SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you, everyone, for joining this webinar entitled "Tech4Good, Tech4All, and Digital Inclusion." I'm Sofia Leiva from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. And today, I'm joined by Debra Ruh, CEO and founder of Ruh Global Impact. Debra is a global disability inclusion strategist, market influencer, internationally recognized keynote speaker, published author, branding expert, and a successful entrepreneur.

In 2019, she was inducted into the Susan M. Daniels Disability and Mentoring Hall of Fame. She created Ruh Global Impact to help clients reduce their compliance and brand risks associated with inclusion and create programs that act as a positive differentiator. She has worked with countries, UN agencies, national, and multinational firms all over the world.

Debra is also the host of a popular program called "Human Potential at Work," and is the author of three books-- *Inclusion Branding, Tapping into the Hidden Human Capital* and *Finding Your Voice Using Social Media.* And with that, I'll hand it off to Debra, who has a wonderful presentation prepared for you all.

DEBRA RUH: Thank you, everybody, for joining the presentation today. This is a topic that I really like. And it seems like there's never been a more important time to talk about these topics than during the COVID-19 crisis. So the reality is-- an understatement-- that the world has changed. And the number of people with disabilities continue to rise.

And I don't mean that in a negative way. I think that it's really important in that we embrace who we are. I'm very proud to be a member of the community of people with disabilities. And my husband and my daughter are also members of this community. So I think that we really need to own who we are and that we all add value to society, especially if society allows us to do that.

So the world has changed for a lot of reasons, but some of them are certainly because of globalization. And that's an interesting one right now when we're in a global pandemic. But globalization has brought a lot of very positive things to the world as well. Of course, so has medical advancements. We have become a lot better at keeping people alive, keeping people alive longer, making sure that we accommodate people as they sometimes become a person with a disability or they join our community, sometimes just temporarily.

But medical advancements have been a real gift to the world. But there's still a lot of things

that we need to do to make sure that everyone has access to the medical advancements that are out there. And I know we're going to talk about that more today.

Of course, technology-- thank goodness that we have technology. I was listening to a show last night. They were talking about the COVID virus. And they said, thank goodness we have technology. Thank goodness we have ICT-- the internet, communications, and technology-- because this would be a much different experience without something like Zoom, without the ability to FaceTime with each other, the ability to game with each other, and do all the different things that we can do to follow the rules when it comes to COVID-19 with the social distancing and staying home to stay safe and things like that.

So other ways the world has changed is we have the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is a few years old now. In the United States, we have the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is actually 30 years old this year.

And we still have the digital divide. And the digital divide has shifted and changed over the years. And digital inclusion is essential to all of us. And we're seeing that more than ever, especially at a time when everybody's going home, and a lot of companies and a lot of organizations still are not accessible. And they're seeing the negative impacts to their employees and their business because they're not accessible. It's not just about making sure you're accessible to people with disabilities, accessibility will actually benefit all of us. And a lot of companies are understanding that right now. And then, of course, more than ever before, corporate social responsibility is something that must be done, and brands must talk about what you're doing, which is one reason why I wrote my book, *Inclusion Branding.*

I talk to corporations a lot. And I'm always explaining to them that return on investment is very important when it comes to including people with disabilities or any other corporate engagement. As opposed to focusing on just a charity or we're going to help those people, the society more and more, the expectations for brands are that you look at the eyes of being involved with your communities, and making sure you have corporate social responsibility, and you're doing good by looking at the return on investment on shareholder value with this lens of are you a company or an organization that's making a difference and giving back? Or are you one of those companies that all you care about is profit sharing and shareholder value?

Which I know that last year, 200 corporations came together and vowed that they were going to focus on more than just the bottom line. And I think that's a positive sign. And the younger

generations are demanding it. And if you want to be an employer of choice, you need to be a company that is making a difference, not only with corporate social responsibility, but with social good. And we'll talk more and more about that.

So brands must realize that the efforts that you're making will increase your productivity. Once again, that is being proven out all over the world right now. I know I heard a number yesterday that 97% of Americans are at home-- so just looking at it from a US lens. But people are sheltering in place all over the world. So also, these improvements and accessibility efforts that you're making, that a corporation makes to streamline your process to make sure everything is accessible and inclusive, from your workforce to your customer base-- these are ways that you can really differentiate your brand.

So equating positive return on investment with the good that you're doing in the world while doing what you do for a living, this has never been more important. And this is going to continue to be expected. For example, if you are a brand, what are you doing to help with climate change and climate action? What are you doing to make sure that you have a diverse workforce? And if you don't have a diverse workforce, you are really missing out on innovation opportunities. So there's so many reasons and there's so much good data out there to show that a corporation must focus on social responsibility. It's just more critical than ever.

Another thing that is critical-- and a lot of the brands that I work with do know what the SDGs are-- the Sustainable Development Goals-- the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. But I still hear a lot of corporations in the United States not really-- they'll ask me, what is SDGs?

