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SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault, Lucy Greco



Rob Mineault 00:13

Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.



Ryan Fleury 00:19

Banter, banter.



Rob Mineault 00:21

Hey this is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today - she gets top billing because she's in a mood. Miss Lis Malone.



Lis Malone 00:44

It's moody, moody Monday. That would go well, so well for Monday, but it's not, Monday never mind.




Rob Mineault 00:51


Yeah, moody Tuesday just doesn't work.





Lis Malone 00:54


Doesn't have the same wing to it. It's Taco Tuesday.


 **Ryan Fleury** 01:00
Moody Malone is gonna stick, though.


 **Rob Mineault** 01:02
Oh, I like that. Moody Malone. Yeah, that's right. Sounds right out of Harry Potter. Hey, look who else it is. It's Mr. Ryan Fleury.


 **Ryan Fleury** 01:14
And that was the littlest cowbell we have here on the show this week. So stay tuned for next week's cowbell.

 **Rob Mineault** 01:20
Oh, the littlest cowbell. There's a children's book right there. We should actually add that to the list of stuff that we're never going to do, along with our cookbook. That's right. AT Banter children's book, yep, the littlest cowbell. I like it. We'll work on that. Yeah, write it, add it to the list. Hey, how the heck are you guys?











 **Ryan Fleury** 01:44
I'm good other than then, I wish it would stop raining.

 **Rob Mineault** 01:50
Tell me about it.

 **Lis Malone** 01:52
You got my rain. Life is grand.

 **Rob Mineault** 01:55
Yeah? What's it doing down there? Usually there's some sort of calamity down there in the Carolinas at any given point. How are you doing this week?



-  Lis Malone 02:02
Oh, it's the beautiful post rain weather. Now it's nice and cool, not humid. Pollen has been washed away, so have to enjoy it while it lasts.
-  Rob Mineault 02:14
So it sounds nice, actually,
-  Lis Malone 02:16
Yeah, no, it's, it's beautiful. But I have no tacos.
-  Rob Mineault 02:28
No tacos on Taco Tuesday. I mean, there's a another children's book
-  Lis Malone 02:34
It would put anyone in a mood. Come on.
-  Rob Mineault 02:36
I wonder if it's only here or if it's an international thing. I wonder if in Mexico, I wonder if they have Taco Tuesdays.
-  Lis Malone 02:44
I think they have Taco Monday and Taco Tuesday, taco Wednesday ..
-  Lucy Greco 02:49
Their Tuesdays is set for tortillas.
-  Rob Mineault 02:57
All right. Well, anything else to say about anything? Or shall we get on with the show?
-  Ryan Fleury 03:01
Yeah, we never ask you, but how are you doing Rob?

R**Rob Mineault 03:05**

I don't know. I've had a weird week. I've actually had a stressful week. Been having weird dreams all week. I think it's because there's a lot going on here at work, at good old Blind Beginnings. So it's our busy time and we're going into our AGM at the end of the month, and, yeah, all kinds of, all kinds of deadlines approaching for year end. And so, yeah I've been eating like garbage and stressed out and having weird dreams. But, you know, I find that, find that doing this podcast and being able to be passive aggressive helps, helps out a lot. So, yeah, okay. Well, how are you, Ryan, now that, now that we've covered me and Lis, now I feel bad that we're gonna leave you out.

R**Ryan Fleury 03:47**

Life is grand, and I wish it would stop raining. And there's never a bad time for tacos. Okay, I'm good. I'm a little miffed. I'm a little miffed though, I've had a couple of guitars in for service for a month now. Really, I finally get to pick them up on Saturday, so we'll be better on Saturday.

R**Rob Mineault 04:13**

Hey, we're hoping they don't have to order parts from China. Okay. Well, hey, Ryan? Yeah, Rob? Let's get to the show. What the heck are we doing today?

R**Ryan Fleury 04:25**

Well, you know, I pondered and I pondered on how to introduce today's guest, because this guest does everything. So I'm just going to wrap it up in two words. Our guest today is Accessibility Evangelist. Lucy Greco, Lucy, thank you so much for joining us today.

L**Lucy Greco 04:43**

It's my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me. I'm thrilled to have a chance to, you know, talk accessibility with you guys.

R**Ryan Fleury 04:51**

And we're gonna talk and talk and talk....

R**Rob Mineault 04:55**

But first we'll talk about tacos.

L

Lucy Greco 04:58

My husband was asking what we were supposed to have for dinner tonight.

R

Rob Mineault 05:03

There you go. There you go. Now we love talking about accessibility around here. It's one of our favorite topics, of course. So yeah, we are really excited to talk to you, and I've read through some of your blog, and we'll certainly talk about that down the road, but before we do that, maybe just give the audience a little bit of a snapshot and a little bit of background about yourself.

L

Lucy Greco 05:25

So I'm an ex-pat Canadian. I live in the US right now, and I've been here for a really freaking long time. I've been here for over 30 years now, and I still think of Canada's home. So what does that tell you? But I am an accessibility evangelist, and technically, what that means is I talk to people who don't know anything about disability and don't know anything about accessibility. And I feel through passion, through examples, through demonstrations, I convert them to the idea of loving accessibility and wanting to be everything accessible, and, you know, all around accessible. In my paid job, I work on web accessibility and digital accessibility for the University of California, Berkeley, and I actually lead the University of California system wide Accessibility Initiative, which is a lot of words to say that I am one of only two people who knows how to test with a screen reader in our 298,000 employee and student system. It also means that, you know, I write policy, and I, you know, try and get a mammoth, behemoth administrative animal to understand what accessibility means and to try and work towards a better, accessible future. And, you know, I think I've been pretty successful at it. We've had some big wins for accessibility, but also, you know, it's a behemoth and it's a really hard job to do. So within another month, I am going to be retiring to do my favorite projects I work on, which is I run a YouTube channel. And the YouTube channel used to only focus on tips and tricks for blind people, on how to cook, because I am totally blind myself, but then I had a pandemic temper tantrum, is the best way to put it, when I had to buy an appliance from my home, and that appliance turned out to be a complete accessibility brick. Couldn't use the thing to save my life without sighted help, and when I used the app, it said, for your protection, you must hold down the web connect button for three seconds before being able to start the device remotely. Well, that web connect button is very elusive and very evasive, and who the hell knows where that is. So I started a appliance review channel, and it's small, but I plan to do a lot more work on it once I retire, and I also plan to do an interview series that I've been doing called the things we love and hate. The appliances. Is called Know Before You Buy because I want blind people to know about the appliances that they want to buy before they buy them, to make sure they get the best one that they don't have to sit there staring at the device, wondering how on earth to use this thing that is protecting them from themselves. And the interview series is called the things we love and hate, and that's where I talk to blind people from all over the world. My furthest away is a young man from India and the UK all over the US. I just about to release an interview with the Canadians. So I just interview blind people, and we talk about, you know, the one thing in their house they hate, and the one thing in their house that they think, you know, hits the accessibility sweet spot. And I want to get to that. I can't wait to talk about appliances, for example, because, you know, Ryan and I have had discussions, both on the show and off the show about this, and I do really think that it's a bit of

