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SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

1:00 P.M. ET

WEBINAR: 2022 DEI FINDINGS

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>> CELESTE KEANAAINA: All right. It is noon. I'm going to go ahead and get started and I'll start my spiel.
 >> OPERATOR: Recording in progress.

>> CELESTE KEANAAINA: Hello and welcome, everyone, to Disability:IN's exclusive webinar, DEI findings. My name is Celeste Keanaaina with Disability:IN. On today's webinar you'll hear a conversation between Disability:IN corporate partner peers. Our panelist today's are Shani Bird director Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Boston Scientific. Tom Frantz, Senior Manager of Accessibility Partnerships and External Communications at Salesforce. Chaz Kellum, program manager, Enterprise Equitable Health Institute at Highmark Health. And Annette Underwood, chief diversity officer at Vistra. Our moderator is Becky Kekula. Before I turn it over to our panel, for anyone who cannot seen the screen or has dialed in, I'll be running through a PowerPoint slide regarding the webinar housekeeping items.
 I'll get that up now.
 As an attendee you are in view only mode. You cannot share audio or video. So please feel free to submit your questions for your panel in the Q&A box any time during the conversation. They will do their best to address all questions either throughout or at the end of the webinar. This webinar as with all webinars in the Disability:IN webinar series is being recorded. You may access all webinar recordings in our corporate partner portal. ASL and live captioning are both being provided during today's webinar. To start viewing the captioning select the CC or closed caption icon in the meeting controls. Feel free to click and drag the closed captioning box to move its position in the meeting window. We will post a Streamtext link chat in the box. Our ASL interpreters will be spotlighted during the webinar. If you need assistance during the webinar, feel free to reach out to me directly through the Q&A or chat box. I will now take down my housekeeping slide and hand it over to you, Becky.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, so much, Celeste, and thank you all so much for being here. I'm excited for our panel discussion today and we are going to get to that shortly. I'm just going to give you a little bit of background info on the DEI. First I'll introduce myself. I'm Becky Kekula. I've been here for five years now. And I use she/her pro nouns. I'm currently in my home office in Massachusetts. Today we are going to talk about the DEI and how exciting it is to participate in the DEI and a little background on the DEI for those who may not be as familiar. I know DEI gets talked about a lot in today's society. For the purpose of this presentation, DEI is referring to the Disability Equality Index. It's the leading corporate benchmarking tool for disability inclusion. It can help initiate company into disability landscape and set goals driven by inclusive values. Data from the DEI can help accompany tap into an under utilized and undercapitalized pool of workers with disability and progress from accommodation to inclusion to genuine belonging. We saw a 30% increase in DEI respondents in 2022. 415 participated this year. We see this as a signal that disability inclusion is becoming a staple of corporate by verse fication agenda ‑‑ diversification agendas. Registration is currently opened for the 2023 DEI and we hope to have even more companies participating. Let's get over 500.
 Just a little bit of what we found in this year's DEI. It has helped articulate a trajectory of corporate inclusion. We saw three approaches. We saw foundational practices, they're considered the industry standard. These are measured that have been adopted by the majority of companies that took the DEI such as 96% of companies now offering flexible work options, 91% encouraging employees to self‑identify and 74% have expenditures with disability‑owned businesses. There are merging trends, thee are practices that push comprehensive inclusion forward and embraced by half of the companies that took the DEI this year. 60% have company‑wide external hiring goals for people with disabilities. 70% authentically market directly to the disability community by including people with disabilities in their marketing and promotional materials. Moving the disability agenda forward from accommodation to inclusion to belonging, these initiatives are embraced by a smaller subset of companies this year. 22% of companies published a diversity report that includes data object employees as identify as having a disability. 25% say disability inclusion is specified as a written component of diversity within senior executive performance evaluations. 10% of documents that govern nomination of directors on corporate boards mention the consideration of people can disabilities. 6% have someone who openly identifies as having a disability serve on their company's corporate board of directors. And 2% of the company's publically is closed report on this information. 30% have a senior executive within the first two layers of the CEO who is internally known as being a person with a disability.
 And 4% of current employees self‑identify as having a disability. And this data is from those company whose share that information with us. That was the medium that we found, 4%. And we know there's a lot more work to do and for those of you who are interested we are going to put a link in the chat with the disability equality index report from 2022. We are excited about how we laid the report out this year and look forward to gathering more information as we enter into the next cycle of the DEI, our ninth year.
 Now let's get started and talk about those companies who are putting these practices into place. They're not just taking the DEI, they're really implementing plans and building a roadmap with the responses to the DEI.
 So let's start off with introductions. Item going to go around and just introduce people by their first name and then they can take it from there. So we will start with Annette.

