**TRANSCRIPT: A Conversation on Digital Accessibility in the Workplace & Marketplace**

**May 19, 2022 - 1:00-2:00PM Central**

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Well, good afternoon, Everyone in the interest of ensuring that We have enough time for what I know is going to be a really rich conversation this afternoon. I'm gonna go ahead and get us started.

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My name is Laura Wilhelm. I'm.

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The executive Director of Disability in Chicago.

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And to give you a brief visual description of myself I'm.

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A white, middle-aged woman with shoulder length straight round here.

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I have kind of a light blue press on today and i'm sitting in my home office, which is in my family room.

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There's a kind of a bright colored painting behind me!

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Oh, welcome to all of you. on behalf of disability in Chicago, and I am so pleased that you are here in us for this conversation on digital accessibility in the workplace in Mark.

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We're thrilled to be partnering with our long time. Chicago land partner and Northern app Northern Trust really has been working with disability in Chicago land since we got started.

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And we have benefited greatly from their expertise and their experience, and the time and the effort that they have shared with us.

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In all things disability, inclusion. Thank you for being here.

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I also wanna give a quick Thank you disability in who is our national partner.

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We've been really fortunate to have a great relationship with them over many years, but they also have kindly shared their chief accessibility.

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Officer that would whistle with us today. So, thanks to disability in as well, before we get into the conversation, I want to go through just a few housekeeping points with you all.

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So the session is being captioned you should be able to see the live transcripts on your screen, probably at the bottom of your zoom window.

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We are going to have a really rich conversation this afternoon, but we want to be sure that we leave some time for questions at the end.

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So as the conversation goes along, please feel free to use the Q.

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A function which shows up as a button on your zoom toolbar to type questions in

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I will be watching those as the conversation goes along and we'll leave some time at the end.

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Share those questions with our panelists. you could also send questions through the chat.

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And we'll do our best to get to as many questions as we can before our hours up. this afternoon.

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We're also recording this session so I will be sure to share a link with all of our participants as a follow up to the session.

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Please feel free to use that with your teams internally.

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Really the more people that hear more about our conversation today than more people that are learning from this and that's that's really our goal.

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So for those of you who might be a little bit less familiar with disability.

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In Chicago land. we are the local business to business network in the Chicago area.

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We are chicago affiliate of facility in and essentially our priorities aligned with disability.

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Internationally we're all about helping support disability inclusion in the workplace, the marketplace in the supply chain and the slides that i'm showing here is kind of a list of our current

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Chicago area partners, so you'll see that we have a mix of companies.

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Who have a presence in Chicago many of them also have a presence nationally as well.

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We're really grateful to all of the organizations that we have the opportunity to partner with and it's really exciting to see so many companies coming together and collaborating on disability inclusion and looking for

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opportunities to continue to integrate disability into their larger diversity.

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Equity and inclusion strategies. So I have the privilege of getting to kind of kick.

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The conversation off today. and hopefully, you all are aware that we're hosting today's discussion in conjunction with global accessibility.

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Awareness day, which is celebrated annually on the third Thursday of May, which happens to be today so happy.

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Global accessibility. Awareness day. really the goal of of global accessibility.

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Awareness day is that people talking, thinking and learning about digital access inclusion for the more than 1 billion people worldwide with disabilities.

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So really, we just wanna highlight for you some opportunities to think about digital accessibility in your organizations.

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Both with your as you're working with your internal teams.

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But also, as you are thinking about your marketplace focus, and we are really really lucky to have some fantastic experts with us this afternoon.

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I know this is gonna be a great conversation. and to keep things off I have the honor of introducing Christine Homes.

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Christine is vice President over your Manager design system and accessibility at Northern trust.

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Christine's been at Northern Trust for 13 years. and for the past 5 years. she's been working with teams to ensure that Northern program are digitally accessible he's also the co-lead of

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Northern stress, disability, Northern trust, disability, business, resource, Council.

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She lives in potato with her husband and her American Savagehire terrier.

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Lexie. Christine, thank you so much for being here.

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Thank you, Laura. I am excited to be here. I think this is a great day, and every global accessibility awareness day.

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I get excited to kind of teach people about what accessibility really means.

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So Northern Trust has. This is our third year being with disability in national. but we are also very proud that we are a founding member of the steering committee that led to the formation of disability in

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Chicagoan in 2,015. So we have a long history, and we will continue because we are great partners.

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Global accessibility. Awareness day for me. actually began to have some meeting about 5 years ago, and then, about 4 years ago, I started pushing it on my coworkers. by asking them to work without their mouse for a day or

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turn off their screen and work with a screen reader for an hour or a half hour, and it actually created some empathy with our developers and designers to understand how people who have a disability work on the computer and how difficult it

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could be just doing everyday things like ordering something on Amazon.

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So. I think this is a fun. day. and I when we were in office I was able to have more hands on stuff, and i'm looking forward to that in the future.

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But really it's all about the empathy and learning and inclusion.

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So most of you probably know what digital accessibility is but i'll touch on it really quickly.

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It's accounting for the design technology and content that make an experience open to all users, and that accounts for visual auditory motor and cognitive disabilities.

