Human-Centered Design and Accessibility Panel

Transcript

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[Jess Klutch]

So I'll start us off with introductions. Like I mentioned earlier, my name is Jess Klutch. I'm a digital experience product designer working for MN-IT at DHS. And then I'm also a member of the HCD Community of Practice. So that's why I'm moderating today. Super excited to be here. And I am a white woman with long, brown hair in my late 20s. Today, I have the GAAD background present behind me, so very enthusiastic to have that on today. And I'm wearing a striped shirt and a red cardigan. So I will kick it over to Jay to introduce himself.

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[Jay Wyant]

Morning, everyone. My name is Jay Wyant. I'm an older white fellow with a bald head and glasses and a dress shirt. And I also have the Global Accessibility Awareness Day background behind me, which is absolutely awesome.

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My title is chief information accessibility officer. And I'm the head of the Office of Accessibility at the state of Minnesota. Thank you.

[Kelly Melcher]

And I'll go next. Hello, everyone. My name is Kelly Melcher. I am the digital accessibility coordinator at Human Services DHS. I am a middle-aged white woman with short hair, kind of in a pompadour aux-pompadour style today with glasses.

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And I'm very excited to be here.

[Becky Bernauer]

Hi, this is Becky Bernauer. I work for the Minnesota IT Services, partnering with the Minnesota Department of Health. I am the MN-ITS-side digital accessibility coordinator for the agency. I am a more than middle-aged

white woman with brown hair and some gray in there. I wear eyeglasses. And I'm wearing an aqua button-down shirt today. I have the public health week emblem in the background.

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I'm a little-- I didn't get it down. It was last week, but that's me. Thanks.

[Claire Gahler]

Hi, all. I'm Claire Gahler, she/her pronouns. I'm the content strategist at Department of Human Services in the disability services division. I'm a white woman. I have short blonde hair. I'm wearing my 'm sure many of you recognize my tie-dye sweatshirt. It's kind of a staple.

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And also looking forward to chatting this afternoon with everyone.

[Jess Klutch]

Awesome. This is Jess. Thank you so much, panelists. We will transition now into the Q&A portion of the event with the preprepared questions. So I'll go through and read through those. And we'll have the panelists respond to the questions.

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So for our first question, we have- so thinking about how accessibility intersects with human-centered design, can you provide an example of how you have incorporated feedback from users with disabilities to enhance a product or service? And, Claire, I think we're going to you with this first question.

[Claire Gahler]

Awesome. Yeah, I'll kick it off. Excuse me. I love this question, thinking about how accessibility intersects with design.

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Not only is it a good reminder for us about the need for feedback on the products we create, but the reminder that we need feedback from all of our users, including folks with disabilities. So right now, we are in the middle of a project to redesign the homepage of the Disability Hub MN website. So the Hub is a service, kind of a product, that disability services helps manage. It's going about as you would expect, right?

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Trying to redesign a website, lots of back and forth, lots of feedback, lots of, what about this, I think this. We're finally at the point where we need to stop, step back, and start getting some new perspectives and feedback from actual users. So we are going to try a first-click testing. So this is where someone sees an image of the proposed design. And they get a task.

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And we ask them to click on the image where they would go to complete the task. Pretty straightforward. But as you might be thinking, this is not something that someone with low vision or no vision could do. This is a totally sighted activity. Look at this image. Click somewhere on this image. And doing this obviously leaves out a chunk of folks that we know use our website, whether through screen readers or just different assistive technology to navigate the site.

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So throughout this process, what's been one of the biggest helps or the biggest help for me is remembering that we can't create a process that's going to be straightforward and across-the-board even for everyone. Everyone experiences our site differently. And that's going to be the same for how they participate or experience any user testing or provide feedback.

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So what we've done, what I've done, is talk to a lot of people, right? I talk to folks that created the tool that we're using for this first-click test. I talked to accessibility coordinators at DHS and other state agencies. And then throughout this, we realized rather than focus on the process of this test that we're doing, we want to look at what information we're hoping to get from the test.

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And a lot of that is centered around navigation. So we're now offering kind of an alternate option through the form of a survey. So folks can take the traditional first-click test, or they can complete a survey. Both will have the same tasks. But one's going to use the visual of the image to navigate the site. And one is going to use text to navigate the site.

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So think of it how one might navigate a website using headers and sub headers. It's the same idea. For me, this has been a big project in thinking how to gather feedback from all of our users. And again, just reiterating, rather than focus on the process and trying to create something that's even for everyone, remember that that's not how folks navigate through the products we create. It's not an even one-to-one experience.

