

AT Banter PODCAST Episode 224 - No News is Good News?

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SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury

R

Ryan Fleury 00:02

This is the AT Banter podcast, a balanced and entertaining look at assistive technology accessibility and its importance in people's lives. Join Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury, and Steve Barclay as they banter with people around the world about anything and everything regarding assistive technology and the disability community. Now on with the show

R

Rob Mineault 00:33

Hey, and welcome to a another episode of AT Banter,

R

Ryan Fleury 00:39

banter, banter.

R

Rob Mineault 00:42

My name is Rob Mineault. Oh, and uh joining me today, the lovely Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R

Ryan Fleury 00:50

My name is Ryan Fleury.

R

Rob Mineault 00:54

And it's a Yeah. Hello. It's the it's the most terrific show on the internet.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:01

Fan. Terrific. We should have an AT Banter branded coffee or something?

R

Rob Mineault 01:06

It would be good,

R

Ryan Fleury 01:07

wouldn't it? Yeah, for tequila,

R

Rob Mineault 01:08

Tequila would work. Tequila would probably be more apt. I do see in the calendar that you you have booked some 8am shows? So maybe maybe coffee would be also a good choice.

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Ryan Fleury 01:23

That's right.

R

Rob Mineault 01:25

Oh, how are you doing?

R

Ryan Fleury 01:27

I'm doing okay,

R

Rob Mineault 01:29

How are you enjoying 2021 so far?

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Ryan Fleury 01:33

So far, so good. You know, I keep waiting and hearing that, you know, more vaccines are coming online for the pandemic. So, you know, things are looking encouraging. You know, life is normal, you know, we go out regardless, groceries become home. That's about it.

R

Rob Mineault 01:50

Yeah, yeah. That's gonna be the weird part about when this is all over is just sort of returning to quote, normal socialization again, whatever that is. I have a feeling that Yeah, just keep doing what I'm doing.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:05

Well, I think what I think what's interesting is, I think coming out the other side of this, there's gonna be some people that have, and I don't know if PTSD is the right term. But this has been pretty traumatic for I think a lot of folks.

R

Rob Mineault 02:21

Yeah, that's true. That's true. It's going to be interesting,

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Ryan Fleury 02:24

What kind of services are going to be needed or required? Or where there's holes in the systems to support people?

R

Rob Mineault 02:30

Yeah. My worry, though, is that if the holes haven't been filled at this point, they're probably not going to be filled once this is all over. Yeah, so. But anyways, that's, that's, that's the now we got it. Yeah, how do we get gloomy and doomy and gloomy? Stop asking you how you're doing? Clearly.

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Ryan Fleury 02:54

I guess.

R

Rob Mineault 02:56

So well, so here's something positive about 2021. That's show related is, we can now offer transcripts for each of our shows, which we're very excited about.

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Ryan Fleury 03:11

Absolutely, it was a long time coming.

R

Rob Mineault 03:13

We knew for a long time, that transcripts, were something that we should definitely have being an assistive technology show and advocates for accessibility, et cetera. But we just didn't, we couldn't really find the means to do it. You know, aside from setting up, you know, three, four hours a week and do it ourselves. But we just we didn't have the time. And we certainly didn't have the budget to hire a transcription service to do it. But we're pretty pleased that we found we came across a pretty good service. And you know, they're not sponsored or anything, but we'll give them a plug anyways, but it's a service called otter AI. And it works pretty well, you know, 20 bucks a month, and it does a pretty good decent job of, of, at least providing a first pass of transcription. And we have to go in and do a little bit of tweaking and editing, but it works works pretty great.

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Ryan Fleury 04:10

At Banter, sponsored by otter AI.

R

Rob Mineault 04:13

No, they're not sponsors, although if they wanted to give us free membership every month, that'd be cool. But I don't think they'd get their money's worth out of us plugging on the podcast, but anybody out there who is looking for some sort of a transcription solution, I'd recommend otter AI.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:30

It's definitely more economical than having to hire somebody to do your transcription or, you know, the time involved to do it yourself.

