

[Music] [Narelle] Hello and welcome to I think it's episode 36 of The Digital Access

Show. We're a bit excited. We've actually

had over 500 views as of Friday last week. So thank you to everyone

that's been listening. Today's guest is someone

I met a few years ago at the. He used to work. He's worked in actually a few different areas in

the disability sector. And I'll leave Andrew

to introduce you, introduce himself to you. So everyone, please meet

Andrew Backhouse. Hello, Andrew and thank you. [Andrew] Hi, pleasure. Welcome. Thank you for having me. And as in Narelle says,

Andrew Backhouse. I've worked in various

disability organisations. Currently at Queenslanders

with Disability Network. Work here across

all disabilities. But I've worked with blindness and I've been some, on some accessibility reference

groups as well. So I've come across lots of

different communication styles. [Narelle] Yeah, Andrew and

that's obviously what I'm really interested in. Because

we've had a few discussions over the last two or three years

that we've known each other. And it's interesting

that what works for one group of people with say vision impairment just

doesn't work for others. What's your take on

the communication or the lack of communication,

digital communication in our society today?

And has it improved? [Abdrew] Well, I

think it has improved a little bit. It's still

got a long way to go. The people that realize that their customers are everybody have usually taken steps, some steps at least, to try and make their communication

more accessible. Whether that's sending letters or websites or even text messages. I think that people think that it's really hard

and I have to do lots of stuff and it's going

to be really expensive. And I think what

surprises people is they find that they

learn along the way that, umm, that it actually

makes accessibility. It's for everybody.

If you simplify something, then

anybody can use it. I think that's a

big takeaway that people have started to realize and helps them

across their business. If somebody walks into a store and you're conscious of how you are communicating with that person, just being aware of it can

help your communication. [Narelle] What's the

barriers that you're seeing at the moment?

What are the biggest barriers that you're really seeing

or challenges as I like to term it. You know, in your work that

you're seeing that you're clients are experiencing

on a daily basis? [Andrew] Yeah. And I

think it's that awareness. It's some people just haven't been exposed yet to the accessibility

problems of others. When, everybody

wants to do it, when they come across this and they realize, oh, I'm doing something

that isn't accessible to people. They don't mean

to be doing that. And then they go and start to look

for ways that they can overcome it. So I think it's just awareness that some people

communicate differently. And

I think it's also people that are really intimate with their business

knowledge about what they do. Sometimes that can be a barrier for others because

when they're explaining it, sometimes talking too much detail because it's

their business and they're doing it and they know

all about it and they want to try and help people. But sometimes if you just

give the simple message about what you do, then

people understand it more. And that's everybody, whether it could be somebody

with autism or it could be somebody that has low vision or it could be somebody that's hard of hearing. There's a whole, if you keep it simple and take

out all the jargon and just explain what

it is that you do. I think that people

start to realize, oh, okay, so what I really want to tell them is not all of this detailed stuff. It's just, this is the

problem that you have identified and I have the

business solution for you. [Narelle] So why

aren't people aware? I mean, we're everywhere. It's not like, we're not the Like, what, there's

13 million people in Australia with some

form of vision impairment. There's 1.3 million people with hearing impairment.

That's 2018 stats. I can't remember

the stats about people on the spectrum,

the ASD spectrum. But there's people

in wheelchairs. There's people

using wheelie walkers. We're everywhere. So

why aren't people aware? I think it's, I think that they are, but they're

not sure where to start. And I know that, I know of some organisations that

have been really quite conscious of it and they make sure they've got ramps to know for people

in wheelchairs and, you know, even low counters. So people in wheelchairs can feel more comfortable

and don't have to speak to somebody

that they can't see, which is fantastic. But then they forget

that there are others, you know, so that accessibility sometimes, it goes with the visual. We can see that

person is in a wheelchair and potentially needs

some assistance. So let's make sure we put

all the ramps so they're fine. But it's the ones that have, you know, maybe low vision that don't look like they need help or it might be somebody with, like I said before, that's on the

spectrum or has ADHD. That might not, you know, they

might not look like they need any assistance. But even to understand

the business. If you're describing it in a way that's too detailed, you're going to lose a whole

bunch of people anyway. And I think that, now that things are fragmenting

and there's a lot of online information and

there's various ways that people can get

their message out there. I think sometimes

the people that keep it simple don't even realise

they're doing it. They just realise I just

need a simple message that's going to get

across to everybody. And I think the

communication message for people that need it, isn't getting out there because people feel like, they either feel like