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Focus instead on what you're looking to get and how d then work backwards in how you can best get that information. We're still very much in the middle of this project. So I can't share if this has been a wild success or not. But talk to me in a couple months. And hopefully, I'll have some more examples to share with this one.

[Jess Klutch]

Yeah. This is Jess. Thank you so much for that example, Claire. I'll reach out to you in a few months. I'm curious how that'll turn out.

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All right, so, Becky, we have you down for this question as well. What would you like to add?

[Becky Bernauer]

Well, an example I have is during the COVID crisis, we had an application that required a signature to complete the process. But of course, the vendor had set it up so that it required a mouse to sign the blocked area. And many users could not use a mouse. And so that was a real problem. And we had to work quickly to solve it.

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So we had to work with the vendor to provide an alternative method to assign that document. We had to check with legal, make sure everything that we were looking at would be legal and fit all the boxes. So the bottom line is that whenever you have a mouse event, you have to have an alternate way to do that. So for instance, in the signature block area, instead of using a mouse to sign, we also had the ability to type your name into that signature block area.

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So you're always going to need to have an alternate. When you are using a mouse, you can never have just mouse. Your users are going to need an alternate. That's it.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Thank you, Becky. That's also a really great example for that first question. I will switch gears a little bit for us for this second question on artificial intelligence.

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So artificial intelligence is becoming a bigger topic of today's—going to restart that. Artificial intelligence is becoming a bigger topic of discussion in today's world. Can AI be used to aid in creating accessible content? What advice and considerations should we keep in mind with AI and accessibility. And, Kelly, I think we're starting with you for this question.

[Kelly Melcher]

Yeah. Yes, thanks so much, Jess.

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This is such a hot topic. And I'm excited to talk about this. I am a strong proponent that AI can be a really powerful tool to have in the accessibility toolbox. I've seen some really cool things at some various conferences and webinars lately. One example of this, there's a product that's out in the market right now. It's called Be My Eyes, which is an aid for people who are low vision or blind. And it's basically a service that they can connect to.

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And then there's a volunteer at the other end. And they can say, hey, can you help me read the directions on this package? Or, can you help me look for this? And so it had been kind of an actual human interaction at this point. And they just launched within the last year a version of it called Be My AI. And this allows users to upload a picture. And then the AI interface will allow them to ask questions or interact with it about details of that picture.

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So if they need help like, hey, can you help me find X in the- where's my cat in this picture? or something like that. So it can be helpful with that. I also just saw yesterday- so yesterday was the Google I/O event, where they do some of their new product launches. And I happened to see a video last night of something kind of similar to Be My AI using a video feature. And somebody was just panning around the room, asking the different questions about what they could see in the room.

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And one of the coolest aspects of that that I saw was somebody saying, hey, where did you last see my glasses? And it was like a big desk with a bunch of stuff on it. And the interface was able to say, oh, they're over here, and then help that person locate their glasses. And I thought that was a really cool thing. So things like that can be super helpful. Another use of it through Microsoft that I saw is the Microsoft Copilot. So if any of you heard of this, it's their AI tool that interfaces with Microsoft 365.

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And this can be really helpful to people. You can ask it to draft emails or presentations for you or get started in other tasks. And when I was looking into this a little bit, I came across some research out of the University of Washington, where they were doing some testing on various AI tools for accessibility. And one of the comments in that around that kind of a tool specifically is it's really helpful because it changes the task from generating content or generating material to one of reviewing material.

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So sometimes for some people with disabilities, it's really easy to look at something and modify it. But it's not always as easy to actually come up with something on its own. So tools like that can be really helpful to get the process started and kind of get you going. All that being said, we still have to be very mindful of how AI is being used. I'm sure we've all heard of various stories of somebody interacting with an AI tool and it being very confidently wrong about information.

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So we can only rely on the knowledge of that tool to know whether or not. So you might have to do some verification of the information that you pull from that tool. I actually decided to yesterday use ChatGPT to ask this very question about AI. And I was wanting it-- I was hoping that it would provide kind of a benefits and drawbacks of it, kind of what I'm doing right now.

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And I had to ask several follow-up prompt questions to get any results for, OK, why might it be a bad thing? and things like that. So again, you just have to be very careful about how you use those kind of tools. The other big one out there, implicit bias is a very real thing in our world. And these tools, these LLMs, these large-language models, are drawing from existing content.

