part of the job.

[00:35:54.38] And I say that with full guilty that I am the worst at putting agendas on there. If somebody requests it, I will do it. But I will need to be told that you need it. Because 9 times out of 10, I'll just space it, like, oh, we chatted about this. It'll be fine. No, it's never fine. My apologies in advance. So whatever those accommodations are, you have to be prepared to back it up. Train your managers how to handle these things. Train them how to have the conversations.

[00:36:27.70] It can't only be the person they're disclosing to, that person with the accommodations. It's going to be an ecosystem. So you need to train everybody in that ecosystem on the idea that this is personal. This is an act of trust. And this has to be backed up with positive intent and action-- "and action" being the key part.

[00:36:54.70] That said, if you are deploying things at scale wherever possible, if you are sharing stories and having open conversations as you go, it may not be required for somebody to disclose. And at the end of the day, it's really nobody's business. Like, if you have a need, get it met. But at the end of the day, somebody's disability is not anybody else's business.

[00:37:25.69] And I think that's something that we sometimes forget. We're used to getting all the information all the time, right? We live by our phones. We want to look anything up, we get information immediately. It's not our business. So keep that in mind too if someone's disclosing

to you, that the details are not your business. How you can help them is. So I just said a lot of words. I hope that resonated with people. But that's the thing.

[00:37:58.09] And I want to just acknowledge, RJ, that you've seen disclosures backfire. They can. They absolutely can. There's bias. There's barriers. There's people not sure how they're going to pay for an accommodation. All we can do is make the positive impact where we can.

[00:38:23.85] It's something I actually tell people who are just getting into any work that supports any underrepresented group. These are not problems that are going to be fixed in our lifetime. It's OK. But acknowledging that it will not get fixed in our lifetime is important, because that means that we celebrate every single win along the way. Celebrate every accommodation that you do get pushed through, every policy change, every culture share. Every bit, you celebrate along the way.

[00:39:02.11] Because if you don't, then you'll get discouraged, and fewer people will be helped. And then who knows? Maybe through celebration, you're helping normalize it and create that ripple effect, where other people start celebrating their wins along the way. And it's OK that not everything is a win. The idea is how we respond to that.

[00:39:26.89] If we see a disclosure backfire, then we learn from it. We see if there's other ways of getting things done that can help people. We educate people. We normalize disability. We advocate for companies to have that budget ahead of time for the few things that actually require them. We advocate for manager training. We advocate for these things. And we keep making impact where we can.

[00:39:55.41] KIM NELSON: [INAUDIBLE]

[00:39:56.97] DONNA BUNGARD: What is your take on encouraging people to develop pride? That's right up there with disclosure. It's going to be personal. Some people will have a lot of pride. Because how I think has been detrimental in some parts of my life, and it has been a huge asset in other parts of my life.

[00:40:22.45] I notice things about people's body languages that other people don't pick up on sometimes. And it's great. I can jump back and forth through a thing. I have a lot of things that I am proud of who I am and how I think. Not everybody is there. Not everybody has had the safety to be there.

[00:40:44.57] And when you have intersecting social identities that can enhance or create additional barriers, well, you've got to respect that sometimes it's just not safe. It's not safe to show that pride. So at some point, we have to respect wherever anybody is in their own journey and do what we can to support them and each other throughout the way. And that's not going to look the same. But wherever it is, it's going to be OK.

[00:41:20.17] KIM NELSON: Yeah. As you said, the concept of disclosure can be a vulnerable experience. You also said earlier how getting people, especially leaders and managers, to talk about disability inclusion, it can make a profound impact on the operationalizing of the inclusion.

Do you believe accessibility should be owned in just one department of an organization, or should it be owned cross-functionally? And why do you think?

[00:41:51.85] DONNA BUNGARD: I always say that accessibility is a toddler with sticky fingers. For those of you who have not had this experience, if you have a toddler, probably with something sticky and smelly-- smelly is usually the key-- but sticky around, they will touch everything in your house. It will be your fridge, your oven, your doorknobs, your dog, your cat. It doesn't matter. They will touch everything.