R

Rob Mineault 04:38

Yeah, absolutely. But I will say I will warn you, if you thought editing yourself, audio wise, was, you know, a real kick in the junk, try reading a transcription of what you're saying. To really make you feel like an idiot.

R

Ryan Fleury 04:58

Yeah, it's it's pretty interesting. Back at, you know, the the text transcript of an audio recording and just seeing how sloppy our vocabularies actually are.

R

Rob Mineault 05:08

Yeah. And how many times you say quote, you know. But no, so you look, I'm excited about 2021 and excited about the new transcripts. I'm excited about the new guests that you've got lined up. We got it. We have some pretty good shows lined up for you people. Today's not one of them. Sorry to rip that rug out from under you. But why don't you tell the people what they've won for listening this week. Ryan?

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Ryan Fleury 05:48

What are we doing this week? This week is just a news show. No, I guess I was going to say a topic show. But it's a news show. We've we've gathered some news from the past few days that we're going to discuss about assistive technology, advocacy,

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Rob Mineault 06:05

Okay, and you're gonna get our opinion on it. And you know, what they say about opinions?

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Ryan Fleury 06:11

What do they say about opinion?

R

Rob Mineault 06:12

Oh, you know what they say about opinions

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Ryan Fleury 06:14

No, I don't think I do.

R

Rob Mineault 06:15

Yes, you do. Everybody has one.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:18

Oh, that saying! Yeah, that's right. I see. Yeah, I also want to give a shout out to some of our listening audience who have been suggesting guests for us to get on at banter. I really appreciate that. And it's looking like we're gonna have some really good shows, like Rob mentioned coming up. So thank you, everybody.

R

Rob Mineault 06:45

Oh, really? Were a lot of those some of those. Audience suggestions? Yep. Oh, wow. Excellent. Well, well done. audience.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:54

Mm hmm. We love you all we do.

R

Rob Mineault 06:58

You know, it's funny, you know, in preparing for today's show. Here's what sucks about 2020. It's really it's taken the oxygen out of the room. In terms of development, I feel like there is not a lot going on right now. In terms of new products, or new software, or even, like, everybody's talking about the pandemic and what's going on.

R

Ryan Fleury 07:23

Yeah, even you're looking at some new sources about CES, the Consumer Electronics Show that's going on right now in Las Vegas. You know, it's, it's a virtual event this year, for the most part. And I haven't really seen a lot that's been, you know, revolutionary. Again, it's evolutionary, and, like you say, I'm not seeing a lot of development.

R

Rob Mineault 07:47

No, and not only that, like, even in terms of moving the ball forward, accessibility wise, or you within the disability community, there's really, there's not a lot going on, I think people, a lot of people are just in survival mode, it's just let's get through 2020, let's get through however, large of a portion of 2021, we need to get through just to get on the

other side of this. And so it feels like everybody's in like a little bit of a holding pattern.

R

Ryan Fleury 08:14

Right? Which, you know, it's okay, because maybe there is some development going on behind the scenes, and then it's just gonna explode.

R

Rob Mineault 08:20

I had a conversation with a friend about the pandemic early on, and looking sort of forward at the other side of this. And I do feel like that, like, even just in retail, and new stores, and new restaurants, all these stores and restaurants or companies that went under during the pandemic, those people are going to come back with new companies and, you know, doing opening new stores once this is all over. So I feel like yeah, like 2022 is going to be like a huge explosion of new stuff.

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Ryan Fleury 08:55

Well, we can, we can only hope. You know, Starbucks, you know, I read is like into closing over 300 stores by March. You know, the travel tourism industry is dead. You know, it's like you say it 2022 is going to be a brand new year and I think a very exciting year with like you say new stores, new franchises, new retail, there's gonna be a lot of new opportunities in 2022.