a big deal. But before we get down there, let's talk a little bit about just accessibility in general, because I'm really curious to hear your take on it being that you have worked in that field for so long, so just sort of an open ended question, you know, how do you feel? How are we at with accessibility these days? Because I feel like even 10 years ago, it was a very nebulous term, not a lot of people knew about it. You know, are we making progress with in terms of organizations understanding what accessibility is and its importance. I think we're making progress with organizations committing to it. How successful they are is, you know, subject to how they do it, hiring and what they do to actually resource it. You know, some of the bigger giants, you know, the Silicon Valley. You know, Big Five do an amazingly good job of talking about accessibility. And, you know, every single one of them have baby steps forward and baby steps back. They end up walking in the square. You know, it's just, it's all over the place. You know, I look at the big accessibility conference that I go to every year, the California State University, Northridge conference on assistive technology, and we look at how much representation we had from different companies there. Amazon had the largest representation. They had a huge booth like the biggest one in the entire exhibit hall. You could have put about eight or nine of the smaller booths in it. Um, but other companies, like Google had much smaller booths. You know, everybody's working on accessibility and what they resource behind it kind of shows what's happening. I'm not going to say Amazon's the most accessible, but it's definitely not the least accessible. I'm not going to say Google's the most accessible, and it's definitely not, you know, it's neither end of the scale. They're both working on it in different ways, and they've got different commitments towards it. I think the best thing we can say is that there is progress. We are moving in a direction that may eventually help more companies become accessible. The biggest problem is, though, is that most people still don't actually understand what that means. So you've got a big company. Let's call them, you know, Company Blue, and Company Blue, and that does not refer to Microsoft. I'm just saying blue because I want to they think they need to hire somebody who knows something about accessibility, and they get a pool of candidates applying, and they don't know how to pick the person who actually has the skill set, so they might get, you know, the stereotypical white guy in his 40s or 50s who talks the big talk, but doesn't know anything about what accessibility really means, and can't run the screen reader, and can't demonstrate a screen reader, or doesn't understand what color contrast means, and, and this person is leading their initiative, and they're kind of, you know, they apply for the job, so they think they know something, but maybe they don't. Then we've got, you know, giant companies that are also hiring lots of people with disabilities. I mean, I love the way Microsoft focuses on hiring with accessibility in mind, because they found that people with disabilities make a very diverse workforce that produce better tools, like they specifically have a program to hire for neurodiversity. And I think that's that's fantastic. These are all baby steps, though, we can't get anywhere until people actually know about accessibility, how to create it, what it means, and really how to actually turn to people with disabilities to make it happen. Until they include us, we are not going to have the best accessible interfaces out there. You know, being blind, I know what works for me. I am not going to say I know what works for any other blind person, but I also have some really good ideas of what, you know, the hundreds of students I saw when I started at Berkeley in 2005 need it for accessibility. I know what they thought they needed. I know how they did their school work and how it worked for them and what failed. You know, I think I'm in a better place than, say, a white woman doing the job who doesn't know anything about accessibility and has never had to use a screen reader, or has never had to increase the font on something, or possibly, you know, use a puff and switch, puff and sip switch to navigate a web page.

R

Rob Mineault 14:31

That makes a lot of sense to me. I do think like that is the missing key to it. I think that you can have somebody that maybe has the the technical know, how around accessibility, but unless they've had that lived experience, I feel like there's, there's just a piece of the puzzle that's that's going to be missing, no matter how well versed they are in the in the technical side of it, they've never had to rely on something like a screen reader.

L

Lucy Greco 14:58

I mean, everyone says, I learned how to use a screen reader, and I can test with a screener, but they always have the option when they're trapped to get out of it. I don't have that option. You know, that look of horror that I give to the developer sitting across the table from me can't be faked.

R

Rob Mineault 15:17

Well, and, and not only that, like I think that there's, there's also just a way that that, that you engage with a screen reader when you're using it every day, and you rely on that, that it's you're you're also in using that screen reader in a different way. It's one thing to know what keystrokes do, but it's a whole nother thing to to understand how, as somebody who's who's blind, how you navigate through something like a web page with a screen reader unless, unless you're just you, you're doing it every day.

L

Lucy Greco 15:49

Exactly. I mean, I had a developer who was very proud of himself. He was so happy. He was like, I I went learned how to use NVDA, and I'm so proud. Like, look at this website I've created. It's really accessible. Now with NVDA, the problem is, is, like you said, he learned the keystrokes that he learned to do, you know, 123, but he didn't actually learn how to use it to read. And he's like, I don't know how to get it to get to the text, so it's not reading the text. So he put, you know, I'm going to get technical and you know, he put tab indexes on every single paragraph, which meant, you know, a keyboard only user now had to tab through pages and pages of paragraphs and paragraphs that you know were not supposed to be tabbable. They were, you know, they were text content. I mean, screen reader users know how to get to the text content. We use our screen readers read all commands or our arrow keys. But since he didn't know how to get the screen reader to read that text, he forced it to read the text and in the completely wrong way. And it was you know, it wasn't even a dueling disability situation. It was a you know, developer trying his best, but did the wrong thing.

