

[Narelle] Good

morning, good afternoon. Welcome to another

episode of the Digital Access Show where

we focus on usability, accessibility and after all, when usability is done well,

when accessibility is done well, gee, we

get some really good communication, particularly

we're looking at the digital content area, but we talk

communication everywhere. In the last month,

we've been really focusing on communication

and bringing it to the point today where

we're looking at leadership. Our guest for today is a

leader in the business network. And I'm really pleased that Shevonne Joyce

from Electro is here. Thanks Shevonne, how are you? [Shevonne] Thank you. I'm good, thank you, and

thank you so much for having me. It's an honour, to be part of

this great series. [Narelle] It's a

privilege to have you on. Shevonne, can you tell

me a bit about yourself? [Shevonne] Yes, so my name

is Shevonne Joyce. I am the founder and principal consultant at

Electro Consulting. I am also autistic

with ADHD and I have a neurological

disorder that I acquired- Well, they actually

suspect I have two, one in my spine

and one in my brain. But for the

simplicity, we'll say... a neurological

disorder that I acquired almost three years

ago now and I was completely

paralyzed at the time. So, I've spent the past three years learning to walk again and use my body again. And I still have some cognitive and physical impairments and I get relapses where I have recurrent paralysis. So prior to getting the neurological disorder, I was a very, what you would term as a "high achieving", you know, as people would generally term it, person, who was full throttle all the time, to everywhere doing everything. Um, kind of a wild horse spirit. And after the neurological disorder, I have had to learn how to navigate my brain and my body in a new way. And it has been quite a profound experience, but it has also honestly been character building. And, um, at the risk of - I don't want to sound kind of 'toxic positivity'. But it's the honest truths where I feel that ultimately what happened to me has been a gift. [Narelle] Yes. [Shevonne] And I'm truly grateful and appreciative to have this new perspective on life. [Narelle] Shevonne, you say you're autistic, you've got ADHD, you've got the neurological disorders. [Shevonne] Mhm. [Narelle] How many barriers in communication have you experienced? It must have been huge. [Shevonne] Yes. So I... I think if we start with

the neurodivergence. Being autistic, I... And bearing in mind,  
there's individual profiles. So, while I can talk  
about my personal challenges with communication, what I'm experiencing  
might not be what another autistic  
person is experiencing. So it's important  
to point that out. But, for me  
personally, I'm autistic. I can't read the gray and  
I don't operate in the gray. So I say what I mean. And I mean what I say.  
And I have been  
trying really hard to learn neurotypical  
since I was diagnosed. I was diagnosed as an  
adult as being autistic. And it's honestly  
been like trying to learn a different language. I'm learning French  
at the moment as well. I find trying to  
learn neurotypical [laughs] like trying to learn  
French, to be honest. One of my biggest learnings... since realizing...  
or,  
you know, I kind of... Look, I always felt like an alien that had been  
sent  
from outer space on a mission I hadn't figured out yet. But when I did  
get  
my diagnosis and was confirmed, yes,  
you're autistic, etc. One of the first  
things that I learnt about neurotypical conversation was that when they  
say yes,  
they don't always mean yes. And that blew my mind! And then I went  
through like a horror story of, how many  
times in my life has someone said yes to me,  
but not really meant yes. And then I've been  
confused or I went through interactions in my

life where something happened. And there was a... you know, a disagreement with someone that seemed to come from nowhere. And I didn't really understand what happened. And that was the moment that I realized that... I wasn't, that there were barriers to communication. The biggest one for me is not... I need verbal, like direct verbal feedback. So, when I meet new people, I will talk to them about the fact that, you know, I'm autistic. And to help me, to help you to be able to communicate together, here's what would be really helpful. You know, so say what you mean, mean what you say. If you feel like I'm not getting something it's not because I don't care. It's because I'm not clocking it. So make sure that you are direct and you give me direct verbal feedback. Because otherwise it's, I might not understand. So I... I kind of felt like I had been going through my entire life... half missing what was actually going on or what was said or what wasn't said. And all of those kinds of things. I would probably say that that is the biggest barrier with my communication. And I sort of see communication as a two-way street, for me personally. I really would like people to listen and to try their best. You know, it's