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Rob Mineault 09:22

Yeah, yeah, exactly. For you know, as much as 2020 and 2021 are going to kind of suck 2022 is going to be like sort of a rebirth. So I'm excited for that. For sure. I mean, I definitely travel, the travel industry is going to be something that just explodes. I'm sure the first thing that everybody's gonna want to do is travel. I don't know if we need the 300 Starbucks that's closing like really, like we kinda had enough I could kind of, I don't know. Could maybe put something else in those spots.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:57

Yeah, Apple kiosks. Google stores.

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Rob Mineault 10:03

All right. Well, hey, you want to talk about a few of these news stories?

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Ryan Fleury 10:08

Sure. Let's see where we go.

R

Rob Mineault 10:09

Yeah, I saw this article the other day. And it really sort of stood out to me as something that has been an issue for a very long time, in my mind. Disability Advocates call for easier access to life changing technology. So this is basically an article all about how there, there's this amazing technology out there called assistive technology, but nobody can afford it. Which I'm sure that many of our listeners can relate to that. So let me read some of this for you. Tammy Martin has spent more than a decade helping young students with special needs learn to read a skill that she too, would struggle with, if not for a state of the art device that allows her to clearly see the words on the page. The educational assistant from Nova Scotia is one of the many Canadians with a disability requiring the use of life changing, but often prohibitively priced Assistive Technology that advocates say needs to be more accessible. So there's the irony right there. We've got assistive technology that's not accessible because its price. Martin has optic nerve hypoplasia, a congenital condition where the optic nerve is underdeveloped and uses a wearable medical device called the ESight from a Toronto based company. Now you say it's, that's a lot like it's a wearable, right? It's a lot like, what else? What else do we sell like that? The IrisVision?

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Ryan Fleury 11:37

Yeah, IrisVision is similar in some regards to the Jordy, sort of similar, but the ESight, that device was pretty revolutionary. Yeah. And very expensive. Well, the ESight was around the \$10,000 price point.

R

Rob Mineault 11:52

Yeah, well, you're exactly right, because the article goes on to say, it's a quote from her, she says, quote, it's completely life changing, I'm able to do so many more things, said, Martin, who was able to fundraise through the company for her first ESight in 2017, which cost nearly \$13,000. So the article goes on to talk about it now. And of course, you know, in that time, I mean, 2017, this, this thing would have been, like, state of the art, really revolutionary. So, which is, you know, \$13,000 price tag, but of course, now it's come down to about 7000. But still, I mean, you think you think about \$13,000. That's a new car.

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Ryan Fleury 12:36

Well, and what's really frustrating is, you know, you and I and Steve, we've been in the industry 20 / 30 years, and nothing has really changed. You know, some Provinces in Canada do have some funding programs for specialized equipment or adaptive devices. But there is no national program. None of this is covered by insurance policies. So a lot of people are having to raise their own funds through Lions Clubs, Alex clubs, GoFundMe is, you know, and if you look at this statistic from 2017, was at 1.5 million people can't afford a device or an aid that they need. Like, why is this not being addressed? This is nothing new.

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Rob Mineault 13:18

Ye ah, and I agree so hard. I mean, I remember when I was with Aroga. And that was always the challenge of marketing these devices was the fact that you there are these great devices for a demographic that can afford them. And it's, it's really frustrating that there's, there's nothing out there that would help mitigate at least some of the costs. I mean, you don't even necessarily need to advocate for everybody getting a device for free. Even, even just part of the price.

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Ryan Fleury 13:51

This, this goes from everything from canes to wheelchairs to communication devices for people who are nonverbal. And that statistic was for people 50 years of age or older. So there's a whole younger population as well, you know, learning disabilities, the spectrum is so broad that I, you know, and being totally blind myself, like even if somebody just needed a screen reader to gain access to their computer, you know, you might be able to go to your insurance agent if you have insurance and ask them to cover some of the costs, or maybe a rehab department of some sort. But it's still, like I said earlier, it just floors me that there is no program for any sort of coverage that I'm aware of in Canada, to help meet the needs of this mass population that is only getting older and exploding.

