

[intro music] [Narelle] Hello! And welcome to another episode of the Digital Access Show. No, I'm not using any other languages today, because right now, I think I'm all languaged out. So this week, I've got a guest that I first met at a conference. We were introduced by a mutual friend, the lovely Shannon Towell, from Shannon Towell Design. And.. Patrick really impressed me with how he goes about his work, and also his consideration for others. So everyone, I'd like you to meet Patrick Lane. Patrick, thank you very much for being on the show. [Patrick] Thank you. It's fantastic to be here. [Narelle] Patrick, can you tell us a bit about yourself please? [Patrick] Absolutely. So I am deaf in both ears with bilateral cochlear implants, and been deaf or hard of hearing since birth. And myself, I am an experience designer, and I currently work for WongDoody, at creative agency, under Emphasis. And I mostly focus on improving the user experience for digital application, whether that be a website, an app, or any digital platform. One of my biggest passions is accessibility, and that's why I'm really happy to be here today. [Narelle] Yeah. Why digital accessibility? Why is it your passion? [Patrick] Because I've had so many barriers, um, growing up, where I just had.. didn't have the access to language that I need, or to the information I need. So even though I grew up with access to the English language, and I had an education in the English language, spoken and written, it got to a point where I

became an Auslan user. So Australian sign language, um, user, when I was 18, and have been since then. So I have the, the opportunity to choose what language I want to access. And so when I'm online, often, at times, I don't have the opportunity to get the information I need. So for example, if I'm at a train station, and all of a sudden, the system's out, and I can't rely on information on the screens, because it's not showing. It actually comes up with the words "listen to announcement." And I dread that every single time I see it, because I might be, I might have had a full day of back to back meetings, and I just wanted to switch off my cochlear implants, because I'm, I do get quite a bit of a headache if I'm constantly listening all the time. But I didn't have access to language. And even if I did have to put my cochlears back on, cochlear implants back on, I would struggle, really struggle to understand what's been said over the, over the announcement because of the other, um, white noise, and general noise in the background of other trains, or people talking people, foot movement and whatnot. So that adds a lot of stress and, unnecessary stress to my, to my journey. So I can only imagine just how, how much... how much other frictional, friction experiences other people have around the world, not just for the deaf and hard of hearing, but also people with vision impairment, and, um, other... [Narelle] People

on the spectrum. The ASD spectrum.

They have a massive issue. [Patrick] Exactly, and

the list goes on and on. And I have a background

in industrial design as well, so I've always had a

passion for the accessibility in a physical space too. So people who

are in wheelchairs, or people with cerebral palsy, and can't, they need to be able

to hold on to things just in case, um, they

feel like they're going to fall. So being able to keep confidence and to everyone

with these needs, to be able to go about the

day independently is so vital, and in fact, it is

actually our right to be able to do this. [Narelle] I agree with

you there. It is our right. Patrick, we've been focusing on what

usable digital communication is over the last few episodes. What to you is usable

digital communication? [Patrick] Usable

digital communication, at its core, is really being

concise and to the point. It's being able

to provide people with the ability to go

onto a website or an app and access information, or explore the information on

the app or website with ease. So an example of this

is the classic 3 33 rule, where you want to be able to

capture someone's attention in three seconds. With very simple visualization, very simple,

compelling headlines, or headings or whatnot. But then the next

step is in 30 seconds, engage them as much as you can. But even in that, that is

actually the most vital point. You want to be able to.. have very simple language used, so that even people, uh, with the reading

level of year nine, uh, level in education
can actually read and understand
what's being said. Everything's laid out in
the appropriate hierarchy, so making sure the important
information is at the top and working your way down. There are many other
things
that I could, um, elaborate on, but essentially at its core, it's the
ability to be
concise, to the point, and engage people
as soon as possible. [Narelle] Okay. One of the biggest
problems I strike, and it does
frustrate me at times, is the amount of
words people use at times. They just go on and on, instead of focusing on
what the point is, don't they? [Patrick] Oh, absolutely.
And I see this all the time. Even though some people want to, this is
just an
assumption of mine, but even though people would
like to express their knowledge of the English language, or any language
for that matter, and really have like,
big, bulky paragraphs, it actually ends
up being a backfire, because you are giving
them more time to read, a more, much more of a cognitive
load to digest information, process it, understand it's content,
uh, the context of it, and then they have to
make a decision from there whether they want
to continue reading, or act on the information
that they just read. So it is really quite
frustrating as well, and especially from my, uh, my standpoint as a deaf
person,
in terms of my culture, um, even though I've