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So at Northern Trust. we have a digital services team that places an emphasis on ensuring disability to all of Northern trust employees and clients in this dedicated team works across digital channels to meet the

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2 wacag, 2 point, one double, a guidelines for new features, and then also for features that are existing or legacy.

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We review them, and where we can bring them up to a kid, guidelines or regulations.

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We do? If we can't then we look at how we can develop them in the near future.

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How do we do this at Northern Trust? We have a small team. So we do emphasize that accessibility needs to be integrated from the beginning, not design, but actually from the inception from the idea how is this program going

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to work. How is this website going to interact with our clients?

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How is the user gonna use it? because it shouldn't really be added on the end.

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If you add it on the end then it feels like it's, you know doesn't actually feel like it is kind of an afterthought, and it becomes a burden more than something that's very intuitive and

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accessible for everyone. so we implemented a design review.

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So most of the times i'll sit in and design reviews, and I will look at

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I'll sit in with the business unit owners and the sneeze, and as the design is going on, I will gently say things like, Oh, well, how is that gonna work with the keyboard?

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Or what is your intention for that design? or what is your intention for that digital visualization or the chart?

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This not only helps the designer, but it also helps the business unit owners and the sneeze.

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Understand why we take certain steps that it has to do with accessibilities and our clients and users, and that it's not really some random decision.

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We made that it's very deliberate then we have

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The ability to train our developers on how to look for accessibility issues while developing.

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We also train our quality assurance team on what tools to use, how to do manual testing, and how to use a screen reader to test on the different projects.

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So once. that is all set we ask that the developers and quality assurance. People come back to us if they have questions, so we expect that they do this testing, and they come back to us with a a list of things maybe that they don't

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quite understand or that they're not sure how to prioritize. so we'll help them walk through understanding the issues and what the priority is, and usually that takes 2 to 3 different sessions, and then the teams will catch on

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and they'll be able to understand that themselves. because there are things as usual, and best practices that off also fall in there.

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So, even though at Northern we're a small team like I said, we're not perfect.

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We have I am the digital accessibility coach along with being the program manager for the digital design system.

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We have an engineer and 2 developers, So we work on a digital design system to make sure that the components that everybody uses has a built-in level of accessibility.

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So when they pull them from our system and plug them in that it has that baseline.

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But then we also educate to say once you plug them into your your system, your program.

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Let's do another round to make sure that you plug them in correctly.

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So, even though we're small we're not perfect we continue to grow and learn.

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This year we are adding more people to our accessibility team, which is very exciting.

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But another way that our Northern trustee learns is through these types of programs where we have a safe space to learn and share through conversation and collaboration.

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So this is a priority of disability in Chicago and International for all its members across all market segments and sectors that we have this ability to collaborate in a safe place.

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So our presenters today will be Jeff Whistle.

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He is chief accessibility, officer at disability in and He supports, disability in corporate partners as they continue to integrate accessibility into their strategies, and prior to his role at disability.

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In. he had a career, fidelity, investments. for over 28 years.

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He started in mutual fund rep as a mutual fund representative, and then he co-founded

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He founded the fidelity investment enable employee Resources Group.

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I know i'm i'm stumbling over this a little bit.

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Many co-founded the that and was director of the Valley.

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Investments office of customer accessibility, and eventually became director of the Fidelity Investments procurement accessibility program.

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So Jeff is well educated, has the experience, but also he is legally blind with an eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa.

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So he has been a user of a assistive technology for over 20 years.

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Our Ron Malcut, from Northern Trust, is an executive Vice President and a group managing director of Northern Trust, wealth, management, business.

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He reads, he leads for multidisciplinary advisory groups, and is the bit.

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The disability, business resource, Councils executive chair and the Council is a network.

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Is it an employee Led network, advocating and providing tools and resources to support the development of include other and inclusive culture in within Northern trust?

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Ron is married and has 2 children, and one of his daughters.

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Has down syndrome and so he's an advocate, and is very interested in planning and policy manners tied to disability.

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So with that i'll hand it off to you run thank you Christine.

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Thank you so much and happy global awareness accessibility day and it's an important day.

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You do great work for Northern trust and it's incredibly important.

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But I get to facilitate a conversation with jeff Wisconsin, who, I think, is an extraordinary person who's been on a journey of his own.

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I've spent a fair amount of time with him I've already forewarned Laura Wilhelm, who's hosting today's event at disability in Chicago land to keep us on track because

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we could talk for hours, so I know we're supposed to have a fireside chat, Jeff.

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But it's going up to 84 degrees in Chicago.

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We'll have a lake side chat and just briefly for your benefit.

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Jeff today. i'm in our Chicago office, some right the heart of the loop and I am wearing a dark brown suit.

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No tie, just like you, dark brown hair by and and i'm thrilled to be here so i'd like to kick things off.

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And, by the way, and we chat it up before we have today's session, it's been a busy day for you this this day has meaning for you, but i'd love for you to share with our participants today

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those who joined us a little bit about your personal journey.

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And and why global awareness, Accessibility Day really means what it means to you.

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And and accessibility in general ron thank you so much I I can't.

