

[music playing]

[Narelle] Hi.

Welcome to The  
Digital Access Show.

Just quickly the reason why  
I brought on today's guest.

A couple of days ago,

I spent two hours  
trying to fill in a form.

I use a screen reader.

I have a severe  
vision impairment.

First page, I thought, yeah,  
accessible. I can do this.

Then I had to actually go  
and get some information.

It put me back  
to the first page.

And that kept up,  
this was a five-page form.

I hit page three and I gave up.

And I thought,

to really talk about all issues  
around digital accessibility,

disability, and...

breaking that cycle,

I'd bring on Simone

Eyles from Disinfluencer.

Simone is also talking at  
the AUCUA Conference,

the Accessible Usable  
Communication Conference,

at the end of September.

So, Simone, thank you  
so much for being here.

[Simone] Thanks for having me.

[Narelle] Simone, can you  
tell me a bit about yourself,

and what you do?

[Simone] Sure.

I'm Simone and I  
founded Disinfluencer,

gosh, just two years ago now,

Disinfluencer is a

social enterprise,

a certified social enterprise,

so we help businesses

and brands be inclusive.

And by doing

that, we offer paid...

employment to

people with disabilities.

And we do that with our

inclusive stock library,

so we have aspiring

artists that come to us,

and we do their photos,

they get head shots

and portfolio shots done,

so we can represent them for TV

commercials and feature films.

Then while we've got them in

the studio on set for the day,

we do some photos

for our stock library.

And we also help...

businesses and brands

market their inclusion

and give them some pointers on

how to be digitally inclusive.

[Narelle] When you say...

you work with businesses  
on how to market their brands,

to be digitally inclusive,

what are you  
talking about exactly?

[Simone] What I'm  
talking about is, a lot of...

A lot of people I've worked  
with or I've come across,

and the reason I developed  
what I have developed is,

so it kind of started  
with the Canberra Airport.

We did images for the Canberra  
Airport with our talent,

and I was speaking to the  
team, the marketing manager.

Now the Canberra Airport,

they have a sensory room.

They changed the lighting  
through the whole airport.

They have all these incredible...

inclusive features, I  
guess you could say,

but they're not  
telling anyone about it.

They're not marketing that  
as a thing about their business.

I know it's an airport and they  
don't need to market themselves,

but I guess as travellers  
who need those...

sensory spaces or  
need that support,

how would they ever know  
that that's an option for them,

if they don't talk about it,  
and people don't talk about it,

cause they don't  
want to upset anyone.

I'm like, wait, you've  
created these...

things and invested a lot of  
money to have these things

for our community,

like, tell them.

So, that's kind of the stigma

and barrier that I come in,

and I empower them to embrace

the good things they've done,

and promote that like an aspect

they'd promote in their business,

and to hold it in power

and be proactive about it.

[Narelle] Wow.

And that's an important thing.

Obviously, I go in

and out of airports,

and I really don't know...

what they've done  
to make it inclusive

I have no idea because, as you  
said, you never hear about it.

So, what what are the steps  
they're taking to market it?

And what are the techniques  
and strategies they are using?

[Simone] So, basically it just  
starts with a conversation.

So, I usually come into  
their marketing team,

and I just take them through  
some basic accessibility tools.

And then I guess it's about  
showing them case studies of...

other brands and what  
they're doing to be inclusive.

So, I talk a lot about Apple.

Obviously Apple's a major brand,

but Apple have a thing  
called Above The Line,

and I can share some of  
these things I show the team.

So Apple, for example,

have accessibility  
embedded in all their products,

hardware, software,  
and it's Above The Line.

So, right now I'm

looking, I'm on my Mac,

and I can see my  
accessibility symbol.

It's not, like you just said,

it's not something you  
have to go digging for to find.

It's embedded front and  
centre to be accessible.

And so I show them that,

and obviously Apple's  
a big, a massive brand,

so it's impressive, right?

Because Apple  
have this thing where,

and it is called

Above the Line, and I...

empower them to think

of their accessibility

or inclusive efforts as

an Above The Line feature

that's not hidden away.

So, I think that's

the first barrier.