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And I don't know if you all have visited the web ever, but there's some pretty terrible, horrible, ableist, racist things that exist on there. And so if these tools are pulling from those kind of sources, we don't really know what kind of results we're going to get. So again, you just have to be very careful of those stereotypes and negative things that exist out there. The final thing I wanted to say on this, so one of my favorite phrases is that accessibility is an art form.

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So we have the WCAG. You have the checklist of everything you can go through and say, yes, my website or my product meets this guideline. I can check off that checkbox. But accessibility is really also about more than just that checkbox aspect of it. It's, what is your intentions behind what you're creating? How are you hoping that people are going to interact with it? And AI isn't going to always know what our intentions are. If you think about alt text- this is one that's pretty common now is using AI to generate alt text for an image, that image that- the AI might tell us, this is a picture of a person sitting under a tree.

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But that AI image generator can't tell us that. What we really want people to take away from that picture is a picture of a young girl contemplating her future, sitting under a lush, green, full tree on a bright, sunny day. So we really just have to be- again, mindful is my keyword here mindful of how we use these tools and make sure that we're balancing those with our own human knowledge and insight.

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[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Awesome. Thank you, Kelly. That was such a wealth of information. And so happy you touched on the implicit bias, too, there. All right. So, Jay, I'll pass it off to you. Anything to add for this question?

[Jay Wyant]

This is Jay speaking. Kelly gave a great overview of the AI issue. And I have a couple of comments I would like to add to that, that there is, in some places, either a blurring or lack of clarity sometimes between what might be considered an accommodation as opposed to an accessibility or a fundamental aspect of technology.

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So take captioning, for example. Captioning is particularly included in the WCAG criteria. But in some cases, it's often viewed as an accommodation. So AI has turned out to be, especially through COVID, a great resource for making captioning or AI-generated captioning better and more useful.

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And so that's been a wonderful thing. But I want you to keep in mind that AI, as Kelly pointed out, only know what it's been taught, so to speak. AI is really good at scraping factual data, or in non-factual data, putting data into a large-language model. It was, for example, a godsend this month as I tried to help my daughter on her chemistry class. But it's also improving performing discrete tasks, like captioning, like I said.

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But while the accessibility framework, like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG, provide measurable, testable criteria for designer to developer, as Kelly pointed out, these criteria truly use human-centered design principles, as they are based on intensive research and people's lived experiences. So while inaudible WCAG inaudible measurable inaudible what represent lived experiences. Then you have to keep that balance in mind.

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So if you decide to use AI like I did and learn about redox reactions in chemistry, ask it very specific questions, like how do I code this button to make it accessible? It could be helpful. But if you plan on using AI to prewrite accessible code for you or to test existing code, that might be more of a challenge, especially as we move into new realms and content in virtual reality, where everything kind of up for grabs. And we don't really learned, actual data of experiential data to back up over time to do.

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So a good way, like Kelly pointed out, is to get a feel of where AI is today to look at AI-generated inaudible. You can find that almost anywhere, like Microsoft Word or Facebook. But as Kelly pointed out, our text is so contact dependent, you almost always have to write your own or edit what it told you. So again, you should verify. And in cases where you don't have the ability to verify, you may want to be careful about how you use it.

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[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Jay, that was awesome, too. Love that piece at the end with making sure that you can verify what the AI is telling you, too. That's super important. So switching gears again with this third question, so we often hear that human-centered design and accessibility complement each other. Are there any trends in design that are conflicting with accessibility that we should be aware of? And this is going to Becky first.

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And, Becky, I think you're on mute.

[Becky Bernauer]

And I was. Of course, somebody has to do that during the meeting, right? This is Becky. We're seeing a lot of more trend towards more video training and that sort of thing right now, which is a good thing because there are a lot of different learning styles and preferences that are out there.

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But if you don't caption your video and have a transcript and do that all properly, then you're kind of sabotaging yourself because not everyone can get that training, right? So you want to think about all the things that make your training accessible. As you're giving a great new opportunity, make sure it's done in an accessible manner. Another thing that we see a lot of lately that we really don't care for is overlays. Overlays are meant to be helpful for accessibility.

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But sometimes they can make things less accessible. An overlay comes from clicking a button that allows you to change, maybe, the font color, the font size, things like that. But it often doesn't run well with assistive technologies, such as a screen reader. So the overlay is adding a layer on top of the base product. And that might conflict with the base code that is needed for the assistive technology tool. And I think Kelly has a little more to say on that part.

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Yeah. Thank you, Becky. Kelly, feel free to add to that.

[Kelly Melcher]

Yeah. I actually wanted to post a link to a survey that was done. So I attended a conference fairly recently. And there was a really great presentation about web accessibility and how people access the web. And one of the things that they did specifically talk about finding it in the chat here. One second- was overlays and how people actually interact with them.