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Rob Mineault 14:43

And especially when you we talk about things like workplace inclusivity and accessibility, well, you're not going to be able to employ people if they don't actually have any sort of assistive technology to do any sort of training to even have to go to school, like even a school age kid who is blind or partially sighted, without something like a screen reader or something, or a Braille display or a note taker, they're really hamstrung in terms of what how they're going to learn.

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Ryan Fleury 15:14

Well, and even, you know, magnification products, sure somebody might be okay with, you know, a handheld magnifier that costs, you know, \$45. But the other end of that spectrum is somebody might need a desktop CCTV to magnify the print or their computer screen large enough. And you know, that's going to be 2, 3, 4 or \$5,000. I don't know what the solution is to this problem. But somebody needs to address this. And maybe the Accessible Canada Act will include some of some of this, I'm it just really surprises me that more and more people aren't talking about this topic, because this isn't new.

R

Rob Mineault 15:51

No, it isn't new. And I think that people have been talking about it, it's just nothing's been done about it. I mean, and and generally these solutions have taken place on a provincial level. So every province has had its programs that helped fund equipment for people with disabilities. So and, you know, historically, the mileage has varied. in Alberta is a great example of that. 10 or 20 years ago, in Alberta, people would just get a device every year, you know, because the province was rich, they had all that oil money, and they had some really great programs in place that would help provide equipment for people with disabilities. That's all gone. Like Alberta's a wasteland now, and, and BC here in BC, it's never really been any good. We had I remember one period where we had that program. What was that program called?

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Ryan Fleury 16:48

EATI

R

Rob Mineault 16:50

Yeah. Where the government would provide up to a certain dollar value of equipment for somebody who is who with a disability who is looking to train for work, I believe.

R

Ryan Fleury 17:04

Yeah, and Ontario had the ADP program and still do. You know, I'm not sure where that program is at and how current the device list is. But you know, there is that program in Ontario as well. But, you know, I think ultimately, we need a national program for assistive devices that people can access when they need needed device or an aid.

R

Rob Mineault 17:24

Yeah, I agree. 100%, even if it's mitigated, like even if it's half the cost of the device, it would, I think, would make a huge difference in people's lives. Because part of the problem is who has \$13,000 to just drop on something. And I mean, like, it makes no sense to me that you can go out and you can finance a car, you can get somebody who works at Wendy's, and no offense to anybody who works at Wendy's, I love you, thank you for providing the Baconator. You're doing God's work. But if it's somebody there can go and buy a new car and have it financed, and just make payments every month, why the hell can't that be happening for assistive technology, when it's, this is life changing technology, this is technology that isn't you're not giving something special to somebody, you're actually just leveling the playing field.

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Ryan Fleury 18:15

Right. And I think that's the key right there, we want to talk inclusive society, we need to level the playing field, no matter what that cost is, you know, we have to give some credit to Humanware, you know, they have a financing program for people who are blind, low vision to, you know, make smaller payments on their devices, braille displays, that talking with players and so on. So, you know, kudos to them. But, you know, it's, it's a start, and we have a long way to go.

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Rob Mineault 18:44

And I mean, yes, I mean, you can, you can leave it to the manufacturers or the retailers, but a lot of times like these assistive technology companies, and we know this intimately, a lot of these assistive technology companies aren't big companies, they can't necessarily afford to do something like financing or putting put in place these programs. They're not actually all that easy to do. And they do take the companies that provide these services do take a big cut. And when the margins are sort of thin enough, for a small retailer, it's it's just there just can't do it. You know, so it needs this problem needs. funding, it needs funding from the government. And I mean, I don't know, I don't know what the solution is. Take \$2 off everybody's check as some sort of a tax and put that into a kitty and like, I don't know, I don't know how much money that would be, but like, whatever, if I have to pay \$2 a check so that everybody can have assistive technology that they need, sign me up. I'm okay.