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: Are you going alphabetically? Hi, my name is Annette Underwood. I'm really excited to be here. First‑timer. I'm the chief diversity officer at Vistra Corp, we are an energy and utility company. I identify as she, her, hers. A black female. Hair is pulled back today. I'm at our home office in Irving, Texas.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Annette. Chaz?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Hello. My name is Chaz Kellum. I'm the program manager for the Enterprise Equitable Health Institute at Highmark Health. I use he, him pronouns. I'm an African American male wearing glasses, a striped shirt today and joining you from our corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Chaz, Shani?

>> SHANI BIRD: Hello, I'm Shani Bird, the director of diversity, equity and inclusion. I'm in my mid 30s, short black hair, wearing thin black glasses, a floral dress and based in Massachusetts. It's a great place. And at Boston scientific we have done the Disability Equality Index for the past eight years.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Shani. And Tom?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Thanks, Becky. So I'm Tom Frantz, the Senior Manager of Accessibility Partnerships and External Communications at Salesforce. I am an unremarkable middle‑aged white male and the only thing I got good going on is my University of Oklahoma polo right now. I will say I have ADHD so I can go unconscious at times in tangent. If I say anything not inclusive, please give feedback. I'm trying to get coaching but nothing has worked in my 40 years of life. But I'm excited to be here. I've been part of the Disability:IN family for probably around eight years as well. Excited to share learnings and get more people involved and help Becky hit that 500 mark.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Tom. We are excited to have you here and we are excited to have all of you here. Let's get started in the questions.
 I'm going to start with Annette again. As a first‑timer, how much time did it take to you complete the benchmark and what additional resources did you need to complete it?

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: So this was not only our first Disability:IN index, this was our first index, period. And so it took us about ‑‑ well we planned about two months because we know it was new. We reviewed the questions. We brought in our supplier diversity director, a safety director, and then our disability employee resource chair also worked with the DEI team and we split it up into sections. We used the two full months. We had checkpoints where we would get together and see where we were and what was the out lying questions. Of course that's when we realized we needed to bring in more people to answer the questions. But that was a good time frame for us.
 We probably could have used I think first timers we should have used every minute from the time we ‑‑ the index opened until the time that it was due. And I think next year it will ‑‑ even though it will be easier because we have done it I think we will plan more time.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you for that. Chaz, what about you as a long‑timer?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: We have been involved here at Highmark Health in the DEI for several years as well. And I really want to encourage everyone to figure out a strategy. Putting a plan in place that is as tangible goals to execute time frames to lock in will help you execute it. It is easier as you do it year over year. But having a plan in place, a project leader or coordinator, someone that can help steer the ship is important. I like to use the trim terminology where small actions make the entire process easier. Having someone that stays organized will help you in completing it. And it is about the team that you put together. Having a team in various departments throughout your organization that can complete parts or segments will help you to complete it. Being honest, transparent and vulnerable are important to have an accurate assessments of yourself. It's about the process you put in place versus the time. Don't let the length of the Disability Equality Index turn you away. The process is so important and so worth it. So I encourage everyone to put an accurate process in place as they execute it.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Chaz. Now for the next question. Shani, what was the benefit in simply completing the benchmark year after year?