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And there were some really great feedback on that. So I'll post the link here. I encourage you to check that out. I'm going to reference that a little bit later in our presentation today, too. But there are some really good information in that. I think, again, just like anything else in the world, overlay specifically can be helpful. But you really have to be careful about how you're interacting with them and have a more broad understanding of how they work and how people work with them.

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The other things I wanted to say about trends is the ones that I think about really have to do more with the project management side of things. I think that there is a lot of focus with some of these project management strategies to focus on trying to do things as quickly as we can, specifically trying to prioritize the things that are the low-hanging fruit, things that are simple and easy to fix. And we can go from there. And accessibility issues, a lot of times, are not low-hanging fruit.

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They can be really complex and difficult to deal with. You can have to do a lot of testing and alteration of your dev work around that. And so they can be really complex. And sometimes that gets ignored or deprioritized in favor of other things. And that can really be problematic because we try to design for the most benefit. But those people who need those accessibility features, sometimes they can be a real small percentage of your users.

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And so it's easy to say, well, but it's really not going to affect that many people. But for those people that it does affect, it has a huge impact on them. And I think it's really careful- people with disabilities are marginalized people. And if we're not focusing on how to help their experience and how to make sure they can interact with our products, we're continuing to marginalize them. For example, I work for Human Services. And we have a lot of things. People need to apply for help.

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They need to apply for health insurance. They need to get various kinds of aid and things like that. And if they can't interact with our materials, then they're even further being put at a disadvantage. Because if they can't get the website to work to apply for their benefits, then they're going to suffer as a result of that. So we really just need to be mindful of that. Along with that, too, we have a big focus on custom off-the-shelf, or COTS, products. And a lot of times, those COTS products don't work well with accessibility.

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There wasn't a lot of consideration put into that. And so that's when, again, those overlays might come into play. And then those overlays don't work as well with those products. So we just kind of need to be aware of that I think- oops, sorry. I've got an alarm going off here. We have a lot- we don't know-- in this kind of work and in things we do, we don't know what we don't know. And so we just need to be very mindful of the questions that we're asking and how we're thinking about these products to make sure that we're taking those different points of view and those different needs into consideration.

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I'm going to talk about that more later, too. And the last thing I just wanted to mention, I hear a lot in developer circles about the MVP, or the Minimum Viable Product. And again, that's just something-- I understand why that's a focus and why we need that. But we need to be very careful because just because something meets our basic, core functionality does not mean that it's going to provide a good user experience or even a usable experience for some people.

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It meets our minimum standards. But can somebody actually interact with it in a way that is going to be useful for them? And I'll leave it at that.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, thank you, Kelly. As someone who works on a product team and hears those terms on the daily, those are some super relevant points. So I really appreciate that.

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We will transition here to the next question. So when considering digital solutions, we often focus on code-level strategies to make our products accessible. How do you distinguish between accessible code and achieving an overall accessible user experience in digital products? Becky, going to you first with this one.

[Becky Bernauer]

This is Becky. For me, I'm not looking at code as much as I am looking at usability. So I test with a keyboard. I test with a screen reader.

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And then I zoom, make sure everything's functioning properly and still announces properly, so that I can see how usable it is using those methods. If I see an issue, I look at the code. And sometimes I do know if the code is bad. But I'm not a developer. So I don't always know what that code should be like, right? So when I'm running into a problem and I'm not sure what the code solution is, then I reach out to my developer and consult with them.

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And together, as a team, we figure out what the best solution is. They might try something. Then I test it. And we're back and forth on that. And then one of the big things that we need to bring into accessibility and the process is that we need to bring all of this in much sooner. When I test it, I'm testing it way at the end, right? They've already done all their QA and all that sort of thing. And then they send it to me.

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We should be discussing accessibility really at the very beginning, during the wireframing process, all of that. And we're trying to get there. And I'm sure every agency is, and little baby steps, right? But that really needs to go up front. And I'd like to see that when we're gathering requirements, we're specifically writing the requirements so that the accessibility piece is just part of the requirement.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, I absolutely agree with everything you said, Becky.

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Super important, especially in the design process, to have accessibility involved. All right, Claire, anything you would like to add to that conversation?

[Claire Gahler]

Yeah, this is Claire. My answer is going to sound very similar to Becky in what she said. And I think it will come as no surprise, especially to a lot of the folks on this call that have worked with me in the past, it's easy to forget the role that content plays in accessibility and design.