Lots of people feel uncomfortable

talking about disability.

There's an array of

reasons, and that's okay.

Like I'm there to say it's

okay if you don't know,

because people don't want  
to talk on a subject matter

that they might not be an  
expert in, but it's not about...

being an expert in...

someone with low vision  
or someone who's autistic,

it's about being an  
expert in marketing...

the tools and resources  
that you've invested in

to help people within  
the disability community

to access your thing.

And the airports,

a lot of Australian airports  
have incredible things,

and you see a lot now,  
especially with the hidden...

the disability sunflower,

because people  
with disabilities travel.

Like, and that's not  
a big shock, right?

And it's such a huge market.

Like, I talk about the  
commercial aspect of what I do,

but tourism is like on  
the top of the tree of...

people with disabilities

love to travel,

they have to travel for work.

So what features

are there for people?

So, there's no

specific thing I do.

It's, I guess, kind of

taking that step back,

and having a conversation with

people about what disability is,

and really...

You know i don't

have a disability either,

so sometimes i even feel

that imposter syndrome

but i want to say

to people that...

the disability community

is busting to be included,

and to be marketed

to, so tell them.

So, I think once i feel like

they've had that conversation,

and have a bit of knowledge and

have looked at some, you know,

business case studies,

they feel confident in moving

forward in marketing the thing,

without being connected or

having an association with it.

And that's kind of the  
first and the biggest barrier.

We have to get people over  
when it comes to disability.

[Narelle] eah, and I agree  
with you. It's that awareness.

And the other thing I often find  
is people think it's so hard

You know, this is going  
to be really complex to do.

How do you cater for a  
person with a vision impairment,

and a person with a  
hearing impairment,

and a person with autism?

And really, it's a  
simple answer, isn't it?

[Simone] Yeah, and  
I think, you know,

what I want to talk about  
at the conference is...

that, I kind of tell this  
story all the time about my...

my Josh.

My Josh has had  
a kidney transplant.

He's autistic and  
intellectually disabled.

And I once drove him

from Wagga to Brisbane

e to go to a morning tea,

because he was invited and

he never gets invited anywhere.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Meredith] But I also

say to people that...

I just lost my

thought there, sorry.

Like...

Like I know all the things

I need to do for Josh.

I know it all,

so I will drive him there.

I'll pack the food he wants.

I can prepare his medicine.

I know all the  
things I need to do.

You just need to  
include me and that's it.

Like, I can do the rest.

So yeah, back to what I was  
saying about the conference.

Again, I think,

I always start,

like I kind of say to everyone,

the first thing you should have...

is an accessibility statement.

So like you said about the PDF,

you know, if that company

had an accessibility statement...

on their website

you would have a

point to call someone,

or contact someone and go,

hey, I need support

with this thing,

or I've had this experience

with your online form,

and let's have a

conversation to fix it.

Now, you shouldn't

have to do that.

But I say that because...

people don't know that  
that is an issue for you.

And that's no excuse,  
right? I'm not saying that.

But we can't just  
advocate empty handed.

We have to bring solutions  
to the table. Like you said,

you know all the things you  
can do. It's an easy fix, right?

We just have to  
give people the tools,

or the know-how how to do it.

[Narelle] And to know how  
to ask the right questions

And I never blame  
people for not knowing,

because, as I point  
out to everyone,

currently in Australia,

web development, coding,

they're not taught...

about how to implement the  
digital accessibility standard.

So if you're not taught it,

how can you implement it?

Seriously.

Everyone thinks, you know,  
Adobe Acrobat, you just...

do this, do this.

Microsoft Word's a classic.

People are not taught about  
the accessibility menu there.

That is a useful menu that makes  
your document more accessible.

If you're not taught about it,

and you don't have  
time to go looking.

You know, you're  
in there to do a job,

to get results,  
to be productive.

You don't have time to...

go and find something for  
someone that you've never met.

Or you don't understand their  
needs because you can't live it.

I always sit there and say,  
I've got sons with autism

And I'll sit there and say,

I don't know what  
it's like to be autistic.

I know what it's like to  
be the mum of autistic kids.

Well, they're adults

now, but I know that.