>> SHANI BIRD: There is so much benefit in completing this benchmark. What it really did was give the foundation to start way back in 2014. During that time we are a highly innovative medical device company and established a lot of resource groups that covered a broad range of diverse dimensions. But we are looking to expand these grassroots efforts to include people with disabilities so we joined going for the gold team which is now Inclusion Works, and we were one of the founding members of this group. Really happy about that.
 And so with joining this group we took a holistic approach to disability inclusion. One requirement of being a member of this particular group was completing the DEI, for sure, in addition to disability hiring requirements, establishing an ERG, and also launching a disability awareness campaign.
 So we did not know where to start so testing the waters with the DEI really gave us a roadmap for us to follow and also highlight gaps we needed to address.
 Upon our first try, everyone, we got a big fat 60 on our first try. But it's not about the score. It's about ensuring we are focused on improving and building a culture where everyone can feel this inclusive environment. Now even with a 100 score the journey still continues. There's immense benefit to build a foundation of our efforts in the disability inclusion space.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. Chaz, did you want to add to that?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Yeah, I can't echo enough, Shani, absolutely well‑said. And the score is only a part of the journey, right? Whether you get to 100 or you're still moving towards 100, there's always opportunities for growth. So there are two key things that have been benefits. One is the internal group, the commitment from our organization to use people resources to complete the DEI. Now we have people committed to disability inclusion throughout our organization regardless of it's directly associated with their job or not, they understand the value and commitment of it.
 And two, the network that we have been able to gather by being involved with Becky and Disability:IN overall, it allows us to strategically fill in our gaps and learn how to do that based upon best practice, common practice, and being creative where there is no practice. So it allows us to utilize areas of improvement and a network that Disability:IN for us to do that.
 So count with other benefits but those are two I wanted to highlight.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. Tom, did you want to add anything to that?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, I'm like why do I have to go after everybody? They're so buttoned up and good at this stuff and I'm always the do everything in crisis mode type of person last‑minute.
 I would say for me this is like a training exercise. I think in this space we are scrappy. I don't know why any of us have job descriptions because we have to do everything and we are always trying to sell which we shouldn't have to. So I think the DEI what really helps is it helps build that foundation which was a common theme of what everyone says. It's like any time I can get a very standard project that I can also help people learn which is like one of my strengths, it's just a dream so I love when the DEI comes around.
 But I think it's all about everybody ‑‑ when you're doing the DEI a lot of these people don't work in accessibility. So the most important thing is let me guide you through this. I'm not just giving you this and saying figure it out yourself. Let me teach you through this and you can be an advocate and don't be scared of it. So I mean, yeah, it's pretty exciting time for me but then it ends and I have to remember that I'm a marketer, manager, operations person, product person, I don't know what I am each day.

>> BECKY KEKULA: You're everything. Annette, what was the most difficult aspect of completing the benchmark especially for the first time?

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: I think the most difficult aspect of completing it the first time is not knowing what I really needed and who I really needed. And so as we begin to go through, you know, responding, we would say, oh, we have to meet with facilities now. Oh, we have to meet with IT. I don't know how many of you have to meet with IT but that in itself is a challenge.
 And these are people we probably should have been working with from the beginning because that turned into many projects. When we were talking about customer‑facing accessibility, that became a many project. So I would say that was the most difficult, not understanding that one team needed to be larger. We thought we had it buttoned down. But I think to really get the result also you want, you have to include people in at the beginning. So I would always recommend, you know, look at every area of your business that touches your accessibility and your programs, and your efforts for DEI and make sure they're included.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Annette. Tom, you had previously mentioned in conversation about different models and getting started. What was the most difficult aspect for you, especially as you've participated in the DEI for several years and in different roles?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, I think that the first time I did it which was back at Facebook many years ago it was kind of not deep‑diving and understanding the questions myself, taking that approach, where it's like here you go, you know this space, kind of figure it out; and it's funny that Annette said IT because that was one of the hardest parts at first. So it's really taking that moment to understand the questions and try to find out like who is this team, what are their goals.
 And soap ‑‑ so I didn't prepare for that time. It was tough. People don't want to respond back. It's a very slow‑moving process. When you don't understand something and have your own job it's easier just to focus on that. I thought I got so good at it by the time I left and then I realized I go to a new company and I have to learn an entire new structure. And it's not just the DEI structure, it's just how people operate. So at SalesForce it's completely different than at Facebook because there are different products, it's just a different type of workforce. And so I went in guns blazing like using my old style and realizing that it just didn't work right at all.
 So it is just making sure that you really figure out if you're going to lead these things, what is the 80% that you can carry over, share with people, and make a consistent process and know that you leave that 20 percent to be more honed in for whether it's your relationship‑building, whether it's understanding different working styles and communication.
 So yeah, I mean, it comes down to people. It really dolls. And I think the best part about the DEI is I get to make so many new friends in different areas that later on when I have an issue just personally I'm like hey, can you help me out, I'll help you out later. It ends up being really good in the end.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. I did ‑‑ I'm going to switch it up a little with one of the questions that came in through the chat and I'll leave this open to whoever feels comfortable answering. The question what is do panelist companies do for compliance of the DEI responses? Is there an ongoing checks and balances or perhaps oversight committee to insure the areas that you're answering are to the best of your ability and honesty?
 (Multiple people speaking).