[00:42:21.04] And you will sit around, acknowledging the fact that you now have a mysterious sticky substance everywhere in your house. Yeah. So accessibility is the same way. It touches every part of our working lives. It touches our technology. It touches how we communicate with each other. It touches our review cycles. It touches our offices. It touches our events we go to. It touches the ability to travel to the event and travel safely to that event.

[00:42:56.92] It touches-- I'm not going to go down the list. It touches everything. So we need to have understanding and building it into that process every step of the way. And that means cross-functional communications. You don't all have to be on the same team. But you should all have people touching base throughout the company in order to bring that story together and to bring those experiences together to make sure that technology platforms are supporting people. And when they bring it into the office, there's enough contrast on the big screens up on the-- a lot of us have big screens on the wall. That's that. But it's maybe moving too quickly on either the big screen or the little screen to make people feel sick.

[00:43:52.08] And talk to each other. Especially when you get in large companies, it's so easy to get siloed. And it's going to take effort to break through some of those silos. But bringing the cross-functional groups together is incredibly powerful.

[00:44:10.24] And maybe your ERG-- Employee Resource Group, ERG-- maybe your group will support that. Maybe you have somebody in a different department supporting that communications. But bring people together once in a while, just to have the conversation of what's going on. And you might find ways to support each other that you didn't realize was there.

[00:44:35.20] KIM NELSON: Your sticky finger analogy is so great. I am borrowing that from you for sure. That was amazing.

[00:44:42.52] As we all know, culture change does not happen overnight. And you had mentioned getting everyone in a room together to discuss it. When they are in that room to discuss it, what is one thing a leadership team can do, this quarter, even, to move the needle on disability inclusion?

[00:45:02.44] DONNA BUNGARD: Well, July is Disability Pride Month. Having an event to speak or something like that into your-- [CLEARS THROAT] excuse me-- organization is always helpful. Excuse me. I'm recovering from a cold. I'm going to just switch to the other drink.

[00:45:19.48] KIM NELSON: Take your time.

[00:45:20.84] DONNA BUNGARD: All right. There we go. Voice is back. So it's a great time to bring people in and again get that conversation started. Especially here in the US, people were always hidden. Their disabilities were always hidden. There were ugly laws and all of this other stuff. There's a great deal of history behind disability here in the US. Similar things have happened throughout the world.

[00:45:46.52] Getting people talking about disability is huge. So one thing they can do is figure out if there's a way to get an event or something out there to show not only support of, but inclusion of, belonging of the disability community.

[00:46:05.40] Another thing they can do this quarter is start looking at, are there success enablers, accommodations that can be deployed at scale? Maybe it's a technology. Maybe it's a add-on to a technology you already have. Maybe it's working with a partner, whatever that looks like to you. Get that conversation started this quarter. Now, I say that started this quarter because we all have to be realistic. If you're looking to deploy something that's going to cost a certain amount of money, you might need some planning time. And that's OK.

[00:46:45.84] But get the process started in order for people to be able to follow through. Don't let perfection get in the way of progress here. Take the steps. Everything's going to be iterative. And I'll say again, celebrate every win along the way, starting today. Maybe your win today is for people from your organization-- took here, went to this. You got four bullet points that actually are going to apply to your life. That's the win.

[00:47:20.12] And share that with your manager or with your ERG or with something. Celebrate your wins starting today, even the small ones. And get that momentum going, too. So right now, it's about getting people talking, celebrating those wins. And start the planning process for what can be done at scale so people don't have to disclose to get the support they need.

[00:47:49.76] And the last thing, actually, with that is, start shifting the narrative in house that this is for the person. This is actually for the organization. Any accommodations, success enablers, are to benefit the organization so that they can get the most from their human potential that they're hiring and they're paying. This is not about something good for the employee. This is good for the business, because they need the talent that employee brings.

[00:48:24.11] So if that business needs that talent, they need those skills-- going back to skills. They need that. And a better accommodations process is good for the business. So therefore, start shifting that conversation around to get us out of a charitable mode.

[00:48:45.51] KIM NELSON: Yeah. I love that you mentioned the pursuit of progress over perfection. And I think that's key.