R

Ryan Fleury 17:05

I think too, we need to be a little careful when we talk in broad strokes like screen reader accessibility, because I think we can all agree we live in a world now where just because you've tested with NVDA doesn't necessarily mean it's going to work with JAWS or Dolphin. I've beta tested products that work great with NVDA, but have issues with JAWS or vice versa, right? So

we have to be careful lumping screen readers all in into the same bucket, because they all behave differently, and different browsers behave differently. Different apps behave differently. So we live now where we need to be testing with multiple tools.

L

Lucy Greco 17:50

Exactly. I mean, there are people that actually use Voiceover for Mac on a daily basis as their primary machine. We need to test with that because it's never going to work the same way, and its total model is so different and so foreign to the Windows world, even, you know, their interaction model. It drives me crazy, but it's how they work.

R

Rob Mineault 18:15

Well, and doesn't a part of you kind of just, you know, sort of scream at the sky, this idea of that we're still fighting the website accessibility war this far downstream? The internet's been around since 96 and we've been talking about it and, it's still, we still have to fight to get websites accessible. All of this stuff should just be baked in from, you know, at the start by now.

L

Lucy Greco 18:44

And, you know, the Internet was created with the idea of making it accessible to everyone. I mean, I was at a talk last week that actually talked about Tim Berners Lee actually wanting the web to be something for people with disabilities to get access to information that they didn't have access to before. I mean, I'm going to age myself and tell you that I was online before there was an internet and I used a tool called Gopher. And Gopher was this phenomenal tool. I could type in a search term and get 15 articles and maybe more, but 15 was the page by page limit, and I could read those articles, and it was like it was incredibly freeing and incredibly liberating. And then HTML came along and broke it all.

R

Ryan Fleury 19:34

People wanted to put pictures of their cats on the screen.

L

Lucy Greco 19:39

Exactly, you know, I mean, you know, for many, many years, my husband used to use a joking term, you know, it's about as popular as porn on paper. You know, now retail is more popular than porn on the internet. So what, you know, it's, it's something that's become part of our lives. It's but the problem is, is it's not increasing in accessibility for us. And there are many, many ways that it goes backwards.

R

Rob Mineault 20:07

And that's part of the reason why I get really excited talking about AI, because I really do feel like AI, as long as we, you know, continue to develop it in terms of, you know, applying it to things like accessibility, I think that there's some real potential there to really even the playing field and to make all of these inaccessible parts of the internet accessible for the first time in really short order.

L

Lucy Greco 20:33

I mean, there are ways AI can work incredibly well for us, but if we just adopt AI blindly, no pun intended, we may, you know, end up with something that we're not really looking forward to. I just posted something today about, you know, the fact that a lot of tools out there, a blind person is expected to use these tools and just have confidence in them. And it was just revealed to us, I think as recently as September, that Be My Eyes, shares your data. They sell your data. What does that mean? You know, they'll, they'll aggregate and anonymize it, but you know, they can sell the data that, you know, a lot of blind people are picking up cans and want to identify the food in the cans. And, you know, that's kind of scary. We have to understand why the tool is doing what it does. Remember that nothing comes for free, and use these things responsibly. And also, you know, question them, and, you know, challenge them. I mean, there's the the post I wrote today talks a lot about the fact that there is all these remote sighted assistance apps that we can, you know, call up somebody, and that person will help you to do everything, and they encourage you to do everything, from fill out your tax forms to you know, read your most recent health report. That's not data that you really want some stranger to read for you. AI will do a better job of that, but you have to pick the right AI tool so that AI tool you know can guarantee you that you know, the next thing you know, you're not getting ads for bunions when your report said that the bunions on your feet came off right?

R

Ryan Fleury 22:29

And I think too, we have to take some responsibility on ourselves. I'm just as guilty as the next person. When I say, I click next, next, next and accept and don't read license agreements or terms of agreements, right? So all along, companies like Be My Eyes or others may have been doing this, but only recently has that come to light. I wasn't aware of that, but if we're not reading our terms of agreement and these licenses, we don't know what we're opting into.

L

Lucy Greco 23:00

Yeah. And, I mean, nobody reads those agreements. I I've met one person who reads those agreements and and that person is like, the most frustrating person to talk to, because they go over the top. I mean, they bought a house last year, and they literally went through the disclosures for the house, line by line. And I'm like, nobody cares. Why are you like, making them go to all this work of making this document accessible? Just run it through, you know, run it through an OCR program. You'll get the gist of it. That's all you need. And like, no, I want to know if the comma is on this word or that word. I'm like, Oh, my God...

R

Ryan Fleury 23:41

Oh, that's doing your due diligence. Definitely, they did diligence.

L

Lucy Greco 23:45

And you know, it probably gave them more sleepless nights than anybody else. But I mean, nobody reads those things, and I mean, it's because they're not written in a way for us to read them, right? And I don't mean that they're inaccessible, because, God help us, that's the first thing the company makes accessible, is their terms and conditions. You know, I remember getting an app that I was like, oh, I can read these terms and conditions, and I have to read them because it actually knew which lines I'd arrowed through. And then I, you know, hit the accept, and the rest of the app was completely inaccessible.

R

Rob Mineault 24:21

And that's just sort of the way of the world these days, right now. You know, the big currency, is data. Like, let's face it, you know, your data is more valuable to a company than, usually, than your dollars.

L

Lucy Greco 24:35

So, yeah, it's, it's, you know, you are the product. Yeah, yeah, the product isn't something. The product isn't the AI that's going to give you the image recognition. The product is you, and the AI is the way to get your data out of you. Yeah, but saying all that, it's still really amazing what the AI can do. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, we have to use it. We just have to use it responsibly, and we have to hold the companies that make these tools feet to the fire to be sure that we can use it responsibly and that they don't take advantage of us because we have a disability.

R

Ryan Fleury 25:15

Yeah, again, we're back to including us in the conversation.

L

Lucy Greco 25:19

Yeah, 100% it's always include us in the conversation. The population that is 70% unemployed, but you know, we still spend a significant portion of the world's money? Yeah, I think I heard something about that. The UK did a study a couple of years back, and they called it, you know, the unchecked pound. And they said that 17 billion pounds were left, you know, because blind people couldn't left on the table, because blind people couldn't finish a transaction. Yeah, yeah, that's, that's a large number of money. Imagine that seven. I mean, at that 17 billion was what people were leaving behind. How much were they spending?