progress not perfection. To communicate in a way that helps me understand. But by the same token, I'm also learning. I'm trying to learn neurotypical ways of communication and different ways that different people prefer to communicate too, so. You know, so we've got this collaborative approach to communication. And in amongst all of that, you know, all of that best intentions and trying... It's also just understanding that you're not going to get it right all the time. And if I don't get it right, being open to that learning and, you know, making sure I correct it or fix it as quickly as possible. So, yeah, I would say that's probably the biggest struggle that I have had in my life and that I continue to have with communication. [Narelle] One of the things when I first met you that really impressed me was you're being a leader. You're standing up. You're not letting your disabilities stop you from getting in there and doing what you want to do. What in your mind is a true leader? [Shevonne] Yeah, so, a lot of people think of leaders as you know, CEOs or celebrities or people who are leading a crowd. And that is one type of leader. But I actually think a true leader is... Or true leadership is the way that you conduct yourself even when nobody's watching. To me, leadership is... Understanding who you are, understanding your purpose and

your legacy and... what it is that you were destined to do, really. And then being more focused on your art or your purpose and, being of service to that, than the outcome of it. And some of the most iconic brands that have ever walked the earth and I shared a LinkedIn post the other day about this very topic mentioning Freddie Mercury. He was someone who was so dedicated to his music. He continued making music up until the day he passed away. And, ultimately, he was so dedicated to that mission of making amazing music and changing the world with his music. Yes, not everyone wants to be famous and Freddie Mercury and all the rest of it. But it's really about leaving your mark on the world and walking away from that, being able to be really proud of what it is that you did contribute to the world. If you're leading people, I think true leadership is understanding that you are being of service to whoever it is that you're leading. To help them come together and be their best. Whether that is staff, clients, industry, you know, whether you're leading, thinking and something. It's all... it's all about being of service to your purpose and the greater good. And I think some people mistake leadership for thinking

that it's all about them. When leadership is really not about you at all. It's about being of service. And I think, even if we look at Diana, Princess of Wales, she was of service to her mission and those, those that she led. And her legacy, and her memory have stood the test of time. That to me is true leadership. I once had a mentor say to me, 'would you if no one recognised what you were doing until after you passed away, would you still be as dedicated to it? And my honest answer is yes. I would still be as dedicated to what I'm doing right now. Even if nobody recognised me for it, I would still be 100% heart and soul focused on it. Because I've realised that this is my purpose. This is my passion and I have the skills to do this. And my legacy really is, I want everyone to know that no matter what happens, I tried my best. I tried my best for the greater good. And to contribute something positive to the world. [Narelle] That's awesome. In the disability sector, in our disability community - and we are a large disability community. How can people with disability lead to improve communication? What can be done? Because you experience barriers, I experience barriers and sometimes it can be every hour. People just don't realise the challenges that we face all the time. What can people with disability do? Speaking as a leader

in the disability community. [Shevonne] Yes. So, I feel like there are two sides to this coin. I feel that the world at large really needs to be focused on ensuring that spaces are accessible and safe for disabled people. 100%. But leading and advocating for yourself as a disabled person. I have really approached this from a place of compassion in every interaction that I have. So the first thing is, for me it's been about understanding that disability is a very individual journey. And it doesn't look the same way for everyone. And being open with that. So recently I just produced a, um, free quarterly e-magazine with my business Electro called the Spark Hub. I have never produced a magazine before. Let alone produced an accessible magazine. And I put all of my knowledge and skills into that. And took feedback from my team, who are neurodivergent and disabled, and also from people who had been featured in the magazine as well. I shared it with them. And I created a plain text version as well. But when I sent it out, I said to everybody, you know, I've never created a magazine before, but also, I have never created an accessible magazine before. So if anybody has feedback or suggestions, about the way that this could be improved. Or, you know, you need any help with it. Please... please let me know. And, it's being open to that learning. So, if somebody comes

back to you and says, 'look, three columns is really overwhelming for me. Can we simplify it to two columns?' Not taking that as a criticism, but understanding that disability and accessibility is a journey. And, focusing on progress and not perfection. So being a leader in a disability space is being open to that learning. And continually asking for it. The other part of it is along the lines of asking. I appreciate that people don't know what they don't know. And there's a lot of stereotypes and myths out there about what disability looks like. And so, if there's something that I need, I will ask for it. If somebody says something with the best of intentions that maybe doesn't land the right way. I will chat to them about that from a place of compassion. So, an example of that is, a leader that used the term, 'the blind leading the blind.' In passing conversation. Now, me personally, I'm not offended if somebody says you know, 'I felt paralyzed' because I, I feel like, you know, feeling paralyzed is a legitimate physical and emotional state. However, just because I don't find that offensive, it doesn't mean that somebody else might not find what's being said to be offensive. And so, I had a conversation I had a phone call with this person and I explained to them. That, you know, a term like, you know, 'the blind leading the