they're doing it enough or they just don't

know where to start. [Narelle] It's strange. One of the things I'm finding

as I'm talking to different groups on this podcast is very much that silo effect. And by that I mean people with visual

impairment, vision impairment, not visual impairment,

vision impairment need one thing, right? People with hearing impairment

say, oh no, no, no. That doesn't work for

us, we need this. And they want it. Or people on the spectrum

have a different need. Ir people with cognitive

impairment or physical. Everyone's pushing their barrow. And they're not

listening to other people. That's something

that I'm noticing. What's your opinion of that? [Andrew] Yes, I think that is, when I talked about things being fragmented, I see that within each of those

communities, people. Today for example was

World Sign Language Day. So today, it was really important

that everybody got the message out about sign language. And that's really important. But tomorrow, that's still important. And I think that if people encounter somebody in a wheelchair, they may not have

done business with a person in a wheelchair before. When they do,

that's when they go, oh okay. I want to be able to, this person to be able

to access my services. Which is fantastic. But instead of thinking, okay, I want everybody to access it. It's that once they come

across it then they realise, Oh, I want, do you know, they look at it at their individuals. [Narelle] Yeah. [Andrew] And so I think

that that's part of it. I think also there is, there's actually intersectionality. That's a big word. Easy meaning. People with multiple needs. [Narelle] Oh yes. [Andrew] So this could be somebody who is in a wheelchair that has ADHD. So there are across things as well that people need to

take into account. And I think that if you do the basics and keep it simple, it actually is for most people. And then you still may not be 100%

accessible. You might send letters that aren't in

braille, for example. So you'll miss a certain part, but you can, then

you can do audio. But if you do simple language, easy to understand, then you'll cover most people. [Narelle] Yeah. So what

responsibility do people with disability have in what we're discussing? [Andrew] Yeah, I think that a lot of people with disability expect to live in a world that is not accessible for them. And a lot of them

have for a long time. A lot of people don't

realise it's actually against the law to discriminate. And discriminates

a big ugly word. But it means providing your service that isn't

accessible to somebody. So having simple things in place, easy read. You may have

come across that before. And that, like, umm. That makes it easier

for everybody to understand. So I think that if

you again break it down into what it actually is that you do. A lot of, some people

call it an elevator pitch. [Narelle] Oh, yes. [Andrew] So you

need to be able to take a really detailed piece of information

and what you do. And try and make it

so when you say it, that everybody understands what you're talking about.

[Narelle] One of the things that

fascinates me, the longer I have my vision impairment, the more I learn. And one of the things that

really fascinates me is I think people with disability are

severely under estimated. They, it's that belief that

they need that extra assistance maybe, is the word. [Andrew] Yeah.

[Narelle] And it

fascinates me that people are not letting the person with disability. And I don't know if I'm

using the right word, letting. be themselves

and be independent. And that includes in

the communication area. [Andrew] Yeah. I think

it's unconscious bias. Again, I don't

think people choose to do that. And it comes from

everybody wanting to help. You see somebody
crossing the road and you want to
help them across. You start with, Hi, my name's Andrew. Do you need a
hand
across the road? And, and make,
let that person make the choice and
make the decision. Or if you see somebody that, that you think may need
help, don't just say, oh, let me help you. Ask them if they
need it or want it. Or, because I think, again, I think people are
surprised at
how independent a lot of people are. And sometimes, society makes people
disabled in a way. Like somebody who's blind, for example, they get up in
the
morning and they have breakfast and they get dressed and they get on
the train and they go to work. And they work all day and
they come home and they have a shower and get
dressed and go out for dinner. But then somebody has
to read the menu to them. [Narelle] Oh my gosh, yes. [Andrew] So all day
they have
been independent, you know, doing
whatever they do. And then they have to rely on somebody at the very end
of their day. And I think that just
being aware of that is, and I've seen
restaurants, amazing. They say, oh, do you
have a braille menu? No, we don't, but
can I read it to you? So there is a
way, again, of, you don't need to, oh, you can't see. I'll tell you
what's
on the menu. Well no, because they're
probably there with somebody. [Andrew is laughing] And, you know, they
don't
need to hovering over them. But I think it's that,