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Ryan Fleury 19:45

Well, and I think what you have to keep in mind too, is you may not have a disability or a need now, but look down the road 10, 20, 30 years, you know, the generations we're all

getting older. We don't know what is gonna be down the road for us. So, at some point, even if it's, even if it's a low vision aid, like a pebble handheld magnifier, or maybe it's a wheelchair, or maybe it's hearing aids, you know, we're all going to need something at some point in time. And with the baby boomer generation, exploding, that need is getting greater and greater. And this is a problem we need to address now, not 10 years, 20 years down the road.

R

Rob Mineault 20:28

Yeah, and what really burns me is I think about sort of the other end of that. Like, I think of somebody who's just starting in school, who needs this equipment in order to learn, I mean, you're, you're -- what parent can drop \$8,000 for a Braille display.

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Ryan Fleury 20:45

Yeah, and it's already hard enough for those of us with disabilities trying to prove that a we can do the job be we can get to the job place, you know, getting accessible textbooks, done, if for our courses, if we are going to school, you know, there's enough hurdles thrown in front of us already, that we should be able to just say, you know, look, we're taking this program at this institution. Here's the forums, I need to fill out, submit them to the government, or the insurance or whatever the program looks like, I get my screen reader, I get my magnifier or whatever, then the aid is, and you just proceed as normal.

R

Rob Mineault 21:23

You know ... See, I get so fired up when we talk about this stuff, because it's so stupid. I mean, because, you know, on the one hand, we're, you know, we're not making things accessible for people, there's, there's the whole accessibility fight, and then you're also can't have the equipment that you need, because it's too expensive. Like we there's so many hurdles that society is putting up against people with disabilities that yeah, it's no wonder

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Ryan Fleury 21:47

Like I said, you know, this is a discussion that, you know, those of us in the industry have known for decades. Yeah. And it hasn't been addressed.

R

Rob Mineault 21:59

Having worked in the assistive technology field. And Ryan, of course, you're still there, you

know, quite well, that what's available in what province because quite often, that's people who are looking into these devices, that's their first question is, well, is there funding for it? Or well, this \$8,000 device is great, but I can't really afford it, or do I have any options? And quite often, we have to point them to different programs. And these days, certainly in the last 10 years, those have just been drying up like crazy. I don't know of any province that has a passable program other than Ontario and the ADP that still, but that's but that's also been really stripped down compared to 20 years ago. Right?

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Ryan Fleury 22:49

Yep. So yeah. And like you said, you know, there isn't a one stop website or organization. I can think of that somebody who has a disability can go to to find out what's available in their area. You know, it's it's a Google search fiasco. You know, I live in Alberta, what sources are available for wheelchairs or hearing aids or the government can put our country \$300 billion in debt due to the pandemic, we can come up with some money for a national funding program for assistive technology devices and aids.

R

Rob Mineault 23:31

Yeah, I agree.

R

Ryan Fleury 23:33

get her done government.

R

Rob Mineault 24:30

Hey, did you hear that Samsung has made its 2021 TVs more accessible for people with vision or hearing disabilities?

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Ryan Fleury 24:38

Yeah, I was reading this story it sounds pretty interesting actually.

R

Rob Mineault 24:43

So Samsung's TV lineup is about to become a lot more accessible for people with low vision or hearing issues. The company on Wednesday said all of its 2020 QLED and Neo QLED models will come with features like being able to move captions to avoid blocking other texts on of video, and the ability to zoom in on a sign language window to see it

better. Along with closed caption and position and sign language zoom, Samsung also showed off the ability to invert colors on a menu. That's, that's big for low vision. That's a good one. It leaves the video as is but makes it easier for people who are low vision to see the menu options. That's a good one. And I'm sure that that was a real easy fix too.

R

Ryan Fleury 25:26

For sure.

R

Rob Mineault 25:27

Well, although there's a quote that maybe changes that quote, it looks simple. But to enable this technology, we had to start by re engineering the chipset, Samsung said, so I guess maybe it wasn't so simple to do, but

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Ryan Fleury 25:41

No, see, I kind of disagree. Now I'm not an engineer. But a lot of these TVs are running software now. So would it not have been pretty easy to just go in and change the software to give you the color contrast? adjustability? I don't know. Maybe Chipset? I don't know.