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I don't have a word big enough to describe how honored I am to to be the chief accessibility officer at disability in and to be here with the the Northern trust family and the Chicago land affiliates

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and and corporations who are celebrating, you know, global accessibility.

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Awareness. Day is one day, but all of us are working on accessibility.

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All the other days of the year is just one day to kind of take a step and think about all the the hard work that everyone's done to make the world in our environments more inclusive into celebrate that at the same time thinking

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about. What can we do further with accessibility? to back up just a step?

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I love giving an audio description as Well, it helps me. i'm legally blind, so I love it when others do so.

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I'm a white male in my mid fiftys very thinning hair.

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What hair I do have is brown and a lot more gray than I used to have.

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Not that I have a lot of any color hair but I i'm proud to say I am legally blind with a degenerative eye disease called retinite, as pigmentosa, or rp.

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It might sound strange to say i'm proud to be legally blind, but I can't tell you the number of mental calories. I wasted over my lifetime trying to hide an invisible, or not a parent

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disability. I I think what's kind of interesting when at least in my left lived experience, and and others that I've talked to in this space.

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It. It seems like when we're on a meeting like this or in conference rooms or or big meetings, a lot of disabilities are not visible.

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It's estimated that 70% of disabilities are are not apparent, and 70% of disabilities.

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I say we age into, and I use air quotes because of this glorious aging process.

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It's also I think oftentimes it was definitely true in my case.

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I viewed my vision loss as a vulnerability.

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It was definitely did not view it as a strength I didn't really think about it all, that often, even though I lived with it 24 7.

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I wasn't a denial. I don't think I just I felt like there was some model I was supposed to fit into a lot of things change for me.

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I am i'm married to my Best friend Carla for 25 years coming up in October.

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We have 2 wonderful daughters, 20 and 16 I have a lot of family, you know, so I've always had this wonderful support system.

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But on the professional basis I didn't know anyone else that I worked with.

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It was blind, low vision, and it was a vulnerability for me.

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I did not have my inner voice 7 years ago. I was connected by email to a colleague out of our Boston office, and I i'm in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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In Alicia was a vice president At fidelity she had lost her vision due to diabetic retinopathy.

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About 2. She had this illustrious career, and she was a coach to our senior leadership.

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So I was introduced to Alicia I wasn't alone anymore, and Alicia, over a very short period of time, help me find doubt that my vision loss was actually one of my greatest strengths, and not perceived weakness and to

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to fast forward the story a little bit. Alicia and I would tell our coworkers about this connection that we made and run every single time that we would share it.

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Our colleague would, colleagues would would share either their direct connection with a disability or an indirect connection through a spouse partner.

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Kids, family members, friends. but they had a story to share and they felt less vulnerable because we kind of shared first, and after a couple months, Alicia, said, Jeff, this is working so well for us, and We're meeting so many

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colleagues, and they have a lot of stories to share.

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You ought to start an employee resource group for employees with disabilities.

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So I did, and overnight I went from being the poster child of covering an invisible disability to kind of one of the faces of our employee resource group to call it enable but what was amazing.

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Is. We started with 6 of us, and when I left Fidelity in September last year, there was over 5,500 associates, employees who were active members, and oh, my gosh!

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One of the most rewarding things was when colleagues would find their inner voice, and they would start bringing their authentic cells to work each and every day, and then they would start bringing their diversity a thought that their

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disability provides it. it. I mean it's life changing okay, so that that's kind of been my experience.

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But then we had this amazing opportunity to learn so much about the disability, dimension of our own associates who were self-disclosing.

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We I spent about a year reviewing comments, from our customers, and in course of a conversation with our our planners, they would share how a disability enters into their life, whether you know they weren't complaints it was just i'm calling

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today, cause my husband can't hear on the phone anymore.

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And I need to transfer the information to them, or whatever this, all these just different scenarios, and they started telling themes.

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So we built a business case and presented it to our senior leadership.

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There were amazing executive sponsor. Gene got us 1 h with 20 of our senior, most leaders, individual meetings, and every time that we would share the business case, Senior leadership would say, not only is this the right thing to

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do it's a business differentiator you mean we're not doing a lot of this stuff already.

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Can I interject there because I I think I was so struck.

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And Northern trust is a business or disability.

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Business Resource Council, very similar to what fidelity is doing.

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Fidelity is a great friend of the Northern Trust, vice versa.

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We do business with each other, and sometimes we compete so on and so forth.

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But we both admire each other but I have you know from my end.

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I've been admiring what You've been able to accomplish during your tenure at Fidelity, and one of the key insights, you know, when we first started having a conversation, I think fidelity is

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an organization that has a terrific moral corporate compass.

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If you will. but yet what we're getting into was not cooked up thought of in some strategy room deep within the you know, the the executive floor of fidelity.

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This was kind of a grassroots a level initiative and and an insight it's like.

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Well, we don't have really that many clients with disabilities.

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So you know, we don't but but talk a little bit how organically and a lot of people think inside companies.

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Things always happen, top-down when in fact bottoms up, and all the itchy scratchy things that can happen and enable, or our business resource council where you've got advocates.

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And we heard from Christine Holmes that are challenging things in the right way.