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Go ahead, Tom.

>> TOM FRANTZ: I'll make it question. I'll say one of the things is for anybody out there who says anything about the 100 score, if I were you I'd be scared to get that. Because you are now accountable. If you get 100, which is just the starting line, it's saying we are committed and trying to do things but doesn't mean we are great. And then you go to a 90, I mean, I don't think that's a good thing. So I think it's really bringing up those trends for accountability measures for hey, we to have stay on the ball. It's the opposite, too, for somebody like getting a 60. Now you're behind the game. So I think the information there is for you to be successful in getting people aligned but I think that's the thing is my favorite part of the DEI and why I end up doing it so quickly is to spend more time in debriefs and learning so we have time to get projects started and get things on people's roadmaps. So it is about telling the real story. You get 100, don't of get a 90. You get a 60, you better step it up and get to 100.

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Our approach has been a lot of trust and trusting the people. Trusting the team. Giving them the space to be the professionals in their space. I want to acknowledge I think this was a great question. One approach that we have taken here at Highmark Health is to mystery shop in components that I can.
 So testing the technology, using our abilities BRG, business resource groups, to try some of the technology or visit some of the physical spaces. We can't secret shop other mystery shop every component of the DEI and that's not what we are here to do. We have to trust the professionals as much as possible. But absolutely we do our best on occasion to explore some of the components in which we respond to.

>> SHANI BIRD: What we have done recently is a lots of indexes so we have a global service owner model where one person is the over lord of all the indexes so they keep track of who we need to reach out to, what are the gaps year to year, and who are the key stakeholders that need to make sure that they review all of the gaps, close the gaps. And also we document line by line with every answer notes. So we said why to this. Why? This is the reason, this is the validation. So anybody that comes into that GSO role year to year has that information because of course turnover happens. That's what we try to do to keep accountability year to year.

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: I would say prior to my role here I was employee relations director. Everything came to us, all accommodation recommendations. We met with facility. Anything that had to do with employees, we were a part of. So we already had a pretty tight system as far as accountability and making sure across the board we were consistent from a compliant standpoint. And now in this role I just really just incorporate that into kind of the whole broader view of what we are doing in the DEI space. I think, you know, having that piece down at the beginning helped quite a bit.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Awesome. Thank you, all, for chiming in on that question. Shani, I'm going to come back to you. How have you used the results of the benchmark and are there any examples of interesting insights you can share?

>> SHANI BIRD: So I mentioned we got 60 on our first go‑around so what we did is went inward and looked at what we needed to improve. But we are really just focused on immersing ourselves in Inclusion Works community of practice. I cannot discount that enough. It's such an amazing community to be a part of. We started increasing our involvement at the Disability:IN conference which helped us to learn more about best practices to help with Disability:IN inclusion practices. Specific examples of how we use results of this benchmark is we developed an on demand training module focused on disability in the hiring process. All managers are required to take this training. We enhanced supply diversity classifications. We launched a supply diversity council. Improved our language and bidding contracts. Enhanced our accommodation process. You name it, we have been able to ramp up focus across the board and help educate across our company around web accessibility, digital accessibility which is really coming to the fore right now. It helped to elevate sophistication of how we talk about disability and conclusion and how our company is best for people of all backgrounds.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Tom, how about you?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, I mean, it's really interesting because things have changed so much during COVID and the whole remote working world. It was just like such a flip on how everything operates. So that was one of the things where I thought that the DEI knew everything and suddenly everything changed even the DEI questions. And I think what is awesome is, you know, with the questions is it really focusing on things like accommodation and internal tools which employees, especially employees with disability. With ADHD communication is my opportunity. I never realized I had anything going on that I would need any kind of accommodation or any kind of accessibility stuff. And now you have this guide right there to help you figure all this stuff out and now teams are ‑‑ it doesn't only help our community but it also helps everybody. So I think that that was a huge learning this last two years and for contact sales force acquired Slack so now it affects our customers. And we know that what they say is there's a billion people with disabilities. I believe it's so much more that it's like, okay, we need to start focusing on the future right now. It's been so nice that they jumped in and really taken ‑‑ when I say Slack, to being like we need to be very inclusive, we want to be the place that people go to to be able to communicate with everyone.
 So it's also a good example of if you think you know the questions and you get the process down, every year something changes and you have to be ready for those changes either if it's new questions coming or just how society changes and adjusts your framing of the questions which goes back to what Shani said is like documentation, having those reasons why you put those answers are so helpful. Also I always think about it as when I left Facebook did I really do the best job putting things in place as the owner of the DEI with my documentation to set them up for success to continue on as strong? I like to think that I did.
 But, yeah, I mean, I just love the amount of different aspects of the DEI that you can do from interpersonal stuff to technology to understanding the world and then the changes you're going through. It's just multiple faceted. It's not just a tool, it's not just an operational process. It's so much more.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Tom. So speaking of owning, I received another question in the chat and it asks: Can you speak to who owns disability inclusion at your organizations and where do they sit? Do you have a senior level accessibility officer? Anyone can answer.