But I always say to  
people that can see,

yeah, you know, living  
with a vision impairment,

it can be really, really good.

However,

I don't know what it's like to  
live with a hearing impairment.

What I do know  
is I can ask people.

[Simone] Yeah.

[Narelle] But you  
need to know to ask.

[Simone] Yeah, you

need to know to ask

and you need to have

someone that you can ask

that isn't going to fob you off.

It's why I say the accessibility

statement is really important.

And a great example of, again,

Above The Line accessibility

statements is South by Southwest.

They have their

accessibility statement...

in the footer of their website.

So it's not just like

accessibility statement click.

It says this is an  
accessibility statement,

and it says what an  
accessibility statement is,

and who to contact.

And the person in that position...

should be able to  
resolve that issue for you.

So it's again about...

starting with something and  
having a tool and resource.

And I kind of...

with what I do and how I did it,

so I'm a graphic  
designer by trade.

I've got a degree  
in graphic design,

and I've worked  
in digital marketing.

And when I started  
Disinfluencer,

I had a business coach,  
she was on me like,

get your website live,  
get your website live.

And I'm like, no, it  
needs to be accessible.

[Narelle] Yep.

[Simone] And I was  
waiting for an expert,

I'm air-qouting here,

an expert in  
digital accessibility

to get my website accessible.

And it kept getting  
put back, put back,

You know what,  
I can't wait anymore.

So I did what everyone does,

and I sat up all night  
watching YouTube tutorials.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Simone] I taught  
myself and I didn't,

I'm a graphic designer.

So to your point,  
I'm a graphic designer,

and I've never, like  
from a very long time ago.

So, you know, but I've never,

accessibility design is  
something I've seen evolve

or come of age  
just as a consumer

But as a designer, I  
haven't trained for a long time,

or done any kind of

studies or anything,

but I can see

that there's, like,

I don't know if anyone,

any of the universities or TAFE

have a module within their scope

or courses on accessibility.

And...

I was actually speaking

to a friend yesterday,

who was showcasing a

website to her cohort of people,

and the website was...

black with white text

and you couldn't read it.

This is the thing  
about digital accessibility,

where I come into it  
and you do as well.

You know,

accessibility design  
or digital accessibility...

helps everybody.

It's not just a separate  
little thing over here

that's nice for a few  
people, it helps everybody.

Now, as a designer,  
that's a big no-no,

any good designer  
would know that.

But you can see they've  
gone for cool and creative,

over usability.

And, yeah,

like there's actual tools  
that you can implement,

even just plugins

simply to your website  
or to your digital channels.

[Narelle] I'll bring you up.

Don't use the plugins.

They don't ensure accessibility.

[Simone] Okay.

[Narelle] Yeah.

Never use plugins.

If you're talking

AccessiBe and UseAway,

AccessiBe has been

fined a million dollars

by the American Fair

Trade Commission,

because it can't do what

it says it's going to do.

And UseAway is

in a class action.

[Simone] I'll have

to check that out.

No, I think, but that's  
just back to the point of,

you know, accessibility  
helps everybody.

Like you said, you had  
problems with your PDF.

You know, that's a  
user problem that would...

probably affect  
everyone that's trying to,

like you, filling out PDFs

that don't have anchor  
links and don't save work.

So, that's the whole point  
about digital accessibility.

It actually improves...

your digital channels  
for everybody.

It also has an  
impact on your SEO.

So, it's really important.

That's why I always refer  
back to Apple is above the line.

Like, this should not  
be an afterthought.

This shouldn't be a thing,  
when we have time or budget,

we'll get to it.

It should be embedded

above the line,

considered with everything  
else that you're doing.

[Narelle] Yeah.

[Simone] And I guess my,

I feel my job is people  
don't know it's a thing.

You know, that's  
still no excuse.

But I'm kind of here to have  
those conversations with people,  
and educate people about...

what you can do,  
where you can start.

You know, you don't need  
to overhaul your website

You don't need to spend  
heaps of money or heaps of time.

There's things you  
can do from the start,

and there's things you  
can implement over time

that will have a huge benefit,

and really help with your...

channels in being  
inclusive or accessible

[Narelle] Yeah.