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And driving conversations that need to be had, and good people coming together solve problems with talk about what that look like felt like for you when you started to bring forward. Geez!

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We have a real opportunity here. There is a business case absolutely.

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Ron in kind of you know, so the employee resource, group started grassroots, and we had every level of employee from you know, executive directors presents division, self-disclosing and and and

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so forth. and then, when we did the business case when we build our business case, I think you know one of the things that you're referring to is

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It didn't come from senior leadership on down you know saying thou shalt create an office of accessibility.

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It was we. We identified through our associate conversations, conversation with customers working with disability in and working with a lot of competitors.

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You know you mentioned Northern Trust and Fidelity get, you know, our great partners, Jp.

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Morgan a lot of financial firms, and in learning what others were doing in this space, also utilizing the disability.

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In Dei Survey, which we had, you know, 350 companies filled this out, and they share.

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They answer a lot of questions across the myriad of everything, from culture to technology, employee resource groups.

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All these different questions, and use that as our roadmap of what our best in class companies doing around accessibility and so forth.

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We also looked for. What are, what were our pain points? pain, points could be things from customers, you know, who who express difficulties doing business with us definitely.

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There was a lot of. I was involved in a lot of contract negotiations where accessibility was part of that contract.

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Negotiation, just like cybersecurity, all the different offerings, and so forth.

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We were a supplier to companies and nonprofits for their full one K.

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4 or 3 B services. So there was a very large focus for those entities.

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Choosing us on the accessibility, capabilities of our websites, and so forth.

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So we looked at all these different aspects, work with so many different companies, and partnered with them.

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They took us under their wing, you know we took some others under our wing.

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If we were farther along in that space. But I think one of the truest statements ever is.

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You know whether we're competitors in business or not we can all be collaborators and accessibility.

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Enron. Every company is at a different level of maturity in their on a accessibility journey.

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No one has this figured out completely, and it continues to be a moving target.

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I I I just think the collaboration and and sharing all those pain points as well as the reach on investment.

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But the true thing is, a lot of this is about telling the story.

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I mean, this is real life for people. politics, religion, and finances are some of the most personal things that that we all have helping our customers and our employees maintain their independence with finances, and so forth is critically important and when you get that

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right. it's a business differentiator and so forth so we kind of did all that.

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But it was organic, but as soon as senior leadership embraced it, it it just took off from there, like many companies just like Northern Trust.

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So Jeff kind of to take us back there, and how he rolled this off, and maybe you know the executive sponsor and the meeting with the executive group zone and so forth.

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What did that look like, and what kind of data did you put together?

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So on and so forth. as you were making your business case sure.

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I mean, we all have access to the the global disability statistics, you know. the one out of 4 went out of 5 individuals throughout the world have some form of a disability.

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At age 65, 2 out of 3 individuals will have a significant hearing, loss, and significant disabilities to make sound in getting old glamors doesn't it.

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But it's a reality. and with all of that I guess probably one of the biggest things was taking all of the information that we had about the national statistics and everything I mentioned.

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We had a lot of We require our representatives to take notes on their conversations.

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All the calls are reported, it's all internal all confidential.

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But when you hear stories from customers about their real life interactions in their real life, dealing with finances. it tells a story in every for every company, you know, knows the profitability of different clients, and so forth what was very telling

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is that with the aging demographics and all these other things, and it generally takes a lifetime to accumulate wealth.

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A lot of the clients that self disclose and self-identified with disabilities, actually are a lot of our clients. That's a very profitable client base.

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So we overlayed a lot of things like that, because you always need to make the business case.

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Everything we talk about is about a business case it's always the right thing to do when it's the right thing to do, but every every aspect of of business We're financial firms.

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It's all you know you have to focus on that it's not the only driver. So we did a lot of that.

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And I mean that tells a story. But the other thing that I think is was so critical for us.

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I mentioned our employees self-disclosing, and so forth, and so many disabilities are being invisible, helping leadership at every level.

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See the disability and realize that Oh, my gosh i'm an employee.

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I have kids who are on the spectrum order down syndrome, or whatever the case might be, and and helping individuals feel comfortable sharing.

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So leadership sees. Wow, I there are. This is meaningful.

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This impacts so many people, that always has to be part of the business case. it's interesting. and I loved how you started working with some of the data.

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And how you speak about invisible disabilities because if you just look at what we think we know within our customer relate management systems, and it's like, well, this really isn't that big of an issue.

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But that obviously it runs emblies what we know from a national data perspective.

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And so a large company like fidelity has millions of clients.

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So at some point you represent an entire demographic.

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So by definition, you know you have clients with disabilities.

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Whether they self disclose or not. And I think that was part of your business case.

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And obviously with all the anecdotal information that you were polling from all the reps that that we're providing information absolutely.

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And we worked with a lot of clients also. you know, customers who had disabilities.

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We have a great excessive. They have a great accessibility to department.

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So following up with customers, making it really easy for customers to share any pain points there experiencing.

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And then, you know, focus groups with customers and learning first firsthand, was, How are they experiencing things that's one of the best practices we work with with the 400 companies that are are members of disability in is If If we

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focus on just like the complaints it's gonna be a very small percentage point.