R

Rob Mineault 26:06

I really don't know what at this point, what the what sort of the pushback is, why they're so hesitant to really dive into this notion of accessibility. Because whenever you mention it to a lot

of a lot of companies, their eyes seem to glaze over, or they just get overwhelmed, and they're just like, well, we can't, we can't devote resources to that. We can't, you know, we can't do that. And, yeah, you can't even present it as a business case, they still resist.

L

Lucy Greco 26:29

They're scared. They're scared of disability. I mean, you know, historically, disability has some very negative connotations, and people are frightened about doing the wrong thing, so they they freeze and do nothing, which is, you know, worse than doing the wrong thing. I think if you try and only maybe get that tiny baby step forward, it's so much better than freezing and not doing anything in fear of doing the wrong thing. But the fear of doing the wrong thing stops a lot of people from getting even beginning the process. As soon as you provide a link that says, you know, accessibility, you know, contact us and let us know how we're doing. That's going to give you more information than hiring a million people who know all about the W3C, that are able bodied, you know, as soon as you provide the link for us to be able to provide feedback, they're going to get the information we have and find ways to actually help us.

R

Rob Mineault 27:35

In general, where do you feel like we're at with accessibility? Are you excited about the directions that we're going? Do you feel like we're finally making some traction and really get, you know, the technology is really getting to the point where we can really start to move the needle forward in terms of accessibility? How are you feeling in general about it?

L

Lucy Greco 27:56

I think that we have a good structure and framework to build accessibility on. I think that we can get really accessible things. It's just not a priority yet. And the priority has to happen where I have hope is in the European Union, their Europeans Accessibility Act, I see what companies are doing to meet the European Accessibility Act. It has a much clearer, much more conceptual way of understanding how to create accessibility than just the plain W3C rules and companies are scared, so they're doing something about it. I mean, I've heard that in the Irish implementation of the Europeans with Accessibility Act, they include jail time if a company is found to violate it, you could very well have you know, one of your corporate leadership end up having to do jail time for not being accessible. And you know, we saw it several years ago with the privacy rules and GPR, when the European Union insisted that privacy happen, and all be damned, all of a sudden we don't have cookie messages all over the world, and not just in Europe, and we don't, and we have a lot better, you know, visibility into our privacy than we ever has before because of their privacy rules. Well, I expect that the EAA is going to do that for us, for accessibility, and I think that we're going to make a lot of progress. I was so hopeful last year when we finally had a Department of Justice rulemaking in the US that said websites were a place that needed to be accessible. I was disappointed when it was just public entities that needed to comply. And I'm even more disappointed that we're going to have to wait probably 10 years for us to clean up the mess that we've built for ourselves in the past six months in the US to destroy all that. But you know, in the meantime, if anybody wants to do business in

Europe, which you can be sure the big companies do, they're going to be accessible, or Europe is going to start collecting a lot of money that's going to go towards teaching people how to become accessible, especially

R

Rob Mineault 30:22

And now everything is being, you know, shuffled around right now in terms of who's selling to who, and you're absolutely right, that could really have some big implications downstream.

L

Lucy Greco 30:34

I mean, we talk about the internet as making us a global village, but you know, if that global village wants to sell their product in France or Germany, they're going to have to follow those rules, and those rules are going to help those of us who need accessibility.

R

Rob Mineault 30:50

It's true. Well, listen, at least we know who is playing the role of the village idiot.

L

Lucy Greco 30:57

I will never argue with you on that. But, and and, I mean, it's sad, and I mean, I, I, I just cringe when I, when I'm in community here, because people are so worried and so scared. And you know, the only thing we can do to keep keep it coming and keep the accessibility happening, is to form community, share with one another, and, you know, keep our principles forward whenever we're dealing with everybody. And I think, you know, we'll make it through. It's just going to be a long haul.

R

Ryan Fleury 31:34

So we need a disability community uprising. It's what we need. The largest minority group in the world, and we're the quietest.

L

Lucy Greco 31:42

Yeah. I mean, I think about the fact that, you know, it took the Capital Crawl for people to in Congress here to recognize disability. I mean, you know, it's we need to keep that up. I have, you know, before I started the university, I was working with a lot of people, high school students, especially that I felt that it was my fault and other advocates of my age that these students didn't understand how to advocate for themselves, because we advocated for the things that they have today. I mean, when I was at University, there was not a department that would make all my alternative media and scan all my books and Braille, my math and all that for me. So I had to choose what I did for my education based on you know, what I could

canoodle and negotiate for myself. Disabled Students today can go and ask for whatever they need. And you know, if they've got a good disabled students program at the University, they can get it. If they don't have a good disabled students program, they can shop around and find a better university to go to that will do it. And you know, I thought I was really well accommodated when I went through school these students today, you know, they can do science. They can do biology. I couldn't take a biology class when I was going to school. There was no way. But a blind student today could take biology and do better than anybody else in the class. Yeah. So we have to keep that advocacy movement up that we did. We have to crawl up those steps. We have to scream at the top of our lungs when the washing machine we buy doesn't have an accessible control panel, we have to, you know, find those things that will resonate with people who are not disabled, so that they will work with us to create a better, accessible world. And you know, when I did start the appliance project, it was not the blind people who helped move that project forward. It was the 1000s and 1000s of people who said, I hate touch screens. They're terrible. They need to go away, and none of them had a disability. I mean, you know, the big thread in one of the videos is that, yeah, touch screens are bad for all of us. Whoever thought a touch screen was a good idea when you're driving a car to make you take your eyes off the road, to change the temperature or the radio station, right? It's, you know, we find those things that resonate and people glomp onto them, and that's where we'll get the accessibility, not by demanding that everybody you know makes the best new Braille device, but more that everybody makes a device that you know I can use, my grandmother can use, and my children three generations from now can use.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:41

Well, I told Rob earlier today I wanted to talk to you about this because you were recently at the CSUN conference, and I understand, or heard an interview that I think LG was there for the first time ever. Did you have a chance to speak to them?