So the SDGs the 17 goals that the United States came up-- and a lot of people joined these efforts to make sure that the world would work for everyone. And of those 17 goals, 11 of them associate with people with disabilities. So people with disabilities have been disenfranchised for years-- forever-- forever and ever and ever.

And even in this COVID-19 crisis, we continue to see people with disabilities being disenfranchised. We see really old, stupid laws that say, well, if you're a person-- I just saw a law in Alabama that if you're a person that has severe mental retardation, maybe they won't prioritize you if you need a ventilator.

I have a daughter with Down syndrome. I have a husband that has aged into dementia. So both of those two family members are at risk for these outdated, ridiculous laws. So we still

have a lot of work to do.

I put a quote in here from Unilever. Paul Polman was the CEO of Unilever for years. He retired a couple of years ago and was very involved with Dr. Caroline Casey with the Valuable 500. I know that Bill Curtis-Davison is on here and that Magic Leap is one of the Valuable 500-- so kudos to that company and the other almost 400 companies that have also committed to being part of the Valuable 500.

But Unilever's quote is our whole business model is geared toward the SDGs-- Sustainable Development Goals-- and that all 300 brands they have globally, their purpose is all about the sustainable development goals because this is about making the world work for everybody. So consumer goods giant Unilever promotes and exemplifies the idea that if a company wants to be prosperous in the long term, putting sustainability, in the biggest sense of that word, at the heart of its business model makes perfect sense. And I agree with Paul Polman, and I really appreciate him.

There's also never been a more critical time to remember that diversity and the intersectionality that goes with diversity is more important than ever. I'm a big women's rights person. I really believe that it's time for gender equity and to break down the barriers that we continue to place upon women in the workforce and politics in societies all over the world.

But looking from the lens of the community that I also identify with, the community of people with disabilities, every diversity program, every diversity effort that's being made out there, we need to remember the intersectionality of this. If you're dealing with the women's movement, that's great. But the women's movement needs to be diverse. It needs to include women with disabilities, women of color, women that are part of the LGBTQ movement and on and on. Same thing with the LGBT community. We need to make sure that all of these movements are diverse. And that includes embracing neurodiversity.

And together, we are stronger. But we see that sometimes, we'll see these movements, and nobody's in these movements except Caucasian people, for example. So all of these movements, including the movement of the community of people with disabilities, have to consider diversity and intersectionality.

This is also a huge market opportunity and continues to be a huge market opportunity. And once again, that's what I talked a lot about in my third book, *Inclusion Branding.* But I highlighted some of the commercials that I'd seen. And I could do slide after slide after slide of

corporations that are really stepping up, trying to make sure that they are including people with disability in their marketing. Because, of course, representation matters. And representation is expected, especially by the younger generation.

So some of the examples that I put up here-- there is an example of Microsoft and the wonderful controller that they created for children that could not use a traditional controller.

[CLEARS THROAT]

Excuse me. I have an ad of a woman touching a flower. And this actress happens to be a woman that's blind. And it's a Dove commercial about lotion, and how good it feels when she puts it on her skin, and how it smells, and how much she appreciates it through her other senses. And it's just really a beautiful experience as you're watching her go about her day. It's a really good commercial.

There's another one of Honey Maid. And there is a woman teaching a little girl how to make a healthy snack using Graham crackers because Honey Maid makes Graham crackers. At the very end of this commercial, the camera backs up, and you see that the woman is in a wheelchair. And I just thought that was very tastefully done. It's a way, once again, to represent our community without it being inspirational porn and over the top, and oh, don't you feel so good that this lady could make a snack for her daughter, things like that. The community does not like that kind of advertising.

So AT&T has done some wonderful, wonderful commercials. And I recently heard they're doing a lot during the COVID virus to make sure that our most vulnerable populations are protected, along with a lot of other brands that are stepping up as well. So kudos to AT&T. And another example here is of Amy Purdy in a Toyota commercial. And Amy lost both of her legs when she was a teenager. She became a Paralympic skier, and she was a runner-up on *Dancing with the Stars* and just a very, very talented woman.

So the point I'm trying to make here is that the more brands that are including people with disabilities, visibly including them in their commercials, those are the brands that our community needs to support because they're taking the time to include us. Every single time I see a commercial-- I'm bad about this, but every time I see a commercial, I look to see about representation. Are you representing different colors of skin? Are you representing different ethnic groups? Are you including people with disabilities? So it's just very important that any of

these commercials that we make sure that we have proper representation.

So we're talking today certainly about technology, and the disruption continues to explode with changes, with new ways of doing things. I mean, obviously, y'all know this. We're all dealing with the COVID-19 viruses. We're dealing with this. But there's so much disruption when it comes to technology and globalization. And a few of the things that are changing-- we are starting to see more and more driverless cars.