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Something percent of complaints around accessibility. But when you focus in on just you know customers who are just experiencing difficulties, you can you know, identify that, and then help find solutions and get that information to the squad leaders to

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the developers, the designers, and track all of this there's nothing better than getting a ticket opening up a ticket where there's an issue, and then being able to resolve that ticket and you see a lot of those

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tickets, you know, collecting, and be able to go back to your client base in your leadership and say these are some of the issues that were identified.

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And this is the results. They're resolved and now this is the feedback from customers that don't have to worry about this anymore.

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It's all those types of experiences I think that that lead to accessibility.

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So it's the day of the big presentation you've rolled up all the data, and and now you're presenting to the executive leadership team at fidelity.

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How are you received, and ultimately, what kind of commitments did you get from the organization to kind of press?

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Forward with your plan. Talk about what that look like and where your fidelity is at today as you've moved on absolutely.

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I'm gonna go back a ways and just to be to be real.

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So for 22 years I had the amazing opportunity to serve our clients.

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I was customer obsessed. Had the you worked in our regional phone center, had the headset, the computer and the customer on the other end.

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I I loved every day of it as a certified financial planner, and I I jokingly say I knew we had senior leadership because we would get memos, and it would say, you know so and so is coming in town make

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sure your cubicles cleaned, and so forth. and that was kind of my my experience with senior leadership.

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So going from because you mentioned earlier organic and so forth I didn't have a title, you know, to do this.

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It was just we saw an opportunity and then gathered the information had amazing support from my manager, Vice President of Sales, general manager.

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And ultimately, you know, worked it worked it through that way but i'll never forget the first time those 20 senior leaders that we presented to.

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We had an hour with them individually. we had a great business case, because it it it's meaningful, and this makes a difference.

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And we had the demographic information, the financial information, all this other information, every single senior leader, was.

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They embraced it. there was never a moment, and let me back up a step.

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2 oftentimes you might hear where well senior leadership definitely assigned on, and they're they're all behind this.

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But then other resources. really there does a really follow up. 6 months later there was, and that was incredible.

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As mar fact, they became our steering Committee i'll never forget the first time going up to Boston, and being in the boardroom, presenting to our senior leadership 3 Presidents of divisions, and so forth, and 2

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years earlier I was in a a customer obsessed in individual contributor, working with our most valued clients, and so forth.

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Then, you being in that opportunity. So I I share that example because that was just a I think that crystallizes it.

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It doesn't have to be you know from senior leadership on down.

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It's every one of us. can. make a positive difference and senior leadership supports it, and the opportunities that you have when you join the employee resource groups.

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When you do different things like this, and you embrace your You know your your disability.

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It's incredible but senior leadership was definitely a 1,000% in, and we see that all across the board with companies, and we see it actually being starting organically and and going that way, as well, we were not on alone.

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It's it's a very common process so do you have 4 kind of commitment did did fidelity make as a result of the work that was done.

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The presentation that was made and obviously can't happen overnight.

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But directionally. Where did things head after that successful effort? Sure.

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So We started our office of customer accessibility myself, and in hail.

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We were the the office of customer accessibility. We had enter an enterprise-wide focus, and we worked with partnered with margin, a digital accessibility team.

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We partnered with the accommodations team, Karen and Team.

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We actually helped also to set up a phone team. actually several phone teams that were our technical support for customers who would call in with technical issues.

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And this this group actually went through a lot of assistive technology training.

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And so they could help customers who had used assistive technologies, and if they were experiencing any issues on our websites or mobile apps, and so forth.

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One of the things that I think was most beneficial, that I share every time with companies.

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Ron. is it it's it's everyone in the organization plays a role, and from the very first day that we started the office we set up a monthly call where we started out with legal risk and compliance and again senior

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Vice President and legal that we were talking with and working with and then over a 3 and a half year time period.

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That call led to include legal risk, compliance, policies and procedures.

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The employee, the employee resource group, the accommodations team.

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That team that took phone calls from customers because we wanted to make sure that there was cross-functional collaboration. and to make sure that everyone was aware of pain points, solutions, suggestions,

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And I use one really quick example you mentioned, You know, the resources behind this We had an example of a type of transaction that we, you know, had a restrict on the website and had a encouraged, or had you know had a switch to

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a phone call to call in to do this particular type of transaction. and if someone was not verbal, that could be a very difficult I mean, how would you do that? So by having policies and procedures, And all these other groups?

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Involved, we were able to utilize a functionality that another department already had for 2 factor identification, and then put that on this type of transaction and put it back online.

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What we found is in. this is so true with every company.

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When you solve for accessibility everyone benefits We found out that we had lots of lots of comments from customers who said, I don't want to have to call in.

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I want to do things online. So we solved for the accessibility, and everyone benefited and made that whole process that much easier.

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But it wouldn't have happened without all that support and , it's interesting. and why, when I hear from you, And then I also think about the journey that we're on with the northern trust a lot of the pieces

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are already there, And yeah, some are coming at it from a compliance perspective.

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Others are thinking about. You know the technology aspects of things.

