

Welcome to accessibility plus 2021. The next three days will offer you some insight into the empowerment of disability for businesses, in a way that businesses should learn, could learn, will learn. And hopefully you'll go back from these sessions-- these 21 hours sessions that are available to you, that will break down some of the tools, and some of the knowledge, and some of the useful information and resources that can help you take your business into the future. My honor is to introduce to you our two guest keynotes.

Before I show you the interview I had with Judy Heumann and Caroline Casey, I'd like to give you some insight into what Judy and Caroline have been working on and the causes that they've been part of and have championed that will be written in history.

Even when we were at the end, we have to empower each other. It was allowing us to recognize that the status quo was not what it needed.

We be no longer allowed the table individuals. And I would appreciate it if we would stop shaking your head in agreement when I don't think you understand what we are talking about. You don't demand what you believe in for yourself. You're not going to get it.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And now here's a little background about our second speaker Caroline Casey and her company-- The Valuable 500.

Without further ado, here's my interview with these two incredible history making women-- Judith Newman and Caroline Casey.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Well it's great to have you to folks today. Thank you so much for making this happen. Judy your miraculous life spent 50 years is just it's just astounding. Caroline gave up the private life, private career to be a public figure that has literally crossed the world. So let's start with this question of a new history. Accessibility has come far, has far more to go. What would you two say have been the biggest challenge in bringing accessibility into the ecosystem of the business that serves the global economy? Let's start with Judy.

Thank you very much for answering anybody here and it's great to be here with my dear friend Carolyn who is like one of the most exuberant committed people I have ever met. One of the first times I met her, I just was brought to smile and to cry because of your deep sincerity. And I think Caroline really has made a commitment for decades now to really work on changing the way the business community and society overall looks at disabled people as being equal members of society. And really I think they say you can bring the horse to water, but you can't make it drink. But I think on the other hand, Caroline is really enticing people to recognize that drinking is essential. It's essential to survival.

And so the way I look at what has been going on in my lifetime, and I'm 73, it really is a dynamic movement which when you hear Caroline or when I reflect on Caroline from those many years ago, I really basically saying that she felt it was essential that she herself come out as a disabled person and own what that meant. And recognizing that she was not alone, and that there are millions and hundreds of millions of other disabled people around the world. I think what we've seen over the last number of decades, and what the vision for the future is, really looking at issues of equality and justice. And the business community in general society obviously need to be doing or continuing to do more than just saying Yes, they agree we need to make change.

People are really looking at what commitment do businesses and others really have to making change. Are they committed to measuring it? What are they doing within their own organizations to really act as leaders and to put an infrastructure together that really can do significant review of what exists, and make meaningful agreements and commitments to what needs to change. And I think we have a growingly demanding disability community around the world, that really is becoming empowered more and more because of laws that have been passed in every country virtually now. And that those laws themselves, really were fought for by disabled individuals in alliances with others.

So I think there's a very different dynamic then when I was born in 1949. And I think that's what's very exciting about what we're seeing now, is there is a new dynamism that exists around the world in spite of all the travails that we're dealing with. Even there, I think we're recognizing that the voices of disabled people cannot be excluded whether they're refugees living in camps, or living in countries where we're not facing those tragedies but where people want to be educated.

They want to be able to get meaningful jobs, and they want to be able to make the contributions. They want to make them real. They want to take them off of fantasyland and put them into reality.

Caroline, Judy has given us a place to stand. What she points to is business and the business difficulty. And that is that's the crosshair target of where Valuable 500 is. We look at it in terms of the opportunity for business, we look in it at it as the opportunity for the disabled. It is kind of the final frontier of acceptance. It's almost kind of like if we could gain inclusion within the business community, it would kind of grace everything else. As on the way to that, you have to redefine the culture. It doesn't happen without a culture change. Why is inclusion been such a barrier in your view to business entry?

Firstly, can I just say I have I've just been on an event with Twitter which network phenomenal. And I was saying to them as I was leaving, I was going to go and to come on to do an event with Judy Heumann. And everybody is like, Judy Heumann.