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, I can say, so on our team ‑‑ it's really hard ‑‑ is anybody who is out there is we are all different companies and different sectors and do things differently. So not everything is going to apply so there's not a one‑size‑fits‑all approach. I sit on the legal organization on office of accessibility team so it's kind of easier for us because we are focused on accessibility and my manager is the VP of the office of accessibility. Reports right up into our chief of staff who is ‑‑ reports up to our chief finance officer, Amy Weaver. So we have direct influence with executives there.
 So for me owning to my support from Catherine, my manager, all the way up to our CFO, that helps out a lot. But yeah. We are unique in the way that we have it set up that it's fairly easy from the organizational perspective.

>> SHANI BIRD: From a BSE perspective we don't have a particular person that owns disability inclusion but in the past our D&I is set up where people either focus on women's inclusion, focus on LGBT inclusion, et cetera. I in the past focused on disability inclusion but it's such a big space that we had to break it's up. So right now we have people who support our ERG's, they specialize in that. We have people that support our ERG's strategically and we work with various functions and divisions and senior leaders that can help us move the needle in the disability space but right now we don't have accessibility office or a dedicated person focused on disability inclusion. It's shared.

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: Yes, with us, it kind of falls in my space and I share the responsibility, of course, with employee relations and their compliance team.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, all, for that.
 Chaz, what does 100 score mean to your company? Does it impact your personal journey, as well?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Yeah, so as individuals having a disability, the 100 score really demonstrates the organization's commitment that our top executive leadership believes in this. But I want to be very clear that that does not mean perfect. There's a ton of room for opportunity for growth for development and for additional resources to be put in play.
 So no score is important as the process that you go through to answer the questions and learn about your organization from in and out. I almost want to echo what Tom mentioned earlier. I'm also not sure 100 score is what I want because that does symbolize to some people that you don't need to do anything. And that's the opposite, right? We need to make sure that 100 score, while great and we should celebrate all of our successes, even if you get a 60, celebrate your successes. But keep in mind no matter what your score is, there's always opportunities for improvement and growth. We do take a couple of items that we answer no or not at this time for. And we work as a team throughout the year to figure out there's a way for us to change that moving forward.
 We can't be everything to everyone. So we take 2 or 3 off of that list and we try to create some actions around that to evaluate if that's something we want to change the answer to by the next time we get to this survey, right?
 We are thoughtful, we are practical, because disability inclusion is shared throughout our company, you know, we have to be mindful of the capacity of our team, as well. But this survey, the hundred score, maintains it as a priority. We are thrilled at it. We celebrate it. But our work is still on going.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you for that. That's very important to note and I appreciate you sharing.
 Tom what does 100 score mean to your company?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Like Chaz did 80% of the work for me which is great. And I think I called out a lot about that's just when you have reached to where you say okay, we are committed. It's the starting line. But I think my approach to this question is I think this is a really hard thing for a lot of us who are close to this because if you think about how the world works, corporate and things like that work differently than our team. Social media and everybody who doesn't know what goes on in the work that we put in every day, you know, doesn't notice anything but this hundred score. And so everyone is out there thinking oh, this company says they're 100 but they're not good enough. Look at all these mistakes being made. And then corporate is happy because it's like we are doing something great and the people who run, you know, communications and I'm close to them being an external communications person is like they're actually really excited and they get to do something in their job to roll out we did a great job here. So it's a lot of misunderstandings and we are stuck in the middle of this. We are clear that 100 is a scary score and you don't want to dip below that once you're there and it's not as easy as it seems. All this stuff is connecting point. I've made the most friends I have doing the DEI on things like this. Everybody on this call is my friend. All of you who took the time to come here and learn more, you're my friends. And I try on social media try to kind of help guide on we really do care. It's just a lot of work and we have a lot of ground to make up a decade plus of work. And we are trying to do that as fast as possible holding so many jobs that like I said we shouldn't even have job descriptions.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Shani, did you want to add anything to that?