had the luxury of... having education in the English language, I know a lot of people in the deaf community who have had Auslan as their first language, and much to, much to people's beliefs, Auslan is actually not an English language. It is a visual language. There is no written component to Auslan. So when you think about sign language in this, at its core, it's a visual language. You're, you're creating visual signs, whether it's a facial expression, using your hands, using your body, to tell a story. There are no written components to that. And as a result, English, the English language, written and both spoken, is predominantly our second language. So therefore, as a result, when you have deaf people coming onto websites who predominantly only use Auslan, and you are relying on them to use their knowledge of their second language to understand the content on a website. So if the content is not short and sweet, to the point, using bullet points, or you're not leveraging visual assets to tell the story of what your, what the website or the purpose of the, um, visual assets is trying to convey, then you are going to lose them, unfortunately. [Narelle] Wow. I'd never thought of Auslan being a visual language, but it makes sense. With Auslan, can you tell us, explain a bit more about Auslan and how you use Auslan? And why... going from that to a website... is an issue? [Patrick] Absolutely. So, sign language has been used

for many thousands of years. And we have over 300 different sign languages around the world, and Auslan is one of them. Auslan is the language for Australia. And we, it's our way of communicating between deaf person to another deaf person or a hearing person who also knows Auslan. And because we cannot talk, a lot of deaf people don't know, may not have the... skill to be able to talk or have been taught how to. Therefore, their only method of communication is via Auslan. And so everyone is different. It's a very beautiful, um, diverse community of deaf and hard of hearing people. So some do talk, but they don't sound as fluent in English spoken language, whereas others like myself, we are a little bit more fluent. So it's quite a quite a beautiful, diverse community. And um. But at its core, Auslan is how we connect, [Narelle] Yeah. [Patrick] and when it comes to websites, everything, they're using English. And for those who predominantly use Auslan, and for the sake of this conversation, they don't have, um, they have very limited knowledge of the English language and the English grammar as well. When they read content, they have to exert much more energy to really understand what they've read. Therefore, as a result, they can get quite tired quite quickly, and they always look for any accessibility offerings on the website. If there is an Auslan interpretation video, they will go to that straight away, without fail. Unfortunately Auslan translation

is considered AAA standard in the WCAG guidelines, um, which is understandable

because it is quite expensive. Can be quite expensive to do, whereas, if you change... a paragraph on a website, you have to complete

that video all over again. And it can be quite costly, because to get an interpreter... on to read the

content of the website, understand what the

website is trying to convey, and then the interpreter

has to interpret that. They don't interpret

word for word. They actually explain... in Auslan what the content does, or the overall gist of that

information they try to convey. They do also struggle when,

um, there's a transcript, too. Even though they do

appreciate a transcript, transcript of a video, it's still in written English, and they still may

struggle with that as well. That's why I also advise

people to have captions too on all video content, just without fail,

have that actual default. even if, even

having it on there, so users would have to turn off. They've, there's, there's been

studies through Netflix, even, where I think it was, I think it was in the

70 percent percentile that their users use subtitles. And that's including

hearing people, That's millions and millions

and millions of users. And even today, go on a train, people are scrolling

on the social media. And all of the

videos are captioned, and they love that because they

don't have to listen to audio. They can just rely

on the captions. So it becomes a no-brainer, that if we can actually

apply that to videos, to websites and be the default, and have them

turned on by default, then that will definitely

help the deaf community and hard of hearing

community dramatically, drastically. Sorry. [Narelle] With captions, what is a good caption? What is a bad caption? [Patrick] Great question. So a good caption

is a boring caption. So what I mean by that is, a great caption is

one that's very simple with a black background, white text, white readable text, of, of the, the appropriate size that's not too small to read, not too large that it's, um, interfering with the video. So just a nice sweet

spot in the middle, and readable content,

readable font. A lot of content out there, they try to be flashy about it, with showing one word at a time, doing different colours,

making it thrown in your face. It's, it's engaging, yes. However, the

problem with that is, you are focusing

more on the subtitle than you are on the

content of the video. One of the things

that I find people... underestimate the power

of your peripheral vision. So what I find myself

when I look at captions is, even though I have captions

on my screen right now, I'm able to very quickly

use my peripheral vision to sort of quickly jump

between looking at you and looking at the captions. And whether I

might get to a point where I didn't

understand what you said, I'll quickly focus

on the captions, because I rely on

my peripheral vision to sort of guide me on

where the captions are at, in terms of the pace. And so, the more people

are used to captions, the simple ones, the more, the more likely

that they, much more likely, the likelihood of them being

able to be more engaged in the video content itself. So the captions are purely

there as an additive tool, not part of the video. [Narelle] A lot of business

today use the AI captioning. -What's your thoughts?

-[Patrick] Yes. [Patrick] So AI caption is, just to a certain

degree, they do... do... a portion of the heavy work, but it all relies on the

quality of the audio, the quality of the language

that's been spoken, and the knowledge of the machine

learning behind the AI itself. So, let's say, for example, the AI had been developed

in developed in, um, developed in India. And therefore they're

bringing it to Australia, for Australian users. But the machine

learning around that had been most

predominantly used in India, so their language. They bring it here, therefore it requires more

time to understand our language and our slangs, our jargons,

our way of speaking, our tone of voice, and that requires

a lot more time. And therefore there are

bound to be a lot of mistakes in the captioning itself. And therefore that

requires a lot more fixing, manual fixing, manual

refinement on our part, to make sure that

they are correct. Now, the question... Now, the interesting

point part is, does that take up more time for us to manually go in

and check and fix everything, or is it easier to manually

do the whole thing ourselves, in terms of time,

effort and attention? So there is benefits

long-term with AI in captioning. But I do feel that... we are in... a bit of an immature