And it might be that the cars are only partially driverless cars. I know I have a Subaru, and the Subaru, about 75% of the time, it can drive itself, sometimes better than I can. I know a couple of months ago I thought I had plenty of time to stop at a stop light. But apparently, my car did not think I was being aggressive enough, and it actually took the wheel away from me, which was very scary. I assumed the car knew better than I did. But there are all kinds of things that are happening with the driverless cars which are going to make our societies safer.

I remember one time posting a post about a driverless car. And somebody said, well, I would never use a driverless car. Three people have gotten killed with driverless cars. I would never do it. Well, I know there's over a million people every single year killed in automobile accidents all over the world. So we do need to do something because often, human beings are distracted drivers. And so driverless cars are going to, more and more, be part of our world. Driverless trucks, I know. I was watching a *60 Minutes* that I talked about, they're going to have driverless trucks on the road. I think they already do in some cases, but it's going to become much bigger.

So 3D printing of prosthetics so that children can-- as their limbs are growing, we can do 3D printing. It's just amazing. Smart glasses-- there's a lot that is being done with smart glasses. There have been some failures, but the reality is we're still learning all this stuff. So we're going to try it. It isn't going to work. And we're going to try it this way, and we're going to learn from those failures. And so I still have a lot of hope for smart devices and internet of things, smart glasses, things like that for making a difference to our world.

And then, of course, the exoskeleton, which is a wonderful thing for people with spinal cord injuries, but they're very expensive. And so that's another thing we'll figure out how to, at some point, get these wonderful inventions to everybody.

But I wanted to highlight-- there's so many good things out here. There's so much tech for all, so much tech for good, so many corporations stepping in to make a difference. And I just did a

few of them.

But I really am a big fan of KR Liu, who works for Google. And she is a woman that was born with severe hearing loss, and she used hearing aids, and she reads lips. And I was talking to her the other day. And she said, I understand why people are going to masks during the COVID virus, especially because the CDC recommends we all wear masks in the United States, even though some of our politicians are choosing not to. I'm going to follow what the CDC says, personally. But she was just noting that, as a person that reads lips, the masks are a problem for her. Now, she's not saying people shouldn't wear masks during this time of crisis, but it's just things like that that I hadn't thought about.

So she has done some really amazing things in her career. But one thing that I wanted to point out was the work that she did with Doppler Labs with their Here One buds. So it's a combination of wireless earbuds and smart devices, which is able to take in the ambient sound through the Microsoft and filter out the background and noises but enhance the speech, which does essentially what a hearing aid does. But she actually had to work with Elizabeth Warren and others to get laws passed so that this could be brought to consumers that are deaf or have hearing loss because the rules were different about the way we did hearing aids as opposed to other devices.

So a quote from KR is "we really believe that accessibility and reaching those consumers is important, but we haven't been able to reach them due to regulation." So what do you do if a regulation's getting in your way? Well, if you're KR Liu, you actually step up and you change the laws. So I love the young people with disabilities that are owning who they are and saying, I don't think the world should work this way. And so they're working really hard to make sure that they are the change they want to see.

So I used this example of the Doppler Labs, Here One buds, as opposed to Starkey's Halos hearing aids, which can cost up to $10,000. I know that my husband is a hearing aid user. And his hearing aids cost us out of pocket $6,000. So by setting their sights on users that have mild to moderate hearing loss, Doppler, Bose, and other companies are blurring the lines between professional grade devices and lifestyle products.

And I think there's a lot of hope there, and we're going to see more and more opportunities with this kind of Tech4Good, Tech4All. It drives down the cost. It makes it more available to everybody. And sometimes it meets the needs better than the initial products that were

created for this particular part of the community.

Another example is Be My Eyes. I'm a huge fan of Be My Eyes. Be My Eyes is a free mobile app that was created to make the world more accessible to people that have low vision or they're blind. And when they launched it in January 2015, they had more than 2 million volunteers sign up to assist people that are blind and are low vision users. The society really, really wrapped around what Be My Eyes were doing. It was really amazing, and they continued to grow all the time.

And I know my son was one of the volunteers that signed up to help. And they have so many volunteers that want to help that sometimes you don't get called that often. And he got called, and he was so excited. A woman had called, and she wanted to have lunch. And she wanted to have a certain kind of soup, and it had a pop top. But she had multiple cans in her cupboard that had pop tops.

And so she used Be My Eyes, and my son was able to help her select the soup she wanted because the other pop tops, pop tart-- oh, gosh, I can't say it-- pop tops were fruit. So she didn't want fruit for lunch. She wanted soup for lunch. So it's really, really cool. And there's so many people that have stepped up to help.

Be My Eyes also is in 180 languages. And the app is very sophisticated. So it connects English speakers with English speakers. And it connects you culturally in different ways. And it's the largest app in the world that is supporting people that are blind and low vision, and the largest also micro-volunteering platform in the world. And I think you're going to see more and more of these micro-volunteering platforms come up. So it's exciting.