And also yesterday I was speaking to Apple, since we're talking about accessibility and design for all, and was similarly saying that I was going to be talking with Judy today. So first of all Judy thank you for being so kind to me, but you're the--

Yeah, but let's be honest. You're the legend. And I think when I watch first watch *Crip Camp*, and John, to your point to this moment in history. I remember looking at it. I mean I cried my heart out watching, and I had all my family and friends watch it. And I was like if I could do for a second what Judy has done with business, so it sort of mirrors the business impact what you began all of those years ago, with a coalition of rebel hearted warriors that would be a phenomenon.

And that's really what the Valuable 500 was, and is. It was to break the CEO's silence on disability business inclusion. And to move from these words OK these words like of course, we know it's good to action. To look at system change not bandaging and papering over, and these cheat sheets and how we can be accessible.

And I also one of the big things that I'm very interested in we talk about the business community and the disability community. And I put there the same thing. OK? Can we just for a second, business is creative design by people for people and all of the pieces that go into that, and guess what? The disability community was two people that love them, is 70% of our global economy.

So this is the same. And I think for me to answer your question about what has been the barrier, three things. One is I truly do not believe the business has seen a role for itself around disability inclusion, it has been traditionally framed in government, or policy, or activism or charity or whatever. And there hasn't been a connection to the human beings who are within the business system, to who we are. OK? And I think that disconnect has been there.

The second piece is that people with disabilities and their families are hugely valuable, and look I'm not making the business case here, it doesn't need to be made anymore, because this is about risk for the business if it's not getting into this. Because I'm not going to talk anymore about the we're worth \$13 trillion points of insight and innovation for universal design. Apple does that by simply existing being incredibly successful. So we don't need to do that.

I think what's happening, is now that has been made. We have seen that with COVID. In some ways, COVID has proved systems flex when they want to, when the intention is there. And so I think business is starting to realize the reasons that it would not have engaged before or given accommodations, or made things accessible or too expensive, it's too expensive not to. But the third thing is I think the gap had been the lack of leadership at the top of a business. And I am not saying that's where all the action needs to happen.

So can I just be really clear? We need grassroots, we need middle management, we need everybody, but if you don't have the CEOs of the most powerful force in this planet taking accountability for this, and having the intention to change it. Because leaders make choices, those choices create culture, in the shadow of the life of a leader. And if a leader is willing to turn their back to disability and go "Oh no it's too complicated, too difficult, then the rest of the world will." So inclusive leadership creates inclusive business inclusive business creates inclusive society.

Now to finish on your accessibility points. Accessibility used to be seen as a niche market for people with disabilities who are needed and dependent. That is not the case. Accessibility is not simply about technology, it's about the 6 inches between our ears, I think it's 6 inches. It's about a mindset to give accessibility to everything that every human being needs, not just people with disabilities.

How many people did we accommodate during the pandemic who may or may not have identified of having disability? They needed accommodations. Accessibility is for everyone. And the companies that truly understand that, and are building it in right from the beginning, are the companies that thrive and survive and will have growth.

And the last point that I talked about Apple, in speaking to Apple yesterday Sarah was saying, Sarah Herrlinger-- accessibility, inclusion is on top of everything else we do in Apple. On top of, it's not the afterthought, it's on top of. And so that shift has started I think, to become more contagious. And I think if you want for those of you listening, is actually a brilliant opportunity right now for differentiating yourself personally in a career, for differentiating the company and the brand, but also if you don't do it soon enough, it will become a risk.

There is I think a subtext in identifying leadership as a vehicle to change the culture. There's almost a the one thing that doesn't seem to be recurring, and it's an interesting new phenomenon and we have a lot of people today registered from universities, is education stepping up? Is education taking its dutiful role in education and career development opportunities in terms of how they go about making ready the next workforce? I will open that to either one of you who may want to respond to it.

Do you want to start Judy?