L

Lucy Greco 34:56

I did. I read them the riot. Yeah. Side, but up one side and down the other, because they were the manufacturer that the very first video was about, and they went out of their way to appease me, not to appease the idea, but to appease me. They not once, but twice, sent a technician to my home to install Braille templates on the machine. They installed a really good Braille template, and then three months later, they sent me another one, which is terrible. I hate it, and what their current Braille idea is based on. And you know, the difference between those two Braille templates is the one actually has real words, or at least abbreviations that you can understand. So Tem for temperature and all that, right? The other one just has 1234, A, B, C, D, what is 1234? And a, b, c, d, mean and it they're focusing on their app. They're focusing on the app that they provide you with. And you know, if a blind person, you know, just hit a and a will tell you, then what it's changed the setting to in the app. Fantastic. Love it. It's not accessible. It makes it usable. It's not accessible. And I draw a very, very strict, firm line between accessible and usable. Something that's usable is something that has a workaround that we can actually, you know, finally get a job done. That's what LG did, is make their machine usable, because you still have to have the app. What happens if your Wi Fi router dies and the machine needs the Wi Fi router to connect to the internet, to connect to their app? You're screwed. You can't turn on your washing machine. There's nothing you can do to connect to that machine, and you can't you can't use it now, even a Braille template, you know

on a touch screen is not 100% an accessibility fix, because as you're touching the buttons. Settings are being made and settings are being changed. Every single button on the touch screen area of an LG does more than one function. IE, that wireless connectivity button is actually the permanent press button, and you have to hold it in, and that's how it becomes the wireless connectivity button. You know, as you turn the steam on, you've got five levels of steam, so you hit the steam button, and it's off, low, medium, whatever. But, you know, unless the machine has some way of indicating those things to you, and there's so many ways they could do that, you know, they could have, they could have a synthesis chip in there that speaks that. You know, how long has it been since we've been able to get speech synthesis that costs pennies for a chip? You know, limited words, no problem. I mean, in the 80s, we had Teddy Ruxpin. Why can't we have a Teddy Ruxpin in our washing machine?

R

Ryan Fleury 37:58

Well, we've got talking microwaves and talking other devices, right? So, yeah, there's no reason for it, exactly.

L

Lucy Greco 38:04

There's no reason not to do it. And you know, it's not going to only help us. It's going to help the person who does the midnight shift and comes home in the middle of the night and doesn't want to turn the lights on to wake the kids, they're going to want to hit their buttons on the microwave and be able to make it through the interface as well. I never think about an accessibility feature or function without thinking about the other people who it's going to affect besides me. I mean, there's been a term in the accessibility world since the 80s of digital curb cuts. Digital curb cuts are the exact same thing as a curb cut. The curb cut helps a person in a wheelchair get onto the street. It also helps the person pushing the groceries part, the mother with the stroller, the person who's not paying attention and walks out into the middle of the street, etc, etc, etc.

R

Ryan Fleury 38:58

What was LG's feedback to you?

L

Lucy Greco 39:02

They were very quiet, very very respectful and apologetic. They said, We're sorry you feel that way. And there were some bigwigs in the room from LG and I feel like I was heard, but I think they were deeply embarrassed. You know, they mention a Braille template on their on their website. I saw those Braille templates at CSUN. They are not Braille templates. They are little raised lines with an A, B, C and D at the end of it. And you know, you have to read the Braille manual, which is, I kid you not, five inches thick, yeah, and in UE B, which, I don't know about you guys, but I don't read UEB. I'm old school, so I couldn't read that manual. And you know who's going to go grab a five inch thick book to figure out what a B, C, D means to play around with a setting that you may not ever need to use again to clean the tub on your washing machine.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:05

Well, I have to give them some credit for attending the conference and hopefully getting lots of feedback from the community that they can take back and reiterate their software.

L

Lucy Greco 40:17

They did get a lot of feedback, not only from me. I'm sure they had some really cool stuff that they had done. So, for example, for people who have difficulty opening and closing heavy doors, they included a feature on the refrigerators that if you stand in a certain place in front of the refrigerator, it assists you to open the door. The only problem is, is the guy in the booth didn't speak enough English to understand that, you know, I was trying to figure out where the thing was independently. So he grabbed my leg and started moving my foot to where it was supposed to step. You do not touch a woman's leg. I mean, I think they learned a lot, yeah, you know, they were also at the talk I gave about appliance accessibility, and they got the sense of the room. I think they learned a lot. They've just announced, I think last week, that they are going to have a competition for people to submit accessibility features and accessibility functionality. And there was no sign of that. No talk of that at CSUN. I have a feeling that was a response to what they did learn at CSUN.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:27

That's great news, yeah.

L

Lucy Greco 41:29

And I mean, I'm willing to work with them if they're willing to still work with me, but you know, I'm known as a very brutally and bluntly honest person, and if I had been polite to them and say, hey, great work. Nice job. And moved on. I wouldn't be helping anybody, but by being blunt to them and being, you know, I was ferocious, I'd have to say,

R

Ryan Fleury 41:51

Yeah, we have to make sure we applaud people and organizations when they need to be applauded, because a lot of times we crap all over them, right? But we never give them the accolades they deserve.

L

Lucy Greco 42:02

Yeah, I mean, I have a few appliances on my channel that I give the buy approval to, and I think that's really important to tell people that, you know, this is something you should buy. This is something that you should, you know, use because it is accessible. And we need to, you know, we need to go to our advocacy organizations and create awards. And you know, yes, there are

a couple these awards out there, I mean, but typically they're given to companies in a very political way, and I think we need to recognize these people in a non political way and very publicly and celebrate the successes we have.

R

Rob Mineault 42:42

Totally, yeah, yeah, that's a really good point.