And the founder says "it's my hope that by helping each other as an online community, Be My Eyes will make a big difference in the everyday lives of all blind people all over the world." And his name is Hans Jorgen Wiberg-- excuse me if I said that wrong. And he's the founder.

But he's right. This has really been a game-changer for so many people that want to be independent. And people that are blind and low vision want to be independent just like everybody else. So it's a very clever way of using the sourcing, the micro-volunteer sourcing, and technology to come together to solve problems that we've had in our society for many, many years.

Another example is Assistive Touch, which is a way that people with mobility impairments or

physical disabilities can operate a smartphone. The apps can be used either on a smartphone or a desktop to solve a variety of daily challenges. Of course, it's available on both Android and for iPhone users with iOS. But it's very important for people to be able to use their technology, their devices, and be independent as possible.

So the Assistive Touch mobile app activates the smartphone's operations, and it makes it much easier to use. It's allows them to create virtual home buttons, back button, screenshot buttons, volume controls, turning the volume on and off, and allowing the individual, with disabilities often, to be able to operate their technology themselves, which is what people want.

It's also very supportive for people that are aging into disabilities. And as a reminder, we have 70 million Americans in the United States that are now over the age of 56. Most global corporations now have five generations in their workforce. It's really important that we all have access to technology. And some of these Tech4Good, Tech4All programs like Assistive Touch can help with that.

The JABtalk is a mobile app that one of my colleagues uses. It's an app that provides text-to-speech functionality. And it really helps a little take it a few steps further for people that are non-verbal adults or children, and it allows them to better communicate in a complex world. I know that as my husband-- he's acquired dementia-- early onset dementia-- his communication skills have dropped dramatically. And they continue to drop and change. And something like JABtalk is very, very helpful to him because he no longer can communicate with me in the way that he communicated with me through our life.

So I really like this app. And there's a lot of other really cool apps that provide this kind of support for people that are non-verbal. It includes the ability to build complex sentences, organize words into user-defined categories, and also import pictures and audio to make the communications even more robust. It transforms any Android device-- and right now, this one is only available for Androids. And I think they're working on an iOS version. But right now, it's available for Android users. But it allows people that are using AAC or augmented and alternative communications different options. And these devices are affordable as well, which is wonderful.

I remember hearing a story one time of a young woman. She was 15 years old, and she had Down syndrome. And it was difficult for people to understand what she was saying. And so the

school was going to buy her an $8,000 assistive technology device to help with her communications. And at the time-- this was about eight to 10 years ago-- she said, well, shouldn't you just get me an iPad? And I'll get some apps to use?

So you can spend $500. Give her-- the device they were considering was 3 feet long, so it wasn't portable. She couldn't move around school with it. And so she actually gave the school indications of how they could best meet her needs and give her something that she could use as a communications device wherever she went. And of course, a smartphone would have done that as well. So I always love that example.

Huawei is another-- there's so many corporations that are doing good things with Tech4Good, Tech4All and really trying to make a difference. And they created a program that has had, I believe the last count, 50 million people had downloaded this app. It's called Storysign. And it was created by Huawei. And they worked with different communities of people that were deaf and hard of hearing and had hearing loss. They didn't do it just themselves. They actually worked with others, which is what you should always do. If you're trying to solve a solution for parts of a community, involve and engage that community. And so they did a really good job with that.

So they created Storysign. Through the power of artificial intelligence and augmented reality, Storysign can bring books to life and help deaf children enjoy story time the same as every other child. They one time gave me a statistic that 90% of children that are born deaf, 90% percent of them are born to hearing parents that don't know sign language. So providing apps like Storysign allow these families to communicate better together. And it also allows us to learn from each other.

I remember we highlighted this at the International Labor Organization's, the Global Business Disability Network in Geneva. And somebody had said, well-- because there's a cute little avatar with blue hair that helps tell the stories, and as the parents read it through these device, then the avatar signs to the child that is deaf or has hearing loss. And somebody said, well, how is the avatar learning? Well, it's not really all artificial intelligence. It's augmented reality.

And I gave a shoutout earlier to Bill Curtis-Davidson with Magic Leap That's what they're doing. They're focused on virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality. How do you take all this and all this technology and pull it together to provide solutions like Storysign that Huawei did? So I applaud Huawei for those efforts and for all of the children that have been helped.

Digital inclusion-- I've done some articles about digital inclusion. I live in beautiful Virginia in a rural community. And I pay $250 every month for my internet. And my internet is not always great, but I work from my home. I have worked from my home since 2001. So as we were sheltered in place, I already had everything I needed. My employees have teleworked from the beginning. But the reality is that we don't all have reliable, dependable internet.

And the rural communities-- disenfranchised communities, including people with disabilities and people in developing countries-- they have even less options. But I often remind people that just because you're in a developed country like the United States-- I'm in Virginia, which borders Washington, DC-- and I struggle to get good Wi-Fi.