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I'm not a developer. I rely on the folks that know the backend of websites, that know applications. But I have been involved in many projects where somebody comes with and I'm putting this in air quotes finalized content and says, take this and create a fully-accessible product, whether that's a web page, a PDF, an application document.

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The accessibility work should start with content development well before you even get to code-level work. We're asking questions like, what is the reading level of the content? How is the sentence structure? What are you using for headers and navigation cues within the content? And that's all stuff that can be created and hashed out well before a developer gets involved. And all of that goes towards creating accessible content and positive user experiences.

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A quick example that I use often is we talk about audio descriptions for videos. So audio descriptions are- they're like additional verbal narration that helps describe what's happening on screen in a video. So if someone is listening to a video, they might miss certain information that's conveyed only visually.

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Good examples are like presentations, right? If the presenter doesn't read the PowerPoint slide, somebody that's listening in is going to miss all that information that's on that PowerPoint slide. So we create audio descriptions afterwards, after the video's created, that adds in that additional information to explain what's on screen. But we don't always need audio descriptions. If you are creating a script for a video or if you're presenter, include that descriptive narration in what you're saying.

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And that can take away from having to do work on the backend to remediate what you were doing when you were creating the video. So again, it's just another shout out for thinking about that content. You can create a script for a video that's very descriptive for somebody watching or somebody listening. And then you don't need to then create audio descriptions, whether that's a separate file or a separate video file, after the video is already created.

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I think this also goes a little bit to what Kelly said earlier about the MVP, the minimum viable product. Like, we could create a video that passes basic accessibility requirements, WCAG requirements. But to create something

that creates a really good user experience for someone, we can do some of that work up front that then makes the whole experience in creating it and watching it and listening to it easier down the road.

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So I'll leave you with what Becky said. Get your people involved earlier, right? Get your content person ugh, cough volved earlier in whatever project you're starting. We, they, can be a great resource not just for creating content, but creating accessible content that helps lead to an accessible product.

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[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, awesome, Claire. I love that emphasis on collaboration, too, to make accessibility happen really. So that makes a lot of sense. All right, so I have one last question for the panelists. And then we will transition into the audience Q&A part. And I see a lot of great questions already coming up in the chat. So we'll do this one final question. And then we'll transition over.

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So for this last question, what are your recommendations for creating personas for people with disabilities? When should personas for people with disabilities be created as individual personas? And when should they be combined with persona groups? And, Kelly, going over to you for this question.

[Kelly Melcher]

Yeah, thanks so much. So the first thing I want to remind people is some of the components of WCAG. WCAG are the guidelines, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

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And this is what the standards are to determine whether or not a product website is considered accessible. I want to set this up, though. I want to show one of my favorite videos about what happens when developers watch QA actually test their product. So indulge me for just a moment. It's just a 59-second long video. You know what? I got to make sure that I'm sharing my audio, too.

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All right. And just the only setup you'll need for this, it's- the video- it's just a split screen of a young woman watching somebody use the product, which is bucket with a lid. And there's different-shaped holes cut into the cover of the lid. All right. Thanks so much for that. I'm going to stop sharing my screen here. So hopefully, this isn't as painful as this is.

[Video]

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So if you were just listening and you weren't able to see it, so all of the shapes fit into just the one square shape on the bucket lid versus their intended hole. There was a slot to match all of the different shapes. But they got put into one. And as this was happening, as the developer watched this happening, she became increasingly distressed. You could hear it in her tone of voice. And she just got a very pained look on her face. But that is something that can happen a lot. Because, as developers, as designers, we envision things happening one way.

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And then our users get a hold of it. And they use it in a totally different way that we never even could have thought about. So how this relates to personas, so let's think about the reason why we create personas. So one of the big reasons around personas is to create empathy. For people with disabilities, they have a different lived experience than we might have.

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Well, everybody has different lived experiences. And the way that we live our lives, the things that we do, the things that we've encountered, the cultures that we lived in, those can all have an impact on how we see and experience a product. A lot of times, we kind of have a tendency with web products to bias them towards audio and visual sensory experiences. But there's people who might not have access to those senses. We also need to think about people who might have mobility or cognitive issues.

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Just as Claire was talking about, we need to shift that- the term in the industry is shift left. We need to start everything sooner in that process and start thinking about how those things can impact a user experience and impact how our product is going to be used. So personas really are going to help you do that and create that empathy and learn about some of those experiences. Some things to remember as you're creating these personas, so a person is more than just their disability. We need to be really careful not to dehumanize people.