R

Rob Mineault 25:58

Maybe? That's maybe that's what the engineers told the Samsung marketing guys. They're just like, No, dude, it was really hard. Oh my god we had to re-engineer the chipset! Just put that down. Put that down in the article that we had to re engineer the chipset. Anyways, the Samsung hasn't said yet what it's 2021 TVs will cost but it's likely they won't come cheap. The lowest end Neo QLED for this year roughly equates to last year's 65 inch q80 .. Oh my god, 65 inches. Remember when, I had a 50 inch TV? And I remember like feeling really super like?

R

Ryan Fleury 26:36

What do you mean had?

R

Rob Mineault 26:38

Well, I mean, I still have it, but I mean, it's now I'm just like 50 inches? Anyways, yeah,

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Ryan Fleury 26:46

I've got my 55 on my wall. And I remember when I bought it was like \$1800 You know now you can buy like a 65 or bigger for like 800 bucks.

R

Rob Mineault 26:53

Yeah, I'm amazed at how how much they've come down in price. You can literally buy my TV for like \$300 like, I mean, like you I paid like 12 or 1300 dollars for it. Crazy.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:07

With no accessibility built in.

R

Rob Mineault 27:10

Yeah. Or smartness. Right? my TVs not smart at all. So that looks like the big reveal there.

R

Ryan Fleury 27:18

Yeah. And I think some of them I think it mentioned, the guides are accessible as well. So I think in settings in the past and maybe still have also enabled text to speech. So you can actually scroll through their menus and have Alexa verbalize those to you as well.

R

Rob Mineault 27:33

So this is interesting, the article goes on .. technology could be a way to help people with disabilities during the pandemic. In the past, people with special needs had to shell out 1000s of dollars for technology that magnified their computer screens, spoke navigation directions, identified their money and recognize the color of their clothes. Today, users need only smartphones, computers and a handful of apps and accessories to help them get through their physical and online worlds. Sort of true. Apple in particular has been at the forefront of building accessibility tech into its products and making those innovations part of its regular devices, not premium add ons. I mean, yes, that is true. And we've talked about that a lot. A lot of accessibility is sort of being baked into a lot of operating systems, like iOS and Android. Slowly but surely, assistive technology is moving away from the idea of being an add on to being baked in. But we still got a long way to go. And there are a lot of cases where you still need a dedicated piece of AT to do the job. Something like a Braille display, or a note taker like you, that needs to be its own device.

R

Ryan Fleury 28:48

Agreed

R

Rob Mineault 28:49

Okay, so anyways, Samsung and other TV makers have offered some accessibility capabilities on their TV sets in the past. Samsung voice guides lets the TV read on screen text and gives verbal feedback about the volume channel and program. Now that .. Okay, so this is a good question for you, because I know that you, you love your TV. You have Have you ever used any sort of built in AT like this?

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Ryan Fleury 29:20

Actually, I have, and we recently in the last couple months, upgraded to Shaw's blue curve or blue sky, actually blue sky, I think is the cable system. And so the Shaw cable box actually has speech feedback so I can hit the guide button, it'll bring up the TV listings. I can scroll through the different time slots. I can scroll down through the programs, the channels that they're on. I can schedule recordings. It's all accessible, and it's phenomenal. Phenomenal because before all this I had no idea what was on at Six o'clock Tuesday night on channel 210. You know, I used to have to remember that okay, CTV News was channel 210, Global was whatever it was, you know, CTV sci fi was this one. Now I don't have to do any of that, I can just hit the guide button, it comes up and says, you know, whatever the last time I was sitting on, you know, 5pm CTV, full house or whatever the program is, right? So yeah, I'm using it. I love it. It's great.

R

Rob Mineault 30:33

Interesting. And they've been so that's all built right into this BlueSky, that there is that like a modem or is that like a PVR?