Yeah, and this is it.

I just don't think

people realise.

And the other thing I would add  
to the accessibility statement,

is before you put the  
accessibility statement up,

make sure you get it completely  
tested by an actual auditor

that knows what  
they're looking for.

Because then you're  
coming up, you're starting

you know, on the  
best foot, really.

And...

you know, you can literally

say if you don't know something,

you've got someone

to go back to as well.

[Simone] And I think

for me as a mum,

the accessibility statement,

and I think a lot of the...

a lot of the things

that happen is,

you just want to be like

seen and heard, right?

You just want someone

to acknowledge your...

existence and your pain point.

I'm not going to come to you and  
ask you to redesign your website.

I'm going to come to you and  
say, hey, I've got this issue.

And you just want that  
acknowledged and actioned.

That's the whole point,  
  
of the person on the other side  
of that should have some empathy  
  
education and  
training to go, okay.

You know, we're not just going  
to take this as lip service,

we're going to, there's an  
issue here with our online form.

So we need to flag that,

and we need to rectify that.

And you might not be able to  
do that in an instant overnight,

but it needs to be needs to be...

needs to be a process within...

the business like anything  
else in the business,

when a customer or client  
comes to you with an issue

that is kind of treated  
through some kind of...

process to be...

reviewed and improved

And that's all that,

you know, most of  
the time the issues are.

You just want someone that can...

hear you.

You want to be seen and heard.

And, you know, some  
kind of outcome that...

resolves the issue,  
not just for yourself,

but for everyone else.

[Narelle] Yeah.

That's such a good point,

that, yeah,  
it can't be lip service.

It's gotta be action.

[Simone] Yeah.

[Narelle] What are some  
advice that you would give...

to someone as a  
takeaway from this podcast

[Simone] Oh, gosh.

[Narelle] You've given so  
many great thoughts already.

[Simone] I think the  
biggest thing I can say is,

disability isn't a dirty word.

Ask people, don't assume.

Like ask people what...

they would want  
or need from you.

So if you're a  
business, you know,

ask the community what,

you know, what can you  
do to help support them.

I've obviously said,  
you know, I always...

kind of talk about the  
accessibility statement.

A big bugbear of mine which has...

greatly dissipated

is captions on videos.

I don't know about

you, but I'm watching TV,

watching my memes with no sound

on because I'm multitasking.

So, do you know

what I mean? Like,

if your video doesn't have

captions, I'm not watching it.

So that's not a,

that's me as a consumer.

You're missing my eyeballs

cause I'm skipping your content.

And that's what I mean about...

having the conversation about  
accessibility is for everyone.

It helps improve your...

presence for everybody.

So,

don't think of accessibility as a  
thing over here for a few people

Think of it as a strategic thing  
you can do within your business

to serve everyone better.

[Narelle] Yeah. I don't think  
you could give anything better.

That's exactly it.

Simone, how can people  
stay in contact with you,

or get in contact with you to  
keep the conversation going?

[Simone] You can find me over  
on the gram at [disinfluencer.co](https://www.instagram.com/disinfluencer.co).

Same website, [disinfluencer.co](https://www.disinfluencer.co).

I'm on LinkedIn.

I really try and have a  
positive outlook on stuff.

In my day-to-day life, some  
days can be a bit of a battle,

and Disinfluencer  
is about influence.

I'm not here to...

I'm here to empower people,

and I want people to have...

a commercial lens when  
they look at disability, as in...

people with disabilities  
are people just like you or me,

and they are your  
customers, they're your clients.

Market to them,  
advertise to them,

and support us in our work

so we can employ more people  
who have dreams of being stars.

[Narelle] Well done, Simone .

Thank you so much  
for being on the podcast.

[Simone] Thanks for having me.

[Narelle] If you  
like what we do,

and I was meant to  
say that at the start,

My editor keeps saying,  
say this at the start, Narelle.

One day I'll get better.

But if you like what  
we do, please like,

subscribe, share, review.

Look, we love feedback.

We really do love feedback,  
so all feedback is good.

And we'll see you next time  
on the Digital Access Show.

[music playing]