Yeah, thank you. I think education is pivotal to the future of the world. And boys and girls, men and women, education across the generations, is also something that we are needing to pay more attention to. As far as the inclusion of disabled people in the fields of education at universities, I think more work is being done but much more needs to happen. I think too many universities are still focusing on the issue of accessibility literally of the physical environment and technology, and some universities I think have been fighting against accessibility as opposed to really recognizing that only in the United States there's a legal obligation, but I think the point that Caroline is making is it needs to be seen as an overarching aspect of the work that goes on, not just in the business world but universities are also businesses.

And subsequently in order to be able to ensure that the faculty, staff, and students are getting what they need to be getting, people go into education and higher education to learn. And they don't want their learning to be restricted by the narrowness of the leadership of a University that is not making themselves truly accessible. And for me, that means courses that deal with disability studies, it means including disability related issues in literature and history on and on. It really needs to be the example of what our society needs to become. And if it doesn't happen effectively at the Elementary and Secondary and higher education, then I think we're dealing with a dynamic that doesn't allow us to move forward in a way that we could be.

And I think you see it in companies like Apple and Microsoft and others, where they will be talking about how people coming out of universities don't have the training that they need to have in order to be able to join the companies, and infuse universal design into the work that they're doing. And so universities right now I think are having additional problems because of COVID. The way they function is changing. And I think also because when we're looking at business and universe isn't society overall, the voices of underrepresented populations minority communities definitely have changed over the last 10 years.

People are becoming much more demanding of equity within education. And equity needs to include both people who have disabilities in positions across the educational field, but also that the subject matter that people are learning really demonstrates the importance of inclusion of learning about our historical leaders who had disability. And learning about whatever, but it needs to be in the central part of the thinking and design that's going on.

When you look at what's still happening in many countries where disabled children are not even in school, or when they are in school but they are in schools where they're not learning appropriately, those are some basic things that we have as a world, as a globe really pay attention to. And can I pick up on that because 90-- this is a startling fact and like Judy and I. Can you believe that 90% of children who have a disability don't get into a classroom.

Sorry, can I just repeat this is 2021, and if I think about why I'm sitting here, is because I had access to brilliant education. And I'm not brilliant education is a privilege. It's a privilege to me, but when I got to University and I'm thinking about all the people who get to University, how exhausting it is to fight for access to learn. And it's so obvious, I don't understand why we've accessed departments in universities which we had when I was there-- why don't we look at brilliant student service for all of our students, for their accommodations so they can reach their potential.

So the investment they make and themselves no matter what it is they need, is it not incumbent upon us to do that from the learning experience? But let's just go to the pipeline piece that Judy mentioned. So access talent. So there is a real shortage of talent for people to have the understanding of what accessibility needs and universal design inclusive design.

So organizations as Judy mentioned like the Microsofts, the Verizons, the Apples, the Facebooks, the Googles for the first time have started to work together to go wow we need to resolve this. We need to make sure the pipeline of the talent that we need in our businesses to make it accessible is there. So this is the link between universities and business, because businesses are putting the pressure on the pipeline, and the universities say, guys, we need this.

But my next challenge then is, well, why are we just doing it this in tech departments? Or when we're training people in digital? What about inclusive marketing and accessible marketing? Where's that in the business curriculum?

And to Judy's point, why are we not learning in history about Roosevelt? Here we are, we are human beings who've lived experience of disability. So the stories of us, the stories, of our lives should be integrated and infused that will help provide the pipeline of talent making the connection between business and University and Judy is also so right is universities or businesses. Wow. Wow, they are. And so if you take just the stats of it, if we say 15% to 20% of our global population have a lived experience of disability, do you think they're invisible in universities? No they're not.

And so one of the things that I would say is when we did the Valuable 500, Sorry we learned that 7% of our CEOs and our leaders have a lived experience of disability, but four out of five of them were not declaring. Like I didn't declare 20 years ago. Would that be the same of deans of college? Are we seeing deans who have lived experience of disability, or on boards of universities, so that we can ensure the curriculum is representative of us? And also the learning environment is.

You see, the thing is, John, this isn't rocket science. We've done it before in so many other issues. So why aren't we doing with disability? And so if we keep if we keep making our universities, unaccessible not because we're bad people, but because we're not opening our minds to what's possible, then we're never going to fix the business side. And if we don't fix the business side, we're not going to fix the societal side.