>> SHANI BIRD: Well, one thing that we have been doing recently over the past few years is yes we share our 100 score but we share in detail all the great work that's happening across the global disability inclusion so people can file that away and know it's not just vanity. It's not just vanity, there's work, that's a part of it. And there's more work to do. So yes 100 score is not perfection, it's showing us we have more progress, more on the journey.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. Well, now it's time to give some advice for companies who are looking to participate in the DEI for the first time. As I had mentioned previously, we are going into the 2023 DEI cycle. Registration is open now through January 27th. So how can we encourage everyone to participate in the DEI with advice from all of you? I can start with Annette.

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: Being a first‑timer, I can say first time getting a great score was, you know, was eye‑ opening. It means we have been conscious and aware of our responsibility as a company to our employees who identify as disabled.
 That was a good feeling.
 However, I would tell people don't be afraid. Don't focus on the score. We didn't go night focusing on the score. We just wanted to see where we are. There is a lot of daylight between who we say we are and who we really are. And you don't really get that information until you do something like the index. And see where you really are. And it gives you a place to start. Like they said even though you get a great score there were still some things on there that we committed to so now I have to go back and make sure we are doing these things. There were things we were doing but as we were going through we thought we could do better. So your end goal should be, you know, are we improving? Your end goal should be, you know, are we who we really say we are? Finding that out?
 And you will get something out of the index, definitely. I would recommend to it anyone. We took a deep breath. I met with our employee resource group and say are we going to do this? Everybody said yes. We took a deep breath. We started it. As we were going through we said we are better than we thought we were. It really is an aha for you as you go through the process so definitely I would recommend it.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Chaz?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: Good question. I would like to say start, start, start. Start somewhere. Right? Be willing to take that first leap and participate in the 2023. The timeline is in the chat. Thanks, Becky, for posting that. I was just about to mention that. There's lots of time. Becky and team are there to support you. You're not in this alone. I'll speak for myself. If I could be of any direct assistance to guide you in your process development, that's what this family is about. And it also sends a signal nation‑wide for potential employees and recruiting that you're organization is one of which is inclusive fully.
 I know what it's like to be the only, and that's not fun. To be part of a system and organization that's committed to this work and welcomes in truly authentically means a lot. So that's what this signifies and does. And being part of the process to explore solutions is such a remarkable experience also. And means so much to me personally. And I'm sure that creating change now may not be a Pat on the back type of job but I promise you long down the road long‑term this work matters as a disability community overall is no longer a community with our hand out. We are talented. We are educated. We are sophisticated. We bring unique creative ideas to tough problems. And that's the type of people that companies want.
 And this is a great place to dig your feet, your wheels, your crutches, your cane, whatever into the ground and really make a change.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Chaz. Shani, what about you?

>> SHANI BIRD: I can't really follow that but I'll try with just some boring tactical things that I've learned over the years. I would just say dive in. The number of questions can be really intimidating at first. Just focus on learning as you go. Don't pay attention to the other top‑scoring companies. A company I worked at before they were going to try the DEI, then they saw the competition and they were like oh my gosh we can't get there. But I encouraged them to try the process then they got 100 on their first try. It's important to just try. I will also recommend that when you come to set up to start the process, have a working group meeting with all the SME's in the room. Then you can see what is complete, what needs to be addressed, or what is a definite no. Having everyone in the room at one time was a really good best practice to get a first pass at it.
 Then use a cloud‑based platform for stakeholders to input their edits. This will help with version control and help you manage during the whole process.
 Lastly, dive in. There's so much opportunity to become a more inclusive climate for people with disabilities so it's a really great tool. That's how I'll end.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. Tom?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Oof. Okay. I'm going to take off my corporate hat now. So Tom Frantz senior manager accessibility partnerships left the building. Tom, human being, is here right now. I'm going to tell you what. I don't trust a lot of things because of how society is. And I think there's a lot of marketing in the world. And that's what people fall to. I have four children. And, you know, watch what they do online all the time. It's easy for them to believe what is being told to them. If I'm job hunting which at the end of the day the goal is to get people with disabilities jobs. I don't care in a company is signed up to a disability organization. It doesn't mean anything to me, what means something to us is somebody who is actually doing something. So if there's somebody with a DEI score that means there's somebody internally that's actually looked at tactical question whose have worked with the team. Like, now I'm going to take a chance if you want me as an employee to think about your company. And look deeper into your company.
 So it's just, like, there's a lot of us. And, like, I mean, you see it on social media. Everyone is upset because there needs to be change everywhere. And not just this space. And people are tired of the facade. So don't be the company that's out there and just a name on a list. Be a company that does something and don't even care about the score. And if you know you have like another year to go before this is going to happen, the questions are out there. You have people like us on this panel who will neat with you and help guide you. That's what this community is about. There really is no excuse for you not to leave here today and start making plans to do this.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Amen. (Laughing). So we have a question in the chat about Inclusion Works. I know I could speak about it just on a practical term of it being a deep dive consulting arm of our organization but I know that Tom and Shani coming from companies who are partners within our Inclusion Works program I'd love to hear from you about your experience from the partner perspective. Someone is asking can you share more about Inclusion Works, how often the working group meets and how many from each company attend, et cetera. I know it's all about what you put into it is what you get out of it. We will start with Shani and then Tom.