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They're not a thing out there. It's an actual person. So that's why we want to give personas names. We want to give them robust personalities to help us understand. We also need to think about- somebody is, again, more than just their disability. They're not just a blind person. They're somebody who maybe has difficulty seeing. But they might also really enjoy sci-fi. They might really like going out into social settings, things like that.

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So we want to make sure that we understand some of what's happening in their life around more than just that particular challenge or disability that they might have. The other thing to remember is that if you say a person is blind, that can have a huge range of meanings. It can mean that perhaps they just have limited sight. Perhaps they can't see in the central focus of their vision. They just can see the periphery. Or maybe opposite- they can't see periphery. They can just see a very narrow spot in their field of vision. Maybe somebody can't see at all. Maybe somebody can see shapes.

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Maybe somebody can see color. Maybe they can see light versus darkness. So there's a wide variety of what it means for somebody to be, quote unquote, "blind." And we need to think about that with our personas. So I really encourage you, as you're developing those personas, don't necessarily think about that disability. Think about the challenges that that person might have. Maybe they're going to have difficulty reading small text on a screen. Maybe they're going to have difficulty clicking in a really small area if they need to check a box or something like that.

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Maybe they're going to have difficulty with those kind of things. There's a framework that I came across when I was researching this and looking into this a little bit. I came across this framework that's been used in educational settings to help with students who are using assistive technology. But I think it can be really applicable to personas as well. And it's called the SETT framework, S-E-T-T. The S stands for students. Or in this case, we can say specifics of the individual. So what are their interests, their skills, their abilities? What are the specific obstacles that they might be dealing with?

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Next, we want to look at the E, the environment. So what is the context in which they're performing this task? Is this something that they're doing at home on a computer that they're used to? Is this something that they're trying to do on a mobile device? Is this something that they're doing at a public kiosk or something like that? What kind of are they under stress? Are they-- are they at a relaxed pace? So what's happening in the environment around them. Next, you want to look at the task that is trying to be completed. So what is the specific goal?

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What is the outcome that they're trying to produce? Or what is the thing that they're trying to accomplish? And then the final T is for tools. So what are the tools that they have access to that are being used to perform those tasks? So if you kind of think about all of that in the context of your personas, I think it can really help you develop a more robust persona. The other thing that I wanted to mention is you really want to seek out experiences and use these to inform your personas. So I put that link up earlier to the web accessibility survey.

00:38:33:10

Take a look at that. That is some great information about how people are actually using the web and what's out there. I follow a lot of people on social media who have a very different lived experience than from me. There's so much great information you can learn from people about just sharing their everyday lives, things about that. There's lots of great blogs and web pages out there that you can do. I think it's really important- again, I talked about this earlier. A lot of times, we kind of design for that middle or develop for that middle.

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But we really want to think about those people on the side or those edge cases as well. So what are the extremes that people might be dealing with when they're trying to interact with our product? I also mentioned earlier, we don't know what we don't know. We might have a lot of blind spots. And using these personas gives

us an opportunity to ask, what if? I also really like, when I'm testing something or when I'm looking at something or trying to figure out how to make something better, I like to think, how can I break this? How can I do the one circumstance that's going to happen every four years on the third Tuesday of the fourth month after the first full moon?

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OK, what happens when I try to do that? It doesn't matter if it's a task that's being done every day or once in a while. How can I break that? How can we make that better? I heard something, too, from a blog. I heard somebody say, think about the micro moments of your product. Don't just think about the macro moments. Don't just think about those big things. Think about those really tiny aspects of your web page and how people are interacting with and using those.

00:40:03:06

The other thing with personas is you really want to make sure you're keeping them relevant. So you don't just create one, and then it's done. You want to make sure that as your product changes, you think about those personas, updating those personas based on that. You want to think about as technology changes. We are in a time when things are happening and development is happening so quickly. So you want to make sure that you are keeping those personas updated when that happens. And then people change, too.

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The way that we see the world, the way that we interact with the world, is constantly changing. I'm a very different person than I was two years ago or four years ago. So you want to think about that with your personas as well. I have so much to say on this. And I'm trying to keep it brief. But the second part of the question about combining personas, I think that's definitely something-- kind of hinted at that a little bit. But yeah, you don't want to create a persona that's just a person who has low vision.

00:40:57:09

You want to, again, incorporate it with all those other aspects that you're considering in your personas. Because a person is a whole person. They're not just one portion of their being. They are a person who, again, has a lived experience and a life and runs into all sorts of different challenges and obstacles and ways of seeing the world every single day. So yeah, personas are good. Include lots of different perspectives with them. Yeah, I'll leave it there. Oh, you know what? One more thing I wanted to say.