Yeah and I really do feel that the companies that we traditionally have called business when we haven't looked at universities as businesses. For many years I've been arguing that the universities need to be told by the companies that we're not going to hire your graduates if they come to us and need to be retrained. And I think that good point very powerful message. And I think another reason why education really looking at early childhood through is so important. Carolyn was talking about the disproportionate number of disabled children, particularly in middle income and poorer countries who are not in school.

I mean, I think in many countries in Europe in the United States and Canada, et cetera. We are seeing the benefit of education for disabled children and adults. And that the laws are having an effect. And that's really one of the issues with the ERGs, where ERGs are being created focusing on disability, and you're hearing the voices of disabled people who are now on staff basically being critical of what more the companies need to do. And responsive companies taking into consideration, the changes that are being suggested.

Now we need to take that down to the elementary school level, we need to be looking at when disabled children are going to school, not just in the building but in the same classrooms, as non-disabled children then people are learning that we are all people. Black, white, disabled, deaf whatever we are. That's when the real learning is coming on. Where you're learning that we are all equal people, and not learning that but disabled people in one classroom, and if you want to go and say hello to them that's OK. Because when disabled kids are not in regular classrooms, and not learning alongside non-disabled children, we are continuing to give the message that disabled people are not equal. And I think we continue to perpetuate this issue of fear of disability.

And I think that's one point that we have to really mention. I feel that non-disabled people feel threatened by disability. And I think one of the important work that is going on is to allow people to see that disability is a normal part of life. And if we take into consideration, what we're discussing in order to remove not just the physical barriers, but the societal barriers, then people can move through their lives where disability, may become permanent or temporary. But where people understand that it is a natural part of life, and education to me is pivotal in that regard.

When I hear what you've said what I'm listening to is a tutoring for business to pay attention to the service that the educational institutions are not necessarily at this time, truly tuned into. So we're asking business to respond to the call of cultural development and creating a new history for the disabled.

I think what we're saying to a University.

Yeah.

University x, is your University of choice so whatever area you're recruiting. And they're not providing you both with disabled graduates, as well as people who are well trained to be able to perform the job they need, then we're looking somewhere else. Because you may be a great institution, but you are failing in a critical area. And I think that's the point that Carolyn has been making over and over again, that businesses need to be responding to the needs of the communities. And if they're not fully inclusive of issues affecting the disability community broadly, then in fact they're not being responsive and their market share goes down.

And it does too in universities, I think that's the point, like the generation that are going to universities, they have choice about what University they go to. In the same way they have choice about why they spend their dollars, they have choice about where they work. And I'm telling you this is a very informed generation who speak about disability pride, disability pride and about what your Judy Heumann, but like honestly Judy in Ireland I don't think I ever saw somebody who stood up who was proud and an advocate about being proud about that identity.

This is a very different time, and they have much different tools. And so whether it's business or universities, please do you know what I'm excited about don't underestimate the extraordinary opportunity that we have for inclusion for all of us, which means that we unplug an awful lot of our problems. That it's not just about disability, but it's about everyone. Because inclusion means all for everyone.

And this generation will not accept a La Carte inclusion. I'll look after them but I'll take away from those. They are not going to do that, whether it's a University, or a business, they are much, much more informed than we were. And inclusion means all for everyone and everyone for all. And we got to work it out.

Look it's hard, but, oh my gosh, the win on the other side. Whether it's a business, or it's loyalty, or talent, it's there. It's just the intention to move on it. And it's no longer well, will we? It's not if, it's when now. And I think when Judy and I began Judy wasn't it was more about if we do, I don't think it's safe anymore. I think it's just like when do you want to be the fifth Beatle, or do you want to lead? Do you know what I mean?

And I think how is very important.

Yeah.

I think that's really something that people are really looking at how do we do this. OK we've made a commitment to do it, now it's the how and that I think is also there's work going on in many, many countries about the how and I think the other essential issue is that companies themselves, when leadership is really committed to inclusion of all people in the communities, including disabled people, people are asking the right questions and they're also holding their leadership responsible for finding out how to do various things that need to happen. There is nothing wrong with not knowing what needs to happen.