They're talking about 5G. Well, we're lucky sometimes to get 3G out here. But as we move towards 5G, society has to assure that we all have access to robust and affordable internet all over the world, or the digital divide continues to widen. And we're seeing that happen. And once again at a time when so many people all over the world are sheltering at home and staying safe-- stay home, stay safe-- this is more important than ever before.

And I often don't hear it being talked about. I believe that the ICT-- once again, internet, communications, and technologies industry-- they need to be leaders with this, and please stop fussing with each other. Oh, I don't like you as a corporation because-- I just think that is not helpful to the world. We are all one world. And yes, we all live in different countries, and we want to be proud of the country we live in. But I think fighting with other countries and fighting-- I just don't think that's helpful for our society, especially at a time when we're constantly in crisis.

So making sure that we are considering digital inclusion in everything we do so that everyone can survive and thrive throughout society and really have their needs met so that we all can come to the table and help solve these critical global issues we have, I think is imperative. It also allows us to thrive socially, economically. It encourages innovation and creativity. And it broadens opportunities.

And of course, as a mom, I'm going to find a way to put a picture of my daughter in here. This is a picture of my daughter Sara. And Sara is a very, very good technologist. I remember when I went from using Microsoft-- I shouldn't say Microsoft. I will show my age now. Let me say it a different way. When I moved to Apple products, I was so confused for a while. And so I was relying quite a bit on my daughter. And I would say, now, how do you cut and paste? And

she's looking at me like I'm a little slow. And she would point her finger. And she'd say, you just hold it down, Mom.

So I have been in the technology field for a long time. I'm over 60. And I had programmed. I had done a lot of stuff. But it was a hard transition for me when I went from my old devices to the Apple devices because they were so much easier to use that they actually confused me. So then I started thinking, OK, what is the easiest way that I could do something, which, by the way, makes that more accessible to everybody?

So my daughter is such a good technology user that sometimes she gets herself in trouble. I will tell you that during this lockdown, my daughter was able to spend $5,000 on little diamond games. So we've been having some discussions with Apple, trying to help us work our way out of that. And now I know how to lock it down that she can't do stuff like that. But she just got into some of these games, having more time to herself. And it wound up getting us in a little bit of trouble. But--

So all of these conversations about seamless integration of everybody-- nobody should be excluded. Nobody should be left out, because-- and then you can fill in your blank. They have the wrong color. They have a disability. They're a woman. Whatever. It's ridiculous. We all win when we come together and we use technologies in a way that benefits all of society. And societies function better when everyone can participate.

People with disabilities have been adding value to societies forever and contributing, but often they have to fight to be there. We need to make it a little bit more seamless and easy for people to be there.

Also, these efforts are good for the bottom line and your brand's image. And if you're not doing this, we are noticing. And the community of people with disabilities is over a billion people strong. The reality is we still don't act together as a cohesive group. Many people don't identify as being part of this community when they actually are. We're seeing, for example, with the COVID virus that people that have asthma are more at risk, for example.

And so I look forward to times when we don't have to label each other to get the services and the supports we need. But right now, that's still not there. So integrating persons with disabilities into an organization's workplace, your marketing and branding and the accessibility of your products and services are critical.

I know at my company, Ruh Global Impact, we look at it from three pillars-- the customer's experience, your employee, and your brand. Everything has to be accessible.

So in conclusion, the good news is there is a direct path to this community. But it's happened because of technology. Advanced technology's creating all kinds of new models and breaking down barriers to the global community of people with disabilities, their families, and their friends. This is an active community. We are engaged. We are a strong purchasing power. But I think we could do so much better of rewarding the corporations that are fighting for us and supporting us.

I'm looking right now at this crisis. I know some of the clients I'm working with-- I know that Huawei reached out to me and said, Debra, we have hundreds and hundreds of masks. Who can we send them to in the United States that needs help? I know that Google is doing amazing things to really try to make sure we have access to the information-- good, solid, vetted information-- that we need. Amazon-- where would we be without Amazon? I know a lot of people like to criticize Amazon, but thank goodness they're there.

It would be so much harder without some of these corporations. And these corporations want to make a difference. But there's still so much work to do.

Social media has allowed us to talk to each other and have the bi-directional path, both for corporations to have access to consumers with disabilities and employees with disabilities, but back and forth. Models that provide-- We have the business to consumers and the consumer direct to business. And some people they're starting to say that we should have business to humans. So there's a lot of activities that are happening, but there's still a lot that needs to be done. And once again, a lot of these advancements can be laid at the feet of social media, critical global marketing platforms, and technology.

So I have a couple of slides here that I don't want to cover very-- I'm going to just show you. Sofia mentioned my podcast, *Human Potential at Work.* It's in 86 countries, 113 regions. I've had about 215 episodes-- good resource there. I'm also a co-founder and a co-host of *AXSChat*-- A-X-S Chat. We've been doing it for over five years. We've had over 8 billion tweets. Special thanks to Barclays, who supports us. But also Microlink and My Clear Text are also sponsors of this.