blind' could be very hurtful. And upsetting for people who are blind. And that language evolves over time. And I... I totally understand that you know, we've all been using certain sayings or certain things without really understanding the true impact of them. But this- and that I'm navigating this, as well, myself. But I wanted to bring this up with them because I felt like it's an important piece of information for them to know, and for them to be aware that to do their best, to think, think carefully about what they're saying and what they're actually saying because when, when you talk to them about what they're actually saying, it's, it's not what is conveyed. And I think, you know, there's lots of assumptions about what blind people can and can't do and, and that's the problem. You know, that's that's the problem with that. Which, obviously you would know a lot about. So, approaching that conversation from a place of compassion, that leader really appreciated it. And it was meaningful, and I could tell that they were absolutely sincere and they were learning just as much as we're all learning as well. And I have no doubt that they have gone on to think about the language that they're using. And think about different ways

that they could express what they're trying to say from that interaction. And I really think that that's true leadership as well. So it's asking for learning and it's also asking for what you need. And it's offering learning in a really compassionate way. And I guess, that situation is different to... if someone's being blatantly discriminatory. And intentionally discriminatory. And I think that we need to separate these two things out. So an example of that is... Before I started a

Electro, I actually, I've been in business for quite a long time, for like 10 years, and then after the neurological disorder, I was in a part-time job with a past client, which I really loved and valued while I was recovering. They went through some financial challenges, and I was made redundant. So I, you know as a disabled neuro-divergent woman, I was like - who was going to hire me? Which is a question that I shouldn't have to ask myself, but needless to say, the recruitment process was soul-destroying. And I had leaders saying to me, 'you look really great for this role but we need somebody in the office five days a week.' Now, I know with the type of work that I do, that somebody doesn't need to be in the office five days a week to do this. And, in that situation, I wrote back and said, 'can you explain to me exactly why this job needs to be in the office five days a week?' So I approached that

differently to the way that I approached this other leader. Because to me, I feel like, everybody knows that

certain types of jobs don't- It's blatant, like it's blatant

discrimination that you wouldn't hire me because I need to be in the

office five days a week. And that's, that's how I, I actually went

out into LinkedIn. And told everybody

about what happened and I had lots of

people approach me and asked me if I would

do consulting for them. And that's how Electro started. I kind of started

it by accident. But it's been a

complete blessing. But, I guess, you know, it is important to

separate those things out. Sometimes you

do need to be very straightforward with

people and call them out on their biases and their

discriminatory behaviour. Other times, yes, I find

compassion is a great way to go about it. [Narelle] And I, I

think you're spot on. My opinion, my thoughts, is that, you know, people with

disability really do need to break their own belief system. Where their expectation

is the information is not going to be accessible, to ask the question, well,

we know we've got the tools to use it,

regardless of what the disability is, there

are tools to help in most areas. There are some things

you just can't get a wrap. They're not going

to be accessible. But in this digital era, that we should be

asking the question 'can you please

provide that information in an accessible way?' And this is the way

I mean accessible. Explain, don't just say 'in an accessible way', explain to the business person, 'Look, don't ring me, please send it to me in an email.' 'Have it black and white, dot points.' So the information's there, if there is any extra information, include it, that you think's necessary, then I can go through it and I can come back and I can ask you some questions. And we can have a conversation. And that, I mean, there's some wonderful, vibrant, incredibly smart intelligent people in our world that have a disability. And the disability hasn't stopped them from becoming doctors of philosophy or whatever it is. They're out there, they're doing it and all it takes - and probably all it took, was for them to ask and say, 'nope.' 'Not good enough.' We need to be asking the question, and you need to provide the answer. And I think that's also a form of education. If you do it in the right way. Not being aggressive or assertive, just say, 'look, please provide it in a form that's accessible.' 'By that I mean email, dot points, I can take it away and think about it.' And you'll find most businesses go 'Oh yeah, of course,' and 'we didn't know.' So it's leaving it up to the business.

[Shevonne] Yeah, absolutely. [Shevonne] Mm, yes, and I, I also think generally, I mean something that I do with Electro is I have in my email footer, you know, if you have any accessibility preferences or requirements. Like, [listing motion] you