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You might be focused on the client experience. and yet somebody has to kind of stitch that all together, if you will, and and then also a sudden, maybe you can elevate to universal design.

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If you will, our journey right now, and and I am so lucky.

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So fortunate to to work with christine and a few others that I know that are dialed in, because we're not quite as a quite as far long as you are as a company.

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But we are making great strides and and that's one of the reasons i'm so excited to have spent time with you and I, and we're hoping you'll be our sure but if you will this we make our

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way up the mountaintop. But what kind of advice or guidance? would you have for the you know us at Northern or other organizations? and you've learned from others you're paying forward you're at disability end, but talk a little about that

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and quite frankly, in your new role. How should people reach out to you? W.

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Where could Where do you think you can really be of help?

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Absolutely So the first thing I would say, disability in is a a member based organization.

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So we work with just shy of 400 of the fortune 1,071 of the fortune one hundreds are members of disability in

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So if your company is part of disability, in by all means you have amazing resources at your disposal, if the company is listening, That's not part of disability in please reach out we'd love to have you part of the organization.

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Run a couple of things. 1 one of the key lessons that I've. I've learned that I share with every company because everyone is on a on.

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They're on the journey, we're all just at different places, and I mean, if I if I think of a probably the top 5 things that we recommend that we because of what we see one, is it's very difficult when we have tens

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of thousands In some cases hundreds of thousands of urls it can feel like boiling the ocean, and one of the learnings is definitely to it's.

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It's it's it's hard to go to senior leadership or a business unit, and say we have websites that in mobile apps that we know are not accessible to the extent that we want them.

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To be We need you to fix it? and they're like Okay, Well, what do we need to fix?

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So There's third party organizations out there that provide automated testing tools.

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It's it's much easier to build a business case when you can say, Okay. In this business unit, you have 37,000 Urls, according to the automated testing which is only want to catch about 40 the around 40% of the

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coding issues against the success. criteria there's 37,000 urls.

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And this is where the errors, are and these are how we would recommend that you prioritize which websites, because some of the websites you end up taking down because nobody's viewing them.

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, most things fall the 80, 20, or 2080 20 rule, where, you know, a very small percent gets like 85% of the views on a daily monthly basis.

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So prioritizing all of that but that's one aspect having that information, And then I think the second thing would really be that looking at Okay, before we put another website update out there or a mobile app update or create something

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new. let's have a definition of done for accessibility?

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What commitment can we get in governance from the organization to? not click new code out there?

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If it has critical or high level accessibility errors.

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And Christine was alluding to this as well at Northern Trust is already doing this. and then taking a look at Okay, if all the accessibility debt that we have, or legacy software and so forth.

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What are we gonna fix first? we can't fix It all how we're going to prioritize

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The the next thing I would say is it's so critically important to not reinvent the wheel like you were saying, Ron, to make sure that you there's someone overseeing what every business unit is doing making

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sure that there's someone in each of those business units that is holding the business unit accountable, but providing the resources and support that they need. And one of the most common things that we hear about is at at certain upper levels.

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The support is there. But when it actually gets down to the squad leaders who have to prioritize their days, and they, if you have to meet a squad leader that raises their hands, says same way, having extra work because we're really

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slow that just doesn't happen so making sure that they have the support. and in the tools they need to make sure that accessibility is there, and it's prioritized, and the last thing i'll share because there's so much

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is to make sure there's collaboration whether it's a monthly call, a weekly call.

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Everybody is doing something with accessibility, and you can be so much more effective together.

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We're better and making sure that everybody knows what everybody else is doing in the share component libraries.

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All these different things. it's incredible how that can move the needle a lot faster when when we're collaborating.

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Well, Jeff, I must say that You've, already been terrifically helpful to the Northern Trust, and

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And our friends, our leadership, within our disability business, resource Council that come from all different aspects of our business but most recently, and thank you for this.

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Now we're hoping to go through the same journey that you are. We have most of the pieces in place, but yet we really could benefit from having a office of accessibility to kind of tie it all together.

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And you know th this encompasses a lot of our organization.

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So I I know you were kind of spend some time with our head of diversity Equity inclusion for the corporation and all we've already reached out to our chief digital officer.

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We're kind of found your playbook and which is helpful. and and so we hope that, that you'll continue to be a resource, as I know you will to sort out, and in fact, we even got into the

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conversation of Well, geez, what did your what is your document look like?

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How did you put together your business case, if you will? So when we roll that up, and and we spend time with our CEO and the members of our management group?

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That we have a concise and a thoughtful recommendation put forward, because, like fidelity, we have, I think, a great, not you know, moral corporate compass, and we expect support, but at the same time, we know our

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company, and all companies have a lot of priorities, so we need to elevate this in a way that it cuts through, and and people can see, the importance of it.

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So we take action so i'm hoping you'll content on a continue on that journey with us, and I wanna be respectful to folks that have joined us today.

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I know we probably have a few questions that are starting to roll in.

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We could talk all afternoon, and not if need be we'll do that now.

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But i'm gonna close with with just one thing before we go to to questions.

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We were talking earlier today that this this could be a moment and a lot of things silver linings from what we've been through over the last couple of years.