L

Lucy Greco 42:45

Yeah. I mean, that's, that's what I that's why I have The Things We Love and Hate, and that's why we always start with the thing they hate, but we always end with the positive, what we love. And, you know, if we had a chance to talk to a developer, what was the, you know, what's the elevator pitch you would give somebody working on something about accessibility? Because I always want to end on that positive note and make sure that those tools get the recognition that they need and deserve,

R

Rob Mineault 43:14

And I think that the really important lesson for them to take away, and these Braille templates, is a great example of this is that, you know, if they had, if they had baked in accessibility at the beginning of the process, if they had done whatever they had to do in order to make sure that something like a touch screen was accessible, whether that was putting in a speech synthesizer or, putting in Braille into the actual design of the touch screen, whatever they had to do they that would have been way easier and more effective and probably better for the consumer in the long run than, trying to patchwork and add on solution after the fact.

L

Lucy Greco 44:01

Exactly. There's, you know, the the term for this is 'born accessible'. The born accessible things are inevitably the better thing out there. I mean, you know, as soon as you start hatching on something, and, you know, screwing on nuts and bolts, we get into what I call the ghetto territory of of devices, and it can be pretty brutal. I mean, what happens if that Braille sticker comes off, which they inevitably do. I mean, you know, two people on my interview series have indicated that somebody you know took the Braille off their microwave that they, you know, painstakingly hired somebody to put on for them, whereas the one I have in my kitchen, the Braille was built in from the beginning.

R

Rob Mineault 44:50

Yeah, well, and I mean, you know, in terms of touch screens, you know, you have to remember it wasn't that long ago, Apple, the iPhone. When the iPhone first came out, everyone was like, Oh, this is great, you know, but you have to remember that the first two generations of the iPhone didn't have any sort of accessibility at all. There was no screen reader. There was nothing.

L Lucy Greco 45:13

Exactly. And you know, it wasn't done out of altruistic reasons. You know, everybody thinks that Apple did this because Apple cared about accessibility. Apple did this because one of the agencies that they wanted to sell to wouldn't buy something that wasn't accessible for blind people. You know, up until the iPhone three came out, the US government was buying blackberries because at least blackberries had some accessibility features, and the US government wanted those people in government to buy iPhones, so Apple had to make them accessible and come up with a screen reader. You know, interesting. I actually have some personal grudges against Apple. I try very hard to not use Apple products because I was an Apple zealot in the 90s and 1997 when Apple went up to OS X, they basically made it impossible for the third party screen reader I was using at the time to work. And there was no accessibility from 1997 to 2005 and you know, the person who led the initiative to create VoiceOver will tell you it was because the School District in Michigan was being sued and they needed to get a screen reader to resolve that lawsuit on all the Macs that they bought for students in the classroom. You can't tell me any company has done that altruistically when that history comes out.

R Rob Mineault 46:43

I believe it. I totally believe it. You know, sometimes, you know, it's, the stick, it's not the carrot that does the heavy lifting.

L Lucy Greco 46:51

Exactly, you know, the old stick. I mean, we all always blind people carry one, and we need to use those sticks more.

R Rob Mineault 47:03

Yeah, it's probably there's too many carrots around there. We need more sticks.

L Lucy Greco 47:07

Exactly. I mean, I know that the reason Amazon does the work they do for accessibility is because they don't want to lose that market share of 25% of the world's population. If that's why you're doing it, because you want my money, I'll give you my money if you succeed.

R Rob Mineault 47:25

Speaking of, you know, back here in Canada, you know, that's, that's what we're up against with, with all of the the new disability legislation here. There's no real great enforcement mechanism built into it. I mean, it's all it's all great on paper, but at the end of the day, if

there's no enforcement mechanism, it's really just, you know, worth the paper that it's written on, and that's about it.

L

Lucy Greco 47:50

And it's so limited. I mean, when I looked at what the Canadians with Disabilities Act covered, I cried a little. Yeah, I really cried because I had so much hope for it. And you know the fact that it dealt with financial transactions, transportation and government, it's like, what about the rest of the world? I remember when I had my very first guide dog and I lived in Calgary, and the apartment building that my then boyfriend lived in, wouldn't let me visit him because I had a guide dog, and there was no consequences to them refusing me. I They were told by the Civil Right or by the Human Rights Commission that they had to let me in. But it was a really uncomfortable situation. You know, I'd go into the building and, you know, the manager would basically make me feel like I was scum. I mean, my boyfriend, now my husband, by the way, moved out of that building because they made him feel uncomfortable. But that was, there was no consequences. There's no penalty. There's no punishment. You know, there's a rule that says here that a landlord must put an accessible thermostat into a unit that is being rented by a person who needs it, but if they don't do it, there's no penalty. It's just a lot of back and forth and arguing and yelling. You know, they don't get charged, you know, \$1,000 for every day that there's no accessible thermostat. And maybe that should be the case, and that's what the European Act is doing, is it's, it's putting in consequences, and it's putting in enforcement, you know, I think I understood that, you know, a violation, depending on the size of the company, could be a minimum of a million euros, that's a lot of money. You can get a lot of accessibility for a million euros. You can hire five people with disabilities to help you make your product better, and then you could probably sell \$5 million worth of product, or 5 million euros worth of product.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:56

And again, even just acceptance of organization. Services, you know, we in Canada talk about Uber denials all the time from people with guide dogs, yeah, and, you know, or taxis, you know, you can put your dog in the trunk. And there is no recourse. Sure, you can send an email off, but that's not going to do anything. You can file a complaint through an app, all that, most of the time, isn't going to do anything. And like Rob was saying here in Canada, the only mechanism we have in place is the Human Rights Tribunal, and that's years in the process, and it's being restructured right now. So who wants to do that?

L

Lucy Greco 50:37

And it doesn't have consequences. You might be able to take a ride the next time. I did some math a couple of weeks back, once I got my my new guide dog, because I was guide dog list for a year, and in that math, I found that I've actually probably paid Uber only about 50% of what they've paid me in settlements, or rejecting me as rejecting my service dog, because I have, you know, filed complaints and arbitrations with them and almost sued them. So the settlements they've given me are literally double what I've actually paid to ride Uber since they've been around, and it's not teaching them any lessons, though, that's what's scaring me. I mean, since I got my new guide dog on March 1, I have a 75% rejection rate. 75% rejection

rate is, it's just brutal, yep. And, you know, I'm shocked actually, when it when it actually works out. I mean, the funny story is, is, when I was in Texas and coming back to the airport, the guy opened up the back of his trunk, and my dog actually jumped in and I was like, no, no ... But, I mean, it was, the guy was like, no, no, no, you don't do want to go. There you go in the back seat. Like it was, you know, it's a pleasant thing that happens so rarely. Yeah, you know, that guy got a better tip than most.