>> SHANI BIRD: So there are a number of different working groups in Inclusion Works. And what I really appreciate about them is they are always asking for our perspective t voice of the customer. What is top of mind for you? What are barriers you need to address? So I really appreciate that. They come to our group for ideas on what should be in the Disability:IN conference so we can help shape that agenda, as well. When we meet on a monthly or quarterly basis depending on the group we sign into we get to learn from other companies and learn best practices. Right now the hot topic is self‑ID. Oh my gosh somebody is asking another self‑ID question. Buff ‑‑ but it's helpful to get into the nitty‑gritty. They are very responsive to our issues. If we have a question they will do research for us and give us helpful links. It's like you have another buddy on your D&I team to help move our strategy forward.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you, Shani. What about you, Tom?

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, it's funny you said buddy. That was in my mind right away. If you want to know who ends up being one of my peers, like it's part of my team, it's being part of Inclusion Works because, you know, my lead who is my buddy is always there for me not only reactively when I need something and quick‑moving but pro actively helping me. I don't always have the time to look at the trends and things that are coming down or what questions our companies have and they're coming to me now. So I think having that part is great. And the groups, like the access to these companies who, like, definitely really want to push the needle and aren't scared to go in and talk about the conversations of their organizations and learn is important. And you can create your own groups. We are always looking for someone to be able to come out and be, like, we are having this problem or I'm having this problem; is anybody else? Can we please get together and support each other and figure out how to change these things?
 So it really is just like a group of close friends and access to people who just get it day‑to‑day. And there's no expert in this space. There isn't. I don't care what leader talks on a panel or whatever, there's no expert. So if you get any information from someone else, it's like gold.
 So, I mean, I can't even like weigh the value of the partnership here. And, of course, I've stuck with it for 6, 7 years now, and push any company that ‑‑ I have one coming in now from the international space and I'm like you need to get in now. They're like, yes, yes, we do. So get yourself your next friend and I'll be here for you.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. So someone asked as a startup how do we implement this process from inception? I know just with the DEI and the eligibility it's for 500 employees or more but there's nothing that prevents companies from downloading the questions and apply as they see fit. So if you were to give any recommendations to a startup, what would you recommend so they're not biting off more than they can chew?

>> CHAZ KELLEM: I think it's important to access the questions, to take a glance at the questions in advance, to get a sense of the variety of questions that are included. Having your executive leadership or your leadership's commitment I think is important because it does take time. Time from positionally several people throughout your organization. So having that commitment and that buy in from a leader. And also having commitment after the results come back in because, again, no question or no index is important. It's always what you do after.
 So not only is it commitment from your leadership to do the actual questions and index, but to have their buy‑in, whether it's resources, financial, addition of people, whatever the solutions are, that they're committed to that, as well. You being here, you that joined us is starting and that should be acknowledged as well.

>> TOM FRANTZ: Yeah, I would add to that that I don't have the answer. I'm not in the startup world anymore. I'm getting too old with my kids to be able to keep up with everybody in that world. I was a long time ago.
 But it's knowing that there's companies that are part of this right now and in Disability:IN who have just went through that phase, who you can really learn from like what are the challenges, how did you get through this, or there might be a company that's at your stage that you can team up with.
 Don't do it alone. You don't have to. Take the moment or utilize us or, of course, the Disability:IN crew to be, like, who can we partner with? Who can help guide us through this? So please do. Please do use your resources.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Thank you. So another question came in. As a board member of a disability‑focused ERG does anyone have suggestions with how we start the discussion with senior leaders to get traction and move forward with allocating resources to go through the process of the DEI?