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A lot of things that we thought might happen. over 10 years has been compressed. And it's happening right now. what what's your view of what the opportunity is, and and how excited should we be about Today's moment?

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I love the question, Ron. I think we should all be excited, being beyond awesome in this space.

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Because the the focus on accessibility, digital accessibility, physical accessibility.

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I, in in my career of doing this, I have never seen it so far along as we are today, and being part of this conversation, seeing what Northern trust is doing, what other companies are doing.

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I mean, of course, we have the microsoft and the Google's in the Amazon. I mean the mammoths and the space have been doing this for 10 years. and have been helping influence a lot.

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Of this, but It's It's the other companies that are really joining and coming on board, and you know my my friend Mike, from Jp.

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Morgan. I love what he said he's like in a three-level timeframe Jp Morgan sent 250,000 employees home during the pandemic and it's like take your Computers Here's

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laptops and to to do accommodations for employees on the fly.

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I mean every company we had to learn how to do something that we never in vision before, to have our workforce working remotely and so forth.

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Everything that we've learned about. how the workforce can can work remotely and in in many cases, but even more productive and effective and efficient and competitive.

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There's a huge opportunity right now, as we do go back to the office.

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Whether it be a hybrid or full-time, whatever the case might be, to take all that we've learned from being forced to learn it in such a short time.

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Frame around accommodations, accessibility, and make sure that we don't lose any of that, as we go back into the office.

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But to use it as a springboard for what the future of work is going to be like It's forever changed.

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Employees expect different things, benefits, offices. you know are doing things that they never imagined before.

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And it's all positive clients expect different things absolutely so.

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The opportunity. is there There's really no not much good from the pandemic, but that is one aspect.

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I think that we can look for that silver lining as taking this needle forward, and the last thing i'll share on that, too.

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It's 30 years after the Ada we have this conversation around websites and so forth.

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We all need to get ahead of the metaverse and make sure that you know whatever Xr.

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Whatever the Meta versus going to be like that we all have a place at the table, and that we're all included from the very beginning.

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Well, my dream is that we'll always have a global accessibility awareness day.

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But at some point it just becomes a way of doing business absolutely and and I think we're well on that journey, Laura.

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Questions that may be coming in from our participants today, as first of all, thank you both for sharing your time and expertise with us. I really, Jeff, I just have to say I feel like we are so fortunate.

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That you have given us an hour out of what I know has been a really busy day.

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So. So thank you. So I have a couple of questions.

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That have come in from first. If you have any advice, or guidance on how to quantify the need and the benefit for senior leadership in some of this work, who might be folks who are managing by the numbers absolutely what whatever role

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you're in. Find the pain points find find Customer feedback find employee feedback for yourself.

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Christine mentioned it. No matter what role you're in if you own any part of the website or mobile app, or you send emails whatever it is.

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Test it out. Use just your keyboard only you.

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If you have a windows computer, you can go to search type in narrator and bring online the built in opera screen.

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Reader for your windows computer and on the max it's way, server tab around on your website, or on your home page, whatever it is, and listen to what you're hearing look at what you're seeing and when you

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tab does the focus go to the area that you expected to?

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Can you see it as their color? Contrast all these different things.

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Use your iphone or your mobile, your android phone, and do the same thing.

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Turn on voice server on the android. You can just still, Siri, turn on, boy server. Wherever you swipe around the focus indicator goes on.

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There. bring up your mobile app and you. Is it doing what you would expect it to do?

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Are there opportunities there to enhance it Go to your competitors?

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See what they're doing. live the experience definitely involve the employee resource group employees with disabilities want to be part of the solution.

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They don't want to do it full time as they're off the side of their desk type of thing. They have their full-time jobs, but we all want to.

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We all want to be part of the solution but finding the pain points and really highlighting that in the benefits of fixing these and the focus on on digital accessibility and mobile accessibility as part of the business case But

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it's it's really telling those stories of anyone listening is part of an employee resource group or not part yet. where you're finding your inner voice share your story.

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You help others to be less vulnerable, and that helps to bring the proximity of disability for non-appearant disabilities to the table.

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And bring bring your diversity. a thought never worry about sharing, because leadership wants to know they don't know what they don't know, and we all have a responsibility to share with them.

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But what we believe to be, you know, a very important thing, Jeff.

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Can I add this? if you could speak to what you what we discussed a while back, and that is on the client side, you know, lot of invisible disabilities, and so people don't self disclose and especially on the client

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side, but at some point when you're working with large data and we know that there's a 1 billion people on planet Earth that have disabilities, you can start to make assumptions and supported by the anecdotal feedback that you're

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getting across the field actual reps, if you will, and we hear that with in our business tens of thousands of clients.

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But we have some very elderly clients, and you know you get too far removed from the client.

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You may not think there is an issue. You start asking around, and pretty soon you figure out pretty quickly that I know there are some real serious opportunities.

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If you will, I think a really simple example to do or simple trial.

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And you don't have to have all the answers on this go for the positive host.

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Something at a branch around accommodations or accessibility, and invite your clients to it, and just go above and beyond, and see what the feedback is from those customers.