R

Rob Mineault 52:09

Yep, there's, there's a long way to go. And I think that, you know, even, even on this podcast, I think that at one time, you know, we, we really kind of thought that the problem was education. People needed to understand what was legal and what wasn't, what the ADA and, you know, over here, up here in Canada, the ACA, you know what they cover and what's legislated, but I mean, people can know and if there's no enforcement, yeah, they're not, they're not necessarily going to do it. Certainly, you have outliers. You have people, and you have organizations, and you have companies that that do try to do the right thing.

L

Lucy Greco 52:48

Yeah, I have people say to me in meetings, and you know, I'm not going to say where these meetings were, but I have had people say to me, I know this is the new law, but we're going to wait to get sued because we can't afford to do it. And I just, I mean, it was a gut punch this, it was terribly upsetting. And, you know, I'm used to hearing that now, but you know, the fact that I am used to hearing it is a really sad state of affairs.

R

Ryan Fleury 53:19

It surprises me that they haven't been sued because we hear that the US is such a litigious state or litigious country, right? Everybody's suing everybody, because if the website is not accessible, or this isn't accessible, why isn't the US accessible?

L

Lucy Greco 53:36

They actually had the person who said it actually had two settlements ongoing at the time. And the problem is that when you get into legal action, everybody shuts up, yeah. And everybody goes quiet and goes silent. The one University that almost had a lawsuit and got their way out of it, went public, talked to their people, said, work with us. Let's work together, and we're very public, and we're able to get the case closed in a year without any settlement or any litigious work whatsoever, because they had people working with them, and they went public and they shared. You know, hey, the Office of Civil Rights sent us this complaint, and these are the things that they want us to fix. We want you, our community, to help us fix it. They did a great job. That was University of Colorado, Boulder.

R

Ryan Fleury 54:30

And there's such a and there's such a deep pool of people to pull resources from as much lived

And there's such a and there's such a deep pool of people to pull resources from so much lived experience that you know people, people like us, would love to be able to help companies out at the same time. You know, it'd be great to be paid for it. We don't want to just give up our time freely to everybody, right?

L

Lucy Greco 54:50

Treat us like the research the asset that we can be, you know, we, we provide a lot of value. Don't, don't expect us to test something for you free. But also, if we test for free, it's not accomplishing the same thing that having us on the team is. It was Microsoft who first said that having a deaf person on the team for Skype, I think it was the product that they were referring to meant that they actually had to have captions in Skype because the team didn't want their deaf person on the team not being well to use the tool that they were working on. Yeah, you know, we have to be a part of it. We have to be, you know, we're not just tokens. We're not people who are sitting there in the room and can't be a contributing member. But, you know, bring us in, make us part of the family, and we will, we will give back a million fold to what you give to us.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:48

I do want to quickly say, too, we need to keep in mind too, you know, we're kind of banging on mainstream companies, but we have disability organizations that have PowerPoint presentations that aren't accessible to their blind attendees who are viewing these workshops, and there are tools that they can be using to make their PowerPoint, their slide decks accessible to us with our screen readers. So there's still some work to be done in the disability community when it comes to education and accessibility tools.

L

Lucy Greco 56:21

Yeah. I mean, there is a tool that, if you're doing a presentation over zoom and have a PowerPoint presentation, that will give anybody in the meeting a link to an HTML representation of that PowerPoint presentation and update live. Yep, it's called Scribe for Meetings. Yep, I have never been able to get any University to buy it or use it, and that sucks. I mean, it's, it's just plain outright wrong. You know, I give out the links to my slides so that people could follow along with the slides during the presentation that you know, there's just things you can do. And our own organizations, I remember many years ago that going to an NFB website, one of their store sites, to buy some of their products, kept saying, clickable, clickable, clickable on every single element on the page. That's like, you've got to be kidding me. This is the National Federation for the Blind who swears that accessibility is the most important thing in the world, not even doing it on their own site.

R

Rob Mineault 57:35

Yeah. There's an amazing amount of of ignorance out there in terms of what's available and what we can actually do. I mean, the assistive technology field is actually very robust, and there's tons of solutions out there, but a lot of times people just don't even know about it. And

you know, I there reminds me of a of an interesting blog article that I read on your site about PDFs and how a lot of people, a lot of people, are building them wrong, right from the jump, like you know, not understanding how to actually make an accessible PDF. They just from a Word document, which is just as easy as y u have to save it in the right way. It's just, there's all these things that a lot of people just don't know.

L Lucy Greco 58:25

Yeah, I am so tickled pink that you mentioned that post. You know, I have this really interesting way of going viral, and that's one of my things that went viral was, you know, I started that whole thing ranting on LinkedIn about the fact that I had gotten a referral from my doctor that was in a PDF that I couldn't read. And turns out, by the way, the PDF was empty. But I mean, the whole point is, is that, that that article went viral, and people really glamped onto it. They were, you know, just like my my washing machine, just so the two of you know, that particular video is over 195,000 views right now. Nice. And that, you know, not because, you know, I promote it, it's because people like the idea behind it, yeah, it's, you know, I'm so glad you read that article.

R Rob Mineault 59:19

I loved it.

L Lucy Greco 59:20

I had a lot of fun writing that one. I hope you like today's too.

R Ryan Fleury 59:28

Well, it's interesting. Yesterday, I had a client ask me for training, and it was reading documents, including PDFs. And I said the Word stuff, yeah, absolutely no problem at all. But the PDFs, I don't think I want to teach you how to read PDFs, and the reasons were, of course, a there's no standard when it comes to a PDF document. There's multiple ways to open it. Acrobat Reader might work, it might not. Edge might, it might not.