And we're talking about accessibility, inclusion, tech for all, tech for good, which corporations-- we don't on there and trash corporations because I don't think that's helpful. But we talk about

the corporations that are making a difference.

And then I have three books-- *Inclusion Branding, Tapping into Hidden Human Capital.* And then I would not recommend *Finding Your Voice Using Social Media* because I wrote it in 2013. Think how much social media has changed. So I haven't updated, so I don't recommend that.

But here's all my contact information. But I wanted to make sure that we had plenty of time for questions. And I apologize if I was talking too fast, but I wanted to make sure that we could have some discussions about this. And I know, for example, that Bill is on, and that Magically is doing a lot of Tech4Good stuff. And so I wanted to make sure that we had enough time to talk about some of these things, but also, some other things that people are seeing and answer any questions that people might have. So I'll leave this slide up. And Sofia, how do you want us to handle the Q&A?

SOFIA LEIVA: Yeah, of course. Thank you so much, Debra, for such a wonderful presentation. I am compiling the Q&A here on our end. And I'll just start reading the questions, and we can go from there.

DEBRA RUH: Thank you.

SOFIA LEIVA: All right, so the first question we have is, "what are the commonalities between inclusive designs for disabilities and for aging in place?"

DEBRA RUH: Oh, that's a great, great question. And I think there's many commonalities. Because making something accessible, we know how to do it. We know what the standards are. The problem is sometimes just the sheer volume of what we have to make it accessible is difficult. And let me just ask you a real quick question, Sofia. Should I turn off my screen-sharing?

SOFIA LEIVA: Yeah, you can definitely do that.

DEBRA RUH: I didn't know if that would help. OK. All right. Thank you. But the commonalities, as far as accessibility and inclusive design goes, we know how to do this. And so the commonalities are the same. What you need to do to make something accessible to somebody with cognitive decline, say that it's for a person with intellectual disabilities like my daughter or my husband, who now has intellectual disabilities, sadly, because of the dementia-- those things are the same.

Where we have problems when it comes to people that are aging into disabilities is access to those people and access to the information that we need. I had one of my customers asking me, well, how do we get the information out, for example, about COVID and what we need to do to the elderly population that have aged into disabilities? And I said, you're going to have to do it through their family members.

Because what we've seen is someone like my husband, he was a technologist. He worked for Capital One as a technologist. But today, he really struggles with a lot of technology. And so I guide him.

And so you have to remember that when you're creating inclusive design for people that are elderly or have aged into disabilities that the way you market to them and communicate with them is often different than the way you would market and communicate to the rest of the population.

Because someone like my daughter, who's 32 years old, she's all over this. Now, she's not always going into internet and, you know, media and places that I would necessarily want her to, but she doesn't care what I want. She's an adult.

But I believe the design is the same. I mean, there are some considerations. You have to think about whether or not-- a lot of younger people with disabilities have been given access to technology-- more, of course, in developing and developed countries. But with the older populations that are aging into disabilities, depending upon their age group-- because we're seeing more and more people acquiring very serious disabilities at younger ages. Unfortunately, we've started to see that shift. So people that are over 85 or really 80 and above, they did not use technology traditionally as much as the younger generation because technology has changed so much. But we're seeing younger people that are getting severe disabilities, like my husband, at younger ages.

And so I believe it's more about how you get the information that you've created out, the inclusive designs that you've created. It seems like the struggle that a lot of us are having is getting the technology, the information into the hands of the people that need it, especially if you are a person that didn't need those kind of devices, and you've aged into it.

One time, I was sitting on a plane. And a woman next to me's father had had a stroke. And we started talking about that. And she's like, it has been so frustrating. We don't know how to help him. But she was the one that was trying to come up with solutions for her father. And I don't

know if you want me to elaborate on that, but that's what we're seeing.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you so much. The next question we have is, "do you have any recommendations for accessible e-learning platforms for schools?"

DEBRA RUH: Accessible e-learning platforms. I've been in the accessibility field since 2001. And my previous company, Tech Access, that was acquired by now Level Access, we had done a lot of work on different Ted-- and I don't even know if Ted still exists. And there was a-- a lot of efforts being made to make sure these distance learning platforms were fully accessible. And we saw lawsuits with it also.

But I find that almost all of them are accessible now. They all also have accessibility issues. But they're all paying attention, especially as the lawsuits started happening, with the distance learning. So in the past, there were some that I was recommending. But I'm finding that most of them are accessible.

A lot of them still need to do a better job with captioning. I love these programs. I noticed the other day, I had not used Google Chat in a long time. Google Chat now provides captioning. You can turn captioning on. I wish we could capture the captioning after we were finished. But I really appreciate the efforts that they've made.