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You know, and let customers know. hey? for any you know we're going to present what we offer, or how you can interact with us. We're gonna present.

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Our investors. You know our representatives, and their focus on inclusion and working with customers who might be deaf hard of hearing blind, low vision, mobility, and so forth.

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If you'd like to learn more join us on this day or this evening, or whatever the case might be, and then get the feedback from them, and it's incredible when we go above and beyond what's required it's a crowd

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pleaser and the feedback you get is incredible it's the motivation to go to the next level

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We had another question. and it's kind of related to your current current title.

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So you are the chief accessibility officer at disability in and I think we're hearing more about organizations that are developing the chief accessibility officer role.

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Can you? Can you just share any advice that you might have about how companies might think about this?

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Are there? There are things you you might suggest to begin laying groundwork for developing a chief accessibility officer role.

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Gosh! so many thoughts. i'm i'm new to the role in the past, you know 6 months very connected with disability in for the past 7 years, but i've had a lot of conversations with companies as

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we help them build out their digital accessibility framework and who makes up the team and so forth.

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I'm not necessarily a sports sports guy but i'll use a sports analogy.

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Can you think of any major League team that does not have a head coach?

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They just leave everything up to the offensive. coaches the defense of coaches, the you know, coaches for the the blind men, and all these, of course not.

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There's always a head coach the head coach is not doing the work of all those those individual coaches.

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But their job is to make sure that their synergy and that they're aware of where their strengths and weaknesses are, and although they're divisions, and they allocate resources, and so forth, every company needs a head coach

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for accessibility. whether that's a c-suite position, we believe it is because anytime that accessibility is a prioritized item, it always has the opportunity to be de prioritized.

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That's what we've seen for 30 years when accessibility is in the C suite like finance like cybersecurity.

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It's always present at the table for when all the decisions are being made, and that is where what it deserves.

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That's where it deserves to be it's where it needs to be, and you know, so we're working on building out a business case for you never see a company without a chief cyber security officer at all the

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decision , it's just part of what's done so we believe there's a business case to be head there.

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Great feedback. Thank you. and I really. I like the way you framed it with the sports.

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Now with you, too. So I think we'd probably have time for one more question, Jeff, and we had somebody ask if you might be able to share a personal story about why accessibility matters in particular to you because we're here at

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global accessibility where we stay. absolutely over the past several years.

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I build a network when i've identified as an individual with a disability, with vision loss. I identify as being blind, low vision, and I've identified with using a white cane all my gosh did I fight that forever.

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I wish someone would have told me that I want to share with the audience.

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If you're want if you're low vision you don't have to be totally blind to use a white cane.

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My shins would have thanked me years ago, if I would have started using it sooner.

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Doing whatever you can to help others find their inter voice and find your inner voice.

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It it it's helped me to bring a diversity a thought to the table, and I want to remain independent.

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I want to have independence over my finances I don't want to have to ask someone because a website doesn't work.

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You know. can you type this in for me that's personal information.

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That's all. these different reasons why it's so personal. but when I see others with various disabilities, and they're able to do things that once were a was a barrier I mean the the weight of the world, goes

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off their shoulders Doesn't change the world but it makes their world so much better.

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I don't know it's just everything is about independence and just fitting in and just being different.

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It's cool to have a disability I think that's probably one of the neatest things I would like to share with her.

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It's cool to have a disability it makes you different and different is better and different as diversity of thought innovation.

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Find your innovation, your Your innovation within yourself and 100 don't let the disability be a blocker.

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It's it's your greatest strength thank you Jeff.

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I I feel like That's a really great place to kind of wind up our conversation today, and I I wanna I want to thank you, Jeff, and I want to thank you.

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Ron you, you know it takes a lot of time and effort to kind of structure.

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These conversations, and to really try to get choose the messages and some themes that will really resonate with an audience. and I appreciate all that you you 2 have put into the program today to ensure that we're

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providing some some really timely information. so thank you both for sharing your time and effort.

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We're ron you've been a great supportor of disability in Chicago land for several years now, and Jeff, we're so excited to have this opportunity get to to partner with you, now, but also to partner, with

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you in the future. So thank you both. I also want to thank Christine Holmes our partner at Northern Trust for all of the insight that you shared.

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I want to thank Nancy now. Heimer She has been a long time board member of disability in Chicago, Chicago Land, and a great supporter from Northern Trust also let's say, in a

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hockey's who is I Think christine's co-chair, the disability business resource council.

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So thank you all for all of the time and effort that you continue to share with us in the information that you're helping us to provide. And then I also just wanna make sure to to thank all of our participants today it's actually a beautiful day here in

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Chicago, and I appreciate that you have chosen to spend the last hour with us.

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I. I have recorded the conversation today, so I will send that out in a follow up email to everyone who has participated.

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And please feel free to share recording with your teams also, just for a quick plugin for our next session.

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So disability in chicago land is hosting a program on June fourteenth. that's going to be on mental health and substance use in the workplace, which is another really timely conversation.

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So i'll be sure to include the registration information for that session in my follow up as well.

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Thank you again for your time at Zoom. We really appreciate you all, and I hope you all have a wonderful rest at your mobile accessibility, where it is.