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Ryan Fleury 30:42

I get their blue stuff confused, because they've also got, they've got the blue curve system, and they've got the blue sky system. So I think the blue sky is the cable system. And the blue curve is the internet system. Or it's vice versa. I, again, I don't remember which is which. But it's actually based off of, I think Comcast in the US, their box was speech enabled as well. And so I guess Shaw has taken that box from Comcast and tweaked it with their own right software and purposes, but it's all baked in.

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Rob Mineault 31:16

It comes right out of the box. Oh, interesting. Well see, that's good. We have to make sure that our brain rotting devices are completely accessible for people so that they can, they can watch Keeping Up With The Kardashians, just like everybody else.

R

Ryan Fleury 31:31

And well, the other nice thing about it is it has apps built in as well. So it has Netflix and Prime video. So in the past, I've had to use an Apple TV, if I wanted to access those services, or an Amazon firestick. You know, now I can just again, hit the share button or the menu button, I can scroll over to apps, I can open Netflix, watch my shows all from one device, I don't have to have 2 or 3 or 4 different devices.

R

Rob Mineault 31:59

It is. But it is so interesting to see the manufacturers that are sort of jumping on the accessibility train, and the ones that aren't. Like, I've seen many articles in the past few years about stuff like this about TV manufacturers who are looking at accessibility options. So this is actually not anything new either, and doesn't really surprise me. But I'm really curious to know like why TV manufacturers are so quick to jump on accessibility, and things other appliances really haven't. Like stoves, for example. Like stoves should have, new stoves should really have some sort of a, I don't know, voice feedback.

R

Ryan Fleury 32:43

They should and that's something we keep hearing about, you know, washers, dryers, stoves and ovens, microwaves. You know, there has been, you know, some speech enabled microwaves. But a lot of these appliances are menu driven and LCD screens, right. You know, I guess if you memorize, hit the button for menu once and then scroll down four times hit the button again, hopefully you're on, you know, large wash, rinse, whatever the settings are, they're looking for. Yeah, it surprises me that these devices still aren't adopting accessibility methods.

R

Rob Mineault 33:19

Well, yeah, I mean, it's great that TVs are but like you would think like a stove. A stove is like, that's essential for somebody. And a lot of these stoves, the newer stoves are all LCD screens, they're all even the, the, you know, the button that you hit to turn the, to turn the

element on is a button. And if they're no longer dials ...

R

Ryan Fleury 33:41

Physical dials or buttons, yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 33:43

So they're getting less and less accessible. And that's got to be a problem.

R

Ryan Fleury 33:50

All right. So my mission is to see if I could get somebody from Samsung or LG, I think on our podcast, and see if something, see if we can ask them about accessibility of, of device or products like that, because Samsung is probably the leader in TVs and the accessibility because we keep hearing about them in the news over and over and over again. They also make their smartphones, which are adopted by many, many people that are accessible. So I'd be interested to know if they're actually working on technology for their home appliances other than TV sets.

R

Rob Mineault 34:27

Well, you know, we've heard about different appliances that that were accessible, but they're always exceptions to the rule. And they always make this big thing like oh, this, this company has made an accessible dryer that speaks and you know, tells you what cycle you're on. But there it's always it's always, always always an exception to the rule. It's never just something that's just being baked into appliances and there's no reason why they can't be, you know. Maybe they have to re engineer the chipset? I don't know, I don't know, maybe it's harder than we think. But it's it's important. This is people's how they live their daily lives. And you know, if you think about it, if you're able bodied out there, and you're listening to this, just close your eyes and try to operate your stove.

R

Ryan Fleury 35:21

Yeah, no. And those of us who are blind who are still able to find, you know, let's like you say, the stove that has physical dials on it like ours, here, you got bumps on, you know, you got a bump at the 350 temperature setting, and you got a bump at, you know, whatever the stove dial is that you need to be set at. So, yeah, you know, we've had work arounds and Band Aid solutions for a number of years. But again, you know, going back to this, it's nothing new. And I'm sure Samsung's and LG's and Panasonic's, I'm sure they've done the

market research, just like you and I know that people are aging, aging at an exponential rate, and that inclusivity and accessibility are at the forefront of people's minds right now. And they need to be working on these solutions now, not 10 years from now. So hopefully they are.