So I'm finding that most-- and I don't know if others on the call want to have some that they recommend, but we're finding a lot of efforts have been made with the distant learning platforms because the universities have been looking for this for years. So none of them really-- these days, I don't hear some are better than others as much. But I do know that a lot of them are accessible.

But also, the complaints that I hear is that even though they have accessibility capabilities, the schools don't always turn them on. So a lot of these platforms are unnecessarily inaccessible because the schools are not taking the time to make sure all the accessibility features are turned on. Or once you start creating the documents or the e-learning inside of it, if you're not following the accessibility rules or turning on the accessibility features, those programs are not accessible. So it still is a little bit buyer beware. But more than everything, we're finding that the accessibility features are there, but the schools don't necessarily know how to use them.

And I provide on here my email address. So if anybody wants to send me an email afterwards to get some specific examples, I have some really good articles about distance learning that I

have accumulated or I've written. And I can also give you specific examples of what we're hearing. Because, of course, I'm hearing some people prefer other e-learning or distance learning platforms more than othersm but that we're seeing most of them have some measure of accessibility built into them, but the tools just aren't being turned on or used by the universities.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you. The next question we have is, "how can corporations effectively remove the cynicism around their action?"

DEBRA RUH: That's a great question That's such an important question. And I think the days of-- and I really am going to continue to champion the younger generations. The younger generations expect everybody to be included. And they expect there to be a diverse workforce. And if they find out that you're not doing the right thing by women, or you're ignoring sexual abuse cases, or you are taking advantage of people with disabilities, they won't work with you. They'll walk out on you. We saw that happening a lot over the last few years.

The younger generations are demanding that corporations stand for something. Not all the corporations have heard it, but a lot of them are starting to hear it. And the bigger corporations and the more innovative corporations, like the ones that have joined the Valuable 500 to show that they care about inclusion, those are the ones that we need to support, and that we need to work for, and we need to thank. And there's a lot of people out on social media that will attack a company if they're doing something to not be inclusive.

But there is still a lot of misinformation. There's still a lot of misunderstanding. There's still a lot of executives that are in power that don't understand why we're having all these silly conversations about inclusion. But I believe there's a really major game-change happening, especially as we all go into telework, whether you were prepared for it or not. Oh, what do you mean your benefits section isn't accessible, your HR section isn't accessible, your customer service platforms aren't accessible? Well, I bet you're really struggling even more during the COVID-19.

So I think some of the cynicism that we've been seeing, some of that's going to go away. But part of the problem also is that the community, the industries that support disability inclusion and accessibility, we're not always saying the same things. And sometimes, there are vendors making big, big promises-- oh, all you have to do is throw this overlay on top of your website, and you're fully accessible. Your distance learning platform, it'll be fully accessible.

Really? So it'll be captioned? Somehow, when you do that overlay, all my videos are captioned. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no-- not your videos. Well, what about my PDFs? Does it make all my PDFs fully accessible? Well, no. Well, so then it becomes really buyer beware in that there are promises being made to corporations and organizations about what tools can be done that don't fulfill it.

And so I was doing a webinar-- I'm doing a lot of webinars right now during the crisis. And there was one that we were talking about captioning. And why should you do captioning? Well, did you know that, according to Facebook studies and other studies too-- Twitter has done some research on this, Facebook. But Facebook a few years ago found that 80% to 85% of the videos are viewed with the sound off. So that's a good reason to caption because if you want somebody to know what you're talking about, caption it.

And also, some of us, we comprehend information better with captioning. I'm a person that has ADHD, and it helps me when captions are turned on. It actually helps my brain consume the data and remember that data in different ways. And so I think some of the cynicism that we see are partially because our industry is not always on the same page, saying the same things about what it takes to truly be accessible and to really do inclusive design and do inclusive design through the entire lifecycle of what you're doing.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you. The next question we have is "people with disabilities are often not considered as paying customers. What can be done to change that mindset of businesses?"

DEBRA RUH: I know, and isn't that a ridiculous thing to say? Because there are at least a billion people with disabilities in the world. We think the numbers are much higher. More and more of us are aging into disabilities. It's an enormous group.

And so I think some problems we see sometimes that corporations struggle with is some of the data that gets thrown out by our community, it's not grounded. Nobody can prove where that number came from. We control trillions of dollars, and we probably do control trillions, but you can't back it down into true facts. And so sometimes, people throw out numbers and statistical information that are not grounded and don't make sense to the business. And so the businesses just don't listen to us.

And I think it goes back to the fact of-- why we decided as a society that some people mattered more than others, I don't know. But we have been doing this for a long time. We've

been making decisions on what people can or cannot do based on the color of their skin, based on what gender they are, based on which religion, or maybe you don't have religion, and then we'll prosecute you for that.