00:41:30:21

The one thing about personas is they do not replace talking with your users directly. You still want to make sure that you're engaging with your users and making sure you're getting that direct feedback from them to make sure that you have what you need.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Thank you so much for that, Kelly. And I'll pass it off to Jay. Anything to add there?

[Jay Wyant]

Thank you. This is Jay speaking. I want to echo a couple of things that Kelly said that I want to really make sure people get is, one, with the point that we all have blind spots.

00:42:05:14

And so if you think about a scatter plot of all the people that might interact with the product, the scatter plot may show a barely condensed central set. And then it show a lot of dots out there. And those outlying dots typically are people with disability who don't share a lot of the commonality with people inside the center. So if your persona only focused on the center of the scatter plot, you're going to miss out a lot of other- those other elements.

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And that's why an answer to an earlier question about accessibility and human-centered design is that by incorporating accessibility into your work, you help avoid the blind spot. You're basically providing a very fundamental platform of accessibility first and addressing a lot of potential issues they may not otherwise think about. And that then allows you then, with use of persona, that other element to take care of all the other potential eventualities that you may want to do.

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So think about accessibility as a very effective tool to help cover the rest or all of what you're doing in the human-centered design process.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Thank you so much for that addition, Jay. And, Claire, did you have something you wanted to add to that as well?

[Claire Gahler]

Yeah. And I can see the time. This is Claire. I can be quick.

00:43:28:13

I do want to give a little shout-out to disability services has a resource within it called the Virtual Insight Panel that we use to actively engage with folks with disabilities or people that support folks with disabilities. I'm going to drop a link in the chat- let me see if I can get the right chat- that explains a little bit more about the Virtual Insight Panel.

00:43:58:17

But this is made up of a couple hundred people that have signed up, self-signed up, to provide feedback to disability services and the Department of Human Services on anything and everything. So we're actually going to use the Virtual Insight Panel to do this first-click test that I talked about earlier for redesigning the Hub web

page. But we also reach out to them for program changes, service changes, helping review different communications that come out.

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And they're a great resource, right? Like, they're a way that we can directly reach out to people with disabilities and ask them to share their thoughts, their experiences, their feedback. And I realize we're a little spoiled, right, that this is a tool that we have and that we can tap into as a resource. But I think it's worth highlighting that this has been going for a couple of years now.

00:45:01:18

It's a very active group. And it shows that it's another resource in a way that we can reach out to, as we've talked about, groups that we often don't hear from to get that direct feedback. Thanks.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, thanks so much for adding that, Claire. And I see it looks like, Jay, you have something you want to add to that as well?

[Jay Wyant]

Thank you very much. And I'm so glad Claire brought that up.

00:45:31:14

And I really want- one of my favorite lines from one of my favorite movies is from the movie Casablanca, where the inspector says, I'm going to round up the usual suspects. And one of the challenges we often have when doing accessibility or disability-type category, human-centered design, we go back to the same people over and over again. And you're not going to get a very good scope that way. So the Hub that Claire points out is great because you have a wider scope of people.

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You have more than just usual suspects. You have a larger user base. And that is so powerful when you think about things like human-centered design, accessibility, and other components.

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, thank you for that addition, Jay. That's awesome. I'm going to pivot us really quick to our audience questions for the final part of this meeting. It looks like we do have a good queue of questions in the chat. I invite you two as well. If you would like to come off mic and answer your excuse me and ask your question, please feel free to raise your hand.

00:46:35:13

It looks like I got a few in the queue already. So I'll go back and forth between raised hands and, I think, the chat just to make sure we get everyone. So I'll start with let's see- Robert Wallace. Yep. actually, Zafar asked a question quite a while ago. Thank you.

00:47:00:11

[Marlene]

Yep, there's a question in the chat going back to the discussion about AI. And the question is, can AI help with VPAT assessments, so assessing Voluntary Product Accessibility Template assessments, so assessing new systems?

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Thank you, Marlene. It sounds like, Jay, do you have a good response to that?

[Jay Wyant]

Sure. This is Jay. Thank you, Zafar, for asking that question.

00:47:30:22

So a VPAT stands for Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. And it's what vendors who have a fixed product like what Kelly referred to earlier, COTS, or consumer off-the-shelf product. And VPAT is the way the vendor complete the document, that it's their testament to how accessible is the product that they are trying to sell. And there are some programmatic examples you can do in evaluating VPAT.