R

Rob Mineault 36:22

Hopefully. But again, it's all market driven, right, especially things like you know, new and shiny appliances.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:30

Well, I don't know, they just need to throw a speech chip in there. And you can press and hold the button for five seconds, it comes up and says, Good morning, what would you like to do today? I would like to broil my potatoes or whatever. Okay, I will set the temperature at blah, blah, blah.

R

Rob Mineault 36:46

Well, and that brings up another, you know, another good point. And it's funny, because just last week, we were talking with Pramit, about the Louis voice control app, but like, just think about how powerful a real smart home would be or a smart appliance where you could literally just be like, "Hey stove, to turn on the right elements to medium". And it would just do it. The technology must be in place that that's a thing. It could even already be a thing. I don't know. I mean, they do have fridges that connect to your smartphone, and that can keep inventory and like, you know, they have crazy shit out there. That is pretty it's pretty cutting edge. Trouble isn't it doesn't it's usually gimmicky, and it hasn't really bled down to like the mainstream.

R

Ryan Fleury 37:38

Well, I think, you know, like I said, I think I'm gonna have to do a little bit of research and see if maybe we can get a major manufacturer to come on and talk to us about, you know, accessibility in their, in their products and see where that's at. Because I think that'd be very interesting.

R

Rob Mineault 37:51

Yeah. All right. See this, we're already coming up with show topics, man, we're just covering a lot of ground this episode. And we did have another article to talk about. But

you know what, I don't think we're going to talk about it, because we're running out of time, because we've spent a lot of time babbling, but it's all about the ADA, digital accessibility lawsuits and what the stats were for 2020 in terms of just how many how many new suits are out there. And it's, it's interesting. Spoiler alert, it's going up. Which is good. Listen, oh, web accessibility is very important. And we we said last year, web accessibility in 2020 was more important than ever, because so many services had to shift to online only because of the pandemic. And a lot of people were shut out of being able to use services, because that said service was not accessible. So good. I'm not surprised by these numbers at all. I'm quite pleased with them, I think, sue the pants off them and get their attention that way. Because that will either fix the problem immediately if the company has any sort of sense, unless they're Domino's.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:13

Well, and that's just it, and we'll link to the article in the show notes, but some of these companies have been sued multiple times. And so it kind of led me to wonder, well, how much teeth does the ADA actually have then? If, you know some of these companies just aren't listening in or being sued repeatedly? So interesting topic for another day. But take a look at it. It's interesting. Like you said, Rob, the numbers are up 25% over last year, over 3500 cases. So anybody out there who's looking for a career path in the US, lawyer? It'd be a great job.

R

Rob Mineault 39:48

No, that's not true. Maybe it's true. I don't know. Maybe? I mean, listen, people, they they need to pay attention, and recognize that this is a thing now. Like it's not 2002 and you can just build a website and get away with stuff like that. You need to, everything needs to be accessible. So it's a new world. I think we've done enough damage for one day.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:19

I think so.

R

Rob Mineault 40:20

Well, hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:22

Rob

R

Rob Mineault 40:23

Where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 40:25

As usual, they can find us at www.atbanter.com

R

Rob Mineault 40:31

They can also drop us a an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com. We love getting email and Ryan loves getting show ideas. So make sure that you send us an email.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:47

That's right. And you can also find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

R

Rob Mineault 40:55

All right, well, I think that's gonna do it for us this week. Thanks everybody

R

Ryan Fleury 41:01

I have been Ryan Fleury.

R

Rob Mineault 41:04

Oh, we did this once before it didn't it didn't work at all. I totally got confused as to who I was. Stop throwing those curveballs at me.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:17

Too funny.

R

Rob Mineault 41:18

Thanks, everybody, for listening in. Thank you for joining me today Ryan and letting me be on your podcast.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:25

You're welcome.

R

Rob Mineault 41:25

And we will see everybody next week.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:30

Bye.