Nothing.

I think being able to really say, "This is where we want to go, this is the timeline we want to achieve it. And we need to find out who are the best people out there to help us do it." but then it's also the ability within the company to visibly see that the changes that the leadership is demanding will, in fact, be able to be carried out, because there are people throughout the organization who are being charged to make sure the organization is moving forward. If it's just in words and platitudes, and you can't say for the people responsible for making this happen, it's not going to happen.

Yeah I think that is the one thing is for anybody out there who hasn't a clue where to start, welcome. It's OK, you're not supposed to know right? But what Judy and I would say to you is but there are so many people out there to help. And there are lots of companies can I also say when we started the value of 500, we discovered a lot of brilliant stuff was happening in the company, but it wasn't being scaled or amplified because the leader wasn't there, sort of like the resourcing in it.

Don't underestimate this brilliant talent already in your universities and your companies. If you ask, that's the thing there's so much already in there you would be so surprised. So I think that for me, is the exciting part. We're opening up the place for conversations, you don't need to be the expert. You don't, but do ask because your employees and your students are there and they have an awful lot of lived experience and advice or they're dying to share with you what can be done.

So I want to tell you a little story. When I worked at the World Bank, one of the things I was trying to do was to get people in the regions who would be identified as working in the area of disability. And I was looking at leadership and I had gone to a regional director and said would they be willing to have a discussion with their senior leadership about disability? And what needed to be done to be more effective and including disabled people in the work of the bank. And the person said to me that, yes, they'd be willing to do it but doubted that there was going to be an interest.

And it turned out that two of the country directors, unbeknownst to the regional director had children with disabilities. And that they were, in fact in their respective countries, doing work on issues in education, employment, et cetera, but they never gave credit to the bank because they didn't think the bank wanted to have this as a part of their work. So once it was something that people could speak about, in a way that embraced the philosophy, that was very valuable.

And I think Caroline can give you many stories I mean talking about herself. That's really the stories of people who you have no idea have a disability. And then come out and say-- there's another story I was in India and, again it was at the Bank of just there are many other stories, but the country director and I were meeting with his staff, and we were talking about the work that we were doing on inclusion of disability. And this gentleman get up to speak and the director leaned over to me and said he is our top accountant. And the guy gets up and says I'm a diabetic.

And the director had no clue that he was a diabetic. And those kinds of aha moments, where people are feeling like they not only had, but one to disclose because there's something like Carolyn why did you finally disclose. I'm in a wheelchair everybody, you can't see it, but just say I don't need to disclose because you can't miss me in my chair.

I say this quote all the time because it best exemplifies. It's from Maya Angelou, and she would say "there is no greater agony than an untold story inside yourself." And that's true. It's really hard to pretend to be somebody else all the time.

And actually, we're never great in relationships when we're not being ourselves. We're never great as parents. We're never great as partners. We're not great in work.

And there's a piece of research that was done in a pharma company that they ran this question, who feels they can be fully themselves at work? Do you want to know what the figure was and it's massively very, very, very successful company, 96% of their top leaders that they could not be themselves at work.

Now, what does that mean? And I think for me it got to the point of I didn't really like myself, because the energy was putting into trying to be somebody else, or trying to be perfect I don't even know what that is, or normal because I have no clue what that is either. It was just exhausting.

And I think Judy's right. There's a hunger now there's kind of a palpable hunger for the world's individually and respectfully seeing see us, hear us, I think everybody's saying that you don't have to have a disability for that right? I think we're all yearning to belong uniquely as ourselves. And that's there's an energy in that you can feel it and it's coming in brands for those of you in business.

You're seeing it in brands and how the brands are expressing themselves in advertising. So don't underestimate the sense of human experience that's happening in business right now. That is really about the individual truly belonging as themselves.

Thank you I think this has been a great session John. Well, I'm sitting here absolutely wordless. And that doesn't happen too often to me. Ladies, you've done it. We thank you, and you've set the table for three days of learning and how to empower businesses provided they're willing to do it and we suspect that there will be.

[MUSIC PLAYING]