that independence that people don't realise they see maybe the
dog or the cane and think, oh, this person needs help. And certainly the
chair. You know, everybody wants
to push somebody in a chair, which is probably really
annoying for most people. [Narelle] Yeah, it's, I was I was at a cafe
last week. And the experience I had
was exactly what you said. But it was quite funny
because I was actually meeting a friend who
happens to be in a wheelchair. And it's an electric wheelchair. So I got
lost.
Someone said, oh, I think you're in
the wrong building. That's where we went. And I said, yeah. And I'm
saying, just keep talking
and I'll follow your voice. And they're, they were good. They had it all
down
pat and I got in there. But the funniest part was
the guy in the wheelchair. Because I said, oh, look, I'll
follow you up to the counter. Make a noise because there
was an electric wheelchair. And anyone else
would have laughed. But all I heard was
his beep, beep, beep, and he saying beep,
beep as he's driving. [Andrew is laughing]
[Narelle] And I was just saying You Bastard. And I cracked up laughing
because
it was such a simple thing. But it was so effective. And then I said, oh,
look,
I can't see what's there. And he said to them, oh,
tell her what's there. I'm having a brownie
and I was into him doing that. You can't do that. It's lunch. And they
just laughed at us. And yeah, we've
got this and this. What would you like?

And it was so well done. But you get others where

they want to read everything. [Andrew] Yeah. Yeah. And you just sort of say,

what do you feel like? Do you feel like something like a salad or do you want something more substantial,

like a steak or? And because I think it's that people, I think it comes from a good place. I think people do want to help. But being more aware. And look, I think the more

people with disability say, I'm fine. Thank you. Just tell me the entrees or,

you know, something like that. But I think again,

people with disability are usually quite used to

people being like that to them. So sometimes they will just be frustrated and just say, oh, you know, let them

just let them read it. And I think if the more

people become aware, aware of it. And I think there's

also things like, And that's like that

alternate text, for example. So that helps all

sorts of people. It helps people

with sensory issues. But it also just helps people be clear about what it is

and how it's described can sometimes give them a

different idea of what it is. And I found this with

international people. Sometimes what they do is they will pull out their Spanish to English dictionary. To get the full

meaning of the word. Because we call it something. And they call it something. But together, they get the full

meaning of the word by taking it back to... Oh,

so this is how it's derived. And again, that taking it

back to its simplest form helps them understand the

English meaning of the word. [Narelle] This is interesting. Andrew, what are

some takeaways? I mean, if I can summarize, you're basically saying, keep it simple. You're saying it's everyone's responsibility in the community to improve communication, whether it's written, verbal, whatever. What's another couple of takeaways that you can give? [Andrew] Excuse me. I think one of the best takeaways is that you don't have to do it yourself. So most people won't do their own tax. They will go to somebody who will help them do their tax. And they're very trusted people. But I think that there are some things like, well certainly like yourself or other people that you can say, can you just have a look at this? And let me know, where do I start? Or am I on the right track? Or what would you do something differently? Because they might find that they, if they're interested in improving communication, they may have already made steps that just need tweaks to make it more broadly available. [Narelle] That's a great point. That's a really good point. Andrew, I can't thank you enough. I know it's been a long busy day for you. So how can people contact you? Andrew, if they want to follow up? [Andrew] Well, certainly you can have a look at qdn.org.au. And you'll see there is a lot of information there, which is easy to get to what you want. So we are pretty much for people with, by people with disability, for people with disability. We run peer support groups where people with disability get together and talk about what's happening

within their local area. We also do systemic advocacy. So things like the taxi subsidy scheme. We can't get one person onto the scheme, but we negotiate with the government to keep that scheme going and talk about the importance of it. So it's systemic advocacy. Pop on qdn.org.au And have a look. And that will also give you a bit of an idea of, of some of the accessibility tips and tricks. That might be a good start for people. But 100% engage somebody that knows exactly what they're doing. Even QDN has somebody that oversees the accessibility of our website and our communication, because it's important. And because our clients are people with disability, it's really important. But if you want to reach more people, the trick, number one is to keep it simple and make your language for everybody. [Narelle] Yeah. Thanks, Andrew. Look, thank you so much for your time. [Andrew] So thank you for having me. [Narelle] Everyone, if you really like what we're doing, and as I said, this is episode 36 of The Digital Access Show. Please like, subscribe, review, Google review. We love feedback, whether it's good, whether it's bad, whether it's ugly. We really love it because we can only improve and learn the more we learn from you about what you're liking and not liking on the show. So we'll see you next time. See ya. [Andrew] Thank you so much. [Music]