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So for example, you could when looking at the VPAT, the vendor is saying whether they support a criteria, partially support a criteria, do not support a criteria, or find that criteria to be not applicable, and then go through all of the criteria in WCAG or Section 508 or whatever is applicable. You can, in theory, count those up and do some calculation by counting those up. You can, in theory, scrape through the tech that the vendor does in their comments about the product, and in so doing, trying to come up with a score.

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The problem is the VPAT isn't that quantifiable. For example, a vendor might have a lot more partially support compared to another vendor. But in their partially support, they might have really good, substantive, qualitative comment about why and how they call that a partially support. Whereby another vendor might say they fully support and provide some fairly stock answer as to why there's support.

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But the stock answer specifically quote back the WCAG guideline, for example. So you have to teach AI to not take that answer, even though it quotes WCAG, and say, oh, that's great, compared to the vendor who really diving deeply into the technology, doing a real deep analysis of where they are and saying, we can do a little

better here, we can do a little better here, and be more self-critical about what they're doing. They might end up getting a worst score in such a thing. So yes, in theory we can use AI to give us an analysis.

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But for now, we really need the human element to get really a VPAT today. Basically, like reading an eighth grade paper, you are evaluating the credibility of the writer, not the factual data they are providing so much. So I would say, in theory, yes, we can get down that road. Maybe we use another tool to provide some preliminary analysis. But like I said earlier, we trust, then verify.

00:50:03:18

[Jess Klutch]

Yeah, this is Jess. Thank you so much for that response, Jay. I'll just pivot to the raised hand. Robert Wallace, it looks like we have you on deck with the raised hand. And then I'll go to the chat, maybe, for our final question.

[Robert Wallace]

Soundcheck. I'm traveling. Can you hear me OK? Yes, I can hear you. I wanted to go back to the term, MVP. Sometimes it gets a bad rap.

00:50:29:08

I like to use the example, minimum doesn't mean minimal. And I think often we get confused. And we try to build something that doesn't meet all of the needs and wants of the audience. I just wanted to kind of throw that out there. I use the example of the first Lexus car that was ever built. Their MVP was quite astounding. So just keep that in mind as we go forward. It's really up to the product team building the solution to make sure that they're accounting for all of their different users and user personas.

00:51:05:00

What is the true minimum usable and viable product? And just wanted to throw that out there. Thanks.

[Kelly Melcher]

This is Kelly. I'll just--

[Jess Klutch]

Go for it, Kelly.

[Kelly Melcher]

I was just going to say, thank you for that clarification, Robert. Yes, I know that I didn't want to raise any hackles. Or I know it can be a sensitive topic. So I hope I didn't offend anybody. I think that's a really good point, just as you said, to make sure that, yes, what's the minimum task?

00:51:33:06

Or what's the minimum things we need to include? But just again, be very mindful. How can we be inclusive about how to accomplish those specific tasks?

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, thank you so much for that question. Marlene, I'll send it back to you. Do we have any other questions in the chat?

[Marlene]

Yeah, we do have a couple more. So one goes back to the design conversation.

00:52:00:13

So with regards to the overlay design trend we were talking about, do we know if users of other forms of accessibility or assistive technology, like JAWS or NVDA, are able to ignore the overlay options?

[Kelly Melcher]

This is Kelly. I can start responding to that. A lot of overlays have kind of like a turn-on feature.

00:52:30:00

So if you ever go to a web page like, I think I noticed this on t was either Menards or Home Depot or some home improvement store web page. If you go there, a lot of times, they'll be a button that has that circle with kind of a human figure in it. Or there'll be some sort of like a little icon that you can click on to activate those overlay features. So, yes, sometimes a person can choose whether or not they're going to use them or not. You know, I don't work with them a ton. And I'm not on the developer side.

00:53:01:20

So if anybody else has more to add, please feel free to jump in. 'll just say very quickly that there's challenge with overlay.

[Jay Wyant]

You're right, Kelly. You could turn it on and turn it off. Those are probably the better application to it. What we don't know sometimes is whether simply putting that button on there itself causing interference. So there's a lot more testing that needs to be done to verify whether an overlay actually is non-intrusive to people with assistive technology.

00:53:42:00

[Jess Klutch]

This is Jess. Yeah, thank you, everyone. I see we're at time. I wish we could continue on. I know there's some unanswered questions in the chat still. But we are at noon. So I'm going to let everyone go. But thank you so much for coming to this event. If you're curious about more human-centered design community of practice events, we're out there.

00:54:02:08

And we're available to any state employee. So please feel free to join us. And I think if we haven't yet, we'll add a link to our community of practice in the chat. But thank you to everyone. And kudos to the panelists for being here today.