state at the moment to rely on it too much, but that's my opinion on it.
[Narelle] I see. So when we look at brevity and considering what

we've discussed so far, brevity is such an

important principle for communication, isn't it? [Patrick] It really is.
With any anything

in life, really, and that's one of the actually

beautiful things about Auslan, because Auslan is

built around brevity. You ask people, How do I sign this the

most simple way possible that people understand

what I'm trying to say? So for example, I would say, I'm going to the
shop

now. See you soon. Auslan will be shop I go. Back soon. [Narelle] Yeah.

[Patrick] That's very short, and the grammar is

a bit different as well. So in terms of the

general scheme of things. Yes, I agree, and I think it's, we as a society
have

been conditioned to... be naturally time poor, have a very small

attention span. We have so much content that we

absorb all the time every day, no wonder no one has much energy

at the end of the day to give. And... I find that if we are

able to really focus on... having effective communication

strategies moving forward, from the start, we're able to provide very

concise, clear information, whether it's verbal in person, or down in
paper in

the form of a letter, or PDFs, reports. -[Narelle] Yep.

-[Patrick] Or even... even on digital platforms, and even visually too,
because it also go to

visualizations as well, and graphics and whatnot. If we can keep it
really

simple and to the point, and logical as well, then I feel like

we as a society, we would, we would generally be in a

much happier place, I feel. And being able to
get things done a lot, much more, much more quickly. [Narelle] Yeah, I
tend to agree with you, because I often think that if
people are using too many words, it really does take
away from that main point of what
they try to say. Yeah. Interesting. Patrick, what's a takeaway that you
could give to
everyone about brevity? About Auslan, captioning, web design, digital
accessibility? [Patrick] Big point, first of
all is be strategic about it. So make sure you have all
your considerations up front and whether you may not have, specifically
for
web development, if you don't, if you
don't have the funding or the capabilities to... adopt all of the
accessibility
strategies straight away, at least have a plan in
place to build a foundation in order to do so. 'Cause the amount of... what
we call tech debt, or in other words, extra, extra work that we have to
do down the, down the end to include these accessibility
features is astronomical, and it's, it requires
so much more money, so much more complexity, and add more complexity
to the coding to, of websites. And it can actually
be a nightmare, or especially for screen
readers to not having, not having the coding
there in the first place to easily go through,
okay, this is heading one. This is heading two,
this is content. This is the all text
for these images. Not having that
there in the first place and to add it in later on, it's just. So
everything comes

down to planning. So if you plan it properly, doesn't matter you if you go from zero to 10, when you want to go to zero to 100, but zero to 100 is

your three year plan? Fantastic. Have a plan, a three year plan, and have your milestones on how you're going to

achieve every step to get there. And hold yourself accountable. Have, have key, key metrics that

would help measure and test, that you are actually

assuming those targets... as you go along, through that,

through that journey. And I could talk about

all the simple stuff, like keep things short. I could talk about

using simple language, Avoid, avoid, um, avoid jargons

and slangs as well. Avoid that. I'll also talk about simplifying

that engage hooks and websites as well. -[Narelle] Yep.

-[Patrick] However, it does get to a point where... the more you simplify it, the higher the risk of... that navigation flow no

longer becomes logical. So it's very important

to find a plan and have a really good

information architecture. So how information is flowing, how people go from one

part of a website to another, and making sure it's

logical and makes sense. And the language that

you use to title those... pages or those

elements of a website, you go clear and to the point. And... Yeah, test. Just test as much as you can. [inaudible] I have a huge, huge, huge

advocate for collaboration and making sure that you have

all the right people in the team to achieve the

best result possible. So if you have the opportunity

to test with someone... who has a disability, fantastic. Do it. No matter how brief an

interaction that might be, you will get so much more out of that than any kind of AI tool that might be able to do it for you. And yeah, definitely leverage that much support you can, from accessibility equipment [inaudible] or you leverage someone, a digital agency outside. There are many, quite a few in Australia, as you know, Narelle, who are willing to support. [Narelle] Thanks, Patrick. Patrick, how can people contact you to keep the conversation going? [Patrick] Easy. You can reach out to me on LinkedIn if they'd like. Or via email, Twitter too. [inaudible] LinkedIn too, if you happen to reach out that way. [Narelle] Fantastic.

Thanks, Patrick. Thanks being on our show today. So that's another episode of Digital Access Show. If you want to follow us, we'd love it. Like, share, subscribe. If you know of other people that you think, Oh Look, we'd like to hear what they've got to say about digital accessibility. Every point is important, because we are all part of the one society. And everyone in society needs to be able to communicate, not just one group. Everyone communicates differently. And that's fine. That's good. So let me know if you know of anyone. So I'm Narelle, and... let's see you next time. Thank you. [outro music]