[00:48:53.35] Lots of companies, they often have key accessibility advocates that are so essential in improving a culture of inclusion. How can organizations ensure that their accessibility efforts

are resilient and not dependent on certain individuals, policy shifts, leadership changes, or compliance mandates alone?

[00:49:23.75] DONNA BUNGARD: [CLEARS THROAT] Excuse me. That's going to come with maturity. And that's one of those things that you're going to have to take iteratively. If it's baked into the culture and baked into your onboarding processes and into your conversations, it's going to be easier to make it resilient. But at the same account, that's not going to happen overnight.

[00:49:53.19] So if you can start that iterative process now and that cultural process now, that's why you need it in your culture. Because policies will change. Because people will change. Because these things happen. That's why you need it in the culture. That's why you need to build it into every little thing with those sticky fingers in order to get it infused in different places. But yeah, just start the process. It's not going to be one and done.

[00:50:32.07] KIM NELSON: Yeah. Maturity is so, so important. And time will truly allow inclusion to be ingrained in a company's culture over time. We completely agree with that here at 3Play Media, for sure.

[00:50:45.43] What role do you believe corporations should play in protecting and also advancing disability inclusion, even when external policies or protections might fall a little short?

[00:51:04.15] DONNA BUNGARD: At the end of the day, we're all human beings. We're all going to have good days and bad days. We are going to have days when we are more emotionally compromised or less. We're all going to have days when, even if you're without a mobility barrier, maybe you sprain your wrist or your ankle. Or who knows? Maybe you drop your laptop or your phone. My phone right now has a cracked screen. It's fantastic.

[00:51:36.87] KIM NELSON: Don't they always?

[00:51:40.43] DONNA BUNGARD: For the record, it's the screen protector. It's not totally destroyed, but it was really close. I don't think it is, anyway. I'm afraid to take off the screen protector. But this is a tangent.

[00:51:50.31] My point is, everybody is going to have needs. Every human being is going to have access needs. And the only difference between disability access needs and not is how mainstream they are seen to be.

[00:52:15.83] A beautiful commercial came out of somebody going through their day. And the sidewalks were built up with hills with, like, treads on them so that wheelchair users would be able to go up. The person went to check into the hotel, and the person was only using sign. Somebody went to do something else, and everything was in Braille. That person was having a hard time because their access needs weren't met. Because that person was used to hearing language, reading content, and walking up stairs.

[00:52:53.27] The only difference is what is considered mainstream. But every single human has access needs. When we start shifting how we look at this work to just being on our fellow humans who have the skills to do a job, we can build in our processes and our communication styles and our company cultures to accept that person with the skills to do their job.

[00:53:29.79] And we will give them what they need, whether it be a refreshed laptop screen or a screen reader to get the job done so that they can use their skills, and at the end of the day, live up to their human potential, which is going to benefit the organization. And the more companies start focusing on the people with the skills to do the job, the more normalized the rest of this will become. And the companies win. The humans win. This is only beneficial.

[00:54:11.78] KIM NELSON: Yes, thank you. Sadly, we are running out of time. I wish we could talk for longer. So I'll ask one last quick question. We're going to talk about the vision, the future. Looking ahead, is there something that excites you about the future of accessibility and disability inclusion?

[00:54:32.38] DONNA BUNGARD: I love that people are talking more. I know I've been talking this whole hour, but I love that people are talking more. If you go to social medias, if you look at books, if you follow audiobooks, if you are out there, people are talking more, even at conferences at wonderful-- thank you, 3Play, for having me for amazing opportunities like this.

[00:55:02.34] I am excited people are talking more. Because the only way we're going to be able to get people's access needs met is to have this be a normal part of our conversation, as much as anything else, as much as our phone screens.

[00:55:20.14] KIM NELSON: Yes. Thank you so much, Donna. That's all the time we have for today. I can't believe the hour's already up. Thank you so much for the wonderful conversation and for sharing such great information with us. And thank you to our audience for joining and asking such great questions. You really helped us drive the conversation today. So thank you. So thank you. Thanks again. And I hope everyone has a great rest of your day.