know, or anything else that we can do to help you access our services. Read our advice, whatever it might be, please let us know When I'm booking meetings with clients or people, whoever I'm booking a meeting with. I will ask them if they have any accessibility preferences or requirements. So we can make sure that they're looked after. It's, it's about everyone making accessibility just the forefront and, it, there's lots of... You know, I learnt this from Rosie Patland recently. I don't know if you've... met or heard of Rosie Patland. She was in - I interviewed her for this first edition of The Spark Hub. She is about designing accessible tech. She said there was, you know, this isn't just about disabled people. This is about everybody. Everybody benefits from accessibility and she shared some examples like lifts, text messages, Siri. You know, and so it's understanding that everybody benefits from accessibility and not being afraid of... Either finding tools that work for yourself, so for example, for me, when I'm reading something - I get overwhelmed by 50 page documents, so, when I'm reading something, I will- I have to convert it to Word and then I will listen to it while I'm reading it and the listening and the seeing at the same time is the combination for me that really helps my brain to get it, but, like, on a similar vein, if I have a client that sends

me huge wall-of-text emails, you know, I will go back to them and say, 'can we catch up about this?' And have a chat about this, and then when we get on the call, I'll say things like, 'could you talk me through, I know you've sent your email, but could you talk me through your thoughts?' And they're more than happy to, to do that and then they start to learn and to understand that sending Shevonne wall-of-text emails isn't the most accessible form of communication. Instead, I'm going to - when we get on our meetings, I'm going to talk through my thoughts there. So yeah, it's kind of being prepared to go on a journey with people, but definitely there's a role that everyone can play... And just sharing, just being willing to not like- I believe 99% of people get out of bed every day wanting to do good.

[Narelle] Yes. [Shevonne] So if we all think about accessibility, if we make it the forefront of what we're doing because it shows people, even having something on my email footer, it shows people that I care about accessibility. That I'm thinking about it and... If somebody gave me feedback on that footer, I would thank them and I would modify it, I would update it I would... you know, so if everyone can actively and proactively go about sharing, asking and sharing, to help with

accessibility and communication, I think that, you know, the world would - it

would be wonderful for so many of us, for sure, yeah. [Narelle] Shevonne,

I always ask at this stage for a

couple of takeaways. What can you... give to everyone

that's listening, as a takeaway about what

we've been discussing? [Shevonne] I think

it, the main takeaway is really the progress,

not perfection. Being open to the learning, and not feeling like we have

to get it right all the time. I think it's important to always go into everything

with the best of intentions. But, it's okay for this to be a journey.

You can be a masterpiece and a work-in-progress

at the same time. And, so can accessibility

and so can communication. Communication isn't perfect. Even those who, you know, even people who are neurotypical

and aren't disabled. They come across challenges with

communication as well, so. I think where a lot of communication

challenges come from is the fear of saying

the wrong thing. The fear of doing

the wrong thing. And sometimes that can... cause people to- or not

knowing how to ask for what people need

or not knowing how to ask for what you

need, this fear, can sometimes lead

to no communication. So, you know, having

communication about how we're going to

have the communication. You know, communication

about communication - let's, let's make that a hashtag -

I think it's not being afraid. And sometimes, I

always say to people because people will say, 'I just don't know how to ask this' or 'I don't know how to have this conversation.' And sometimes just being honest about that, just saying to someone, 'Look, I'm not sure... the best way to communicate this to you and I'm feeling really worried about ABC so is it okay if we go into this conversation and I can just get my thoughts out or I can just ask for what it is that I need or I'm thinking about. And we can navigate this together?' And the other person's going to be like, 'yeah, of course,' and then you know, make it a collaborative thing. Don't feel like you have to get it perfect the first time. And understanding that if you do make a mistake, or someone else makes a mistake absolutely, your feelings are valid. In that moment, but, there can be a lot of healing and connection through learning together and evolving and I really think that's personal leadership, and leadership in general. So don't be afraid to have the conversation or to ask for what you want. Or to receive feedback from somebody else, that's a gift. [Narelle] Thanks, Shevonne. Again, look, thanks so much for your time today. You've made so many great points. How can people contact you if they want to keep the conversation going? [Shevonne] Yeah, so, I would love for people to contact me. They can find me on LinkedIn. It's Shevonne Joyce

which is S-H-E-V-O-N-N-E and then Joyce is J-O-Y-C-E. Or they could go to,

um, Electro's website. Which is [www.electro - electro,](http://www.electro-electro.com)

with an O, [consulting.au](http://consulting.au).

[[www.electroconsulting.au](http://www.electroconsulting.au)] You can find us there

and I would love to connect. Thank you for having me it's

been a pleasure and an honour. [Narelle] Oh, thanks Shevonne. So, yeah, this is the

wonderful Shevonne Joyce. Thanks again Shevonne. As I said, so many

great points today. So, if you like what we're

doing, please like, review, share, give us

feedback - good, bad, ugly. I absolutely do love feedback because it gives me a

chance to learn and improve what

we're doing and we'll see you next week

on the Digital Access Show. See you next time.