>> SHANI BIRD: I'll jump in here. My boss, chief diversity officer here, is such a great example of making sure that leaders go through an experience. The first thing is bring them to Disability:IN conference. Get them excited. Because experiences lead to emotions which leads to change in behaviors which hopefully leads to opening pockets and creating more resources to move things forward.
 So I would say bring them to Disability:IN conference, get them on panels. Get them immersed so they can see it first hand.

>> BECKY KEKULA: I love that.

>> TOM FRANTZ: I can also say I was in the position of being in like a global leader of our disability‑related ERG at Facebook. And what I learned is you really need to speak the language of leadership and know that the stories are one half but how do you relate this to the business? And I mean how do you impact the bottom line, the stakeholders and all that? Because I know it's hard to be, like, we shouldn't have to do these things. It should just be a given. But at the end of the day if we don't impact the bottom line or help with that and the company goes through hard times and layoffs, then nobody has a job. And people with disabilities lose jobs anyway.
 So really like a SalesForce that came in after the fact did a great job. I've never seen an employee resource group not only put together a business case that helps with the employees and the customers, but also brings solutions to leadership. I think they're really used to employee resource groups coming with a lot of the more qualitative areas of things whether it's events or items like that. And I think that where Shani was like the Disability:IN conference comes with solutions and shows there's other leaders here. You don't have to again do it alone. The leaders want to learn from each other. And really going, hey, not only am I coming to you with all this, here are solutions. Metrics are tough to come by. But there's always something you can do to really relate with those leaders and get them on board.

>> ANNETTE UNDERWOOD: I a agreement I was very fortunate that our executive team was so on board, and, you know, making the pledge to be involved. But you do ‑‑ there are some ‑‑ we have received great benefits as a business with applicants seeking us out because we now have this, you know, this disability‑friendly status.
 And just the pride that comes in the workplace. It's not on culture. There's a business plus to this. It's not hard to find data that will support your conversation with the executives.

>> TOM FRANTZ: I guess I'll give up one of my secrets. I shouldn't ‑‑ I'm kidding. There's a statistic out there, I think it's by 2030 something that there's going to be a deficit in the engineering space of something like 40 something million hours in the workforce so you're not going to have enough people to go out there and make change or run your products or do anything. So you need to be ahead of the game and where can you close that gap and where can you find a talent pool that can really kick butt and that's available and wants to work and just ready? It's the disability space.
 So if you're not on board right now you're going to miss your opportunity and your product is going to suffer if not today, definitely tomorrow.

>> BECKY KEKULA: Amen. And on that note, we are getting towards the end of our conversation but there were questions about practicalities about raising the bar for the DEI and the DEI working with higher education. We don't currently work with higher education but you can download the questions and you see fit and apply as you see fit but we don't have any formal mechanisms for that currently. We are approaching the 10th anniversary of the DEI so we are looking at what it's like for the future as far as the question of just raising the bar and next priorities. But the way we are informed on how to make improvements for the DEI is getting as many companies as possible engaged and participating so we can learn what companies need to prioritize based on what they're already doing and where they want to go. So I strongly encourage as many companies as possible to participate in the 2023 DEI. And we also have the second phase of our global DEI pilot that you can also participate in. You have an unlimited amount of references that you can participate on behalf of. And the more information we can get in this coming year will help us inform how to make these tools even stronger. So thank you, all, for being a part of this journey and partnership. And as we all actually learned at the Disability:IN conference this past summer someone from Nike said there's no finish line. We are on this journey together and have to find ways to be inclusion of people with disabilities. Thank you to all our panelists. I really enjoyed our conversation.

>> CELESTE KEANAAINA: Thank you so much, Becky. Thank you to our presenters, Shani, Tom, Chaz and Annette. I'm putting up one last PowerPoint slide I hope everybody can see. Thank you, so much, to our ASL interpreters and captioner. A special thank you to our audience for joining us today. Please visit or Disability:IN partner portal for the complete webinar schedule and registration links. Join us for our next webinar September 21st from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. EST. Thank you so much for joining, and have a great rest of the day.
 (Webinar concluded at 1:00 p.m. ET)

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