L Lucy Greco 1:00:07

I prefer to work with instead of training people how to do things, I prefer to work at the systemic level to make people, you know, create accessibility from the start. You know, I'm very proud of the fact that at my own university, I was able to convince the policy people to stop using PDFs. They had a web page with over 1000 PDFs on it for every single policy, from, you know, where a food truck could park on campus to how to, you know, suspend a staff member who had been inappropriate. All those policies were all these PDFs, and because of certain reasons, they had to make those all accessible. And I said to her, okay, I can send you to seven hours of training on how to make PDFs inaccessible, and then you can go through these 1000 PDFs, and maybe in four years, might have all of them done, and maybe half of

them by then have to be redone. Or you can just make them HTML, and she's making them all HTML, and I'm, I'm so proud of that, that's a win for sure. Yeah, you know? I mean, yeah, I mean, it's just, there's no, there's no reason that we're still stuck on PDFs. There's none whatsoever. But, yeah, no. I mean, my favorite thing in that particular post is that the only people I've ever heard say that PDFs are okay and that they they can be made accessible is the people who make money selling the training to make PDFs successful. I have this great sticker on my laptop right now that says, Make Love, Not PDFs. I went up to one of these guys who's like, you know, you know, his whole living is training people how to make PDFs. And he goes, you're stabbing me in the heart and making me cry. And I go, I don't care, PDFs suck.

R

Rob Mineault 1:02:03

I'm sure a lot of people would definitely agree with you on that one. Yeah. Anyways, we could go on for another two hours.

L

Lucy Greco 1:02:10

I can always come back.

R

Rob Mineault 1:02:12

I think we'll have to have you back, because honestly, this has been very I feel like I said, it's been a stressful week, and now I feel like, feel like a little bit better. I feel like I've vented a little bit.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:02:21

Maybe we need, like, an accessibility evangelism segment every quarter or something when we bring Lucy back on for that.

L

Lucy Greco 1:02:30

I think that's a great idea. You know, the next time you're feeling that stress and anxiety, I have an espresso machine that works really well on my YouTube channel.

R

Rob Mineault 1:02:37

See, perfect. There's no app to connect to it.

L

Lucy Greco 1:02:41

There's no app to connect to it. It's got tactile buttons. The only, the only inaccessible part is, if you want to grind one shot or two shots worth of grinds, you have to the same button, does it?

So our our workaround is that we keep it set on one and if you want two shots, just push it again.

R

Rob Mineault 1:03:02

I always want 2. Listen, it's been an absolute delay talking to you. Thanks so much for coming on and chatting. Where can people find you on the web? Where can they find your the YouTube videos?

L

Lucy Greco 1:03:21

The website is www.ccessaces.com. I'm accessaces.com and my YouTube channel is linked on there, and I have all the different playlists linked on there. And I promise that once I retire in the middle of May, I'm going to start posting more and creating more videos. I'm looking to find better ways to create the videos to make it go faster. And yes, I do edit all my own videos so ... it's a, a thing. Oh yeah, but please visit the website. You know, watch my YouTube videos. And hey, I mean, reach out to me at lucy@accessaces.com if you want to be, you know, interviewed, or if you have a product you want me to review, or if you want to be a guest reviewer, I have a, you know, I have my very first guest appliance review on the channel that I put up. I think, in January of this year, a woman I know bought a induction stove that she thinks is very accessible, so she demonstrated it, and I posted the video with her on the channel.

R

Rob Mineault 1:04:47

Nice, very cool, very cool. And we'll make sure that we link to all of those in the show notes for folks as well.

L

Lucy Greco 1:04:53

Excellent. I really appreciate I I've enjoyed talking to you guys. You really loosened me up at the beginning of the call, and you're a pleasure to talk to.

R

Rob Mineault 1:04:59

Well, great because, yeah, we'd love to have you back on because there's plenty more to talk about. And yeah, it'd be great to make it a regular thing.


R


Ryan Fleury 1:05:13


And we should have said to this show is always better with beverages. So next time, bring your favorite beverage.


L


Lucy Greco 1:05:16


 Lucy Greco 1:05:19
Well, I've got lots of those. I can talk to you about my favorite thing I saw at CSUN this year for sure. That was so much fun, guys. Thanks very much.


 Ryan Fleury 1:05:31
Thanks so much. Lucy. Appreciate your time.


 Lucy Greco 1:05:33
Go out, fight the fight. Be accessible, and don't let people get away without it.


 Rob Mineault 1:05:38
That's right. Use your stick. Use your stick.


 Ryan Fleury 1:05:43
That damn stick is awesome. Thanks so much, Lucy. Thanks a lot. Have a good night.

 Lucy Greco 1:05:51
You too. Thanks. Bye, bye,

 Rob Mineault 1:05:54
Big sticks. Yep, sometimes you gotta use them.

 Ryan Fleury 1:05:58
Yeah, it's good point. Not always, but sometimes.

 Rob Mineault 1:06:02
You know, actually, I'm beginning to think that you pretty much always have to use the stick. I did not realize that about Apple. I did not realize that they though they leaned into accessibility for specific reasons.

 Lis Malone 1:06:15
It always comes down to money

it always comes down to money.

R Rob Mineault 1:06:18

That's too bad. I remember when Apple was sort of the accessibility King. Yeah, they they were the they were the the trailblazers, right? And it sounds like they're kind of falling, falling behind. Well, do you think, I think we've done enough damage for one day?

R Ryan Fleury 1:07:16

Yep, we'll be back next week to do more damage with our big sticks.

R Rob Mineault 1:07:24

Excited. Hey, Lis.

L Lis Malone 1:07:29

Boop, boop, yes?

R Rob Mineault 1:07:31

Where can people find us? Boop, boop, because it's Dinner time.

L Lis Malone 1:07:40

Dinner time or Miller time?

R Ryan Fleury 1:07:42

Dinner time for me.

L Lis Malone 1:07:44

Miller time for me. Okay, yeah. www.atbanter.com yo.

R Rob Mineault 1:07:47

Nice, like that. I like how that turned out. This is why we do it live every day. This is why we don't do canned version, Ryan. Because we get gems like that. They can also drops an email if they desire at cowbell@atbanter.com

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:26

They can also find us on Facebook and Instagram and Mastodon, or wherever they listen to podcasts.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:36

There you go. All right, I think that is going to about do it for us this week. Big Thanks, of course, to Lucy for joining us, and we'll see everybody yo next week.

S

Steve Barclay 1:08:59

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