So I think some of it is just humanity evolving and us being consistent with the information we're using. Because sometimes when you talk to a corporation and you just throw out a whole bunch of facts and you'll say-- I hear people say all the time, you're leaving money on the table if you're not including people with disabilities.

I think it's the wrong argument. I think we have to get our arguments more in business language that business understands. And in the US, we can say, well, let me talk to you about how much the accessibility lawsuits are up, and we expect when our courts open up, the lawsuits are going to go even higher. And they were already out of control. And I'm not saying that's the way to move towards inclusive design is through lawsuits, but there are other people that that's the first thing that we're going to do.

So I think some of the problems that we've seen are just society learning to be better. But at the same time, I think our community accidentally causes some of these problems by not giving the right grounding information and be able to point to it. Well, let me tell you what this corporation's doing and the successes they've seen. So I think we have an opportunity there.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you. The next question we have is, "can non-disabled people be effective champions for disability equality? Or do you have to be disabled to gain credibility?"

DEBRA RUH: That is such a great question. Whoever asked that question, thank you. When I first started in this business-- I come from the banking industry. I was in the banking industry 25 years. And when I joined this, I joined it because I had a daughter with Down syndrome. I certainly didn't consider myself a person with a disability. But I was really surprised at the barriers that were thrown in front of me saying, we don't need you in this conversation. You're just a parent.

And I thought, well, don't you need all allies in here? Isn't there benefit in having all of us in this conversation? It did not make sense to me. So I didn't listen to them. And I think it's really important that we embrace our allies. And that's one reason I always mention the intersectionality of it because what does it mean to truly be human?

And we can get out the definition of the ADA, and we can look at the definition of what it means to have a disability according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. But shouldn't we focus instead on just bringing our best to the table and allowing everybody to participate in including and embracing our allies? So I know what you're talking about. And I see a bunch of that.

And it's interesting-- now that I'm over 60, I'm starting to hear more of, will you old people just shut up and go home? Well, I don't think that's helpful. But at the same time, I think we need to do a better job-- my generation, the Baby Boomer generation-- we need to do a much better job of opening the door and telling the stories of other people, younger generations, different cultures, the intersectionality of what's being done.

And I'm not just saying that. I practice that. I interview people all the time on my show-- some people they're just starting their careers. I've had people on my show that are as young as-- one guest, she was 15 years old when she was on my show. But she had a brilliant story to tell. So I think some of these barriers we're going to break down naturally, and we need to push towards them.

When you're talking about representation-- when I was talking earlier about representation in marketing and commercials, you really do need to show people with visible disabilities because that model, that beautiful model that you're showing, maybe she is part of this community. Maybe she or he has an invisible disability. And 80% of disabilities are invisible. But in certain situations, you need to show me what you're talking about. You need to visually represent what you're talking about. And that means including models and actors that have visible disabilities.

But as far as whether you have a disability need and you belong in these conversations, I think that's ridiculous. We all should be part of these conversations because allies matter. So that's a really, really good question. Thank you for asking that.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you so much. I believe we have time for one more question. "What about usability testing, especially in gaining insight from users with disabilities? How can one go about reaching groups to help test?"

DEBRA RUH: Oh, and that's such a good point too. And what we used to do at my company, Tech Access-- and we do accessibility testing at my current company too. But that's all we did at Tech Access. And we would always do usability testing at the time because-- and we're still working on the standards. But there weren't good standards for people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities. And so how we balanced that was we balanced it with usability testing. And I think

usability, UX, all of that-- it is critical. It's critical. All of the inclusive design and accessibility, I think it all plays together to making the products the very best that we can.

And as far as getting people engaged in these testings, there's a lot of different ways that we've done it. We have a large group of people that we can reach out to for focus groups and to use them as testers. There are people with disabilities. There are people without disabilities. There are people with different types of disabilities.

There are people-- for example, we have screen reader users that are novice users, and we have screen reader users that are some of the best screen reader users in the world because they're going to get different results when they're testing. And we need to consider that, because if we're testing just with super sophisticated, brilliant screen reader users, they know all kind of workarounds that maybe a novice user wouldn't know.

So I think usability testing is critical to these conversations. And I think there's a lot of different ways that we can get people involved in wanting to be part of your testing. Some of it, of course, if you have a sexy product-- a gaming product or something that people love-- sometimes people are a little bit more quick to volunteer for those kind of tests than maybe testings of other things that are considered boring. But there's a lot of innovative things that you can do to get people to join the testing.

And once again, if you want to send me an email, I can give you a few suggestions and some of the people I see out there doing it. But very good point. Thanks for asking that question.

SOFIA LEIVA: Thank you so much, Debra. And thank you everyone for joining us today. This was a really wonderful presentation. And I definitely learned a lot, and I hope that everyone else did too. And I hope that everyone has a wonderful rest of their day, and stay safe. Thank you, Debra.

DEBRA RUH: Thank you, Sofia. And thank you, everyone, for joining, for everything you're doing, and everybody stay safe.