

[music playing] [Narelle] Good morning,
good afternoon, hello, and welcome to another episode
of the Digital Access Show. Digital Access Show is where
we talk about communication. We talk about usability and we talk about
digital accessibility, because, after all, if you want good communication,
it's gotta be usable, and if it's digital
communication, it's gotta be accessible. This week's guest is a
guest with a difference. He is a marketing person... for an NDIS provider,
and he does wonderful work. And the reason that I've
asked Mark to come on, we have great conversations
about beliefs and perceptions. So this month,
our theme is perceptions, and about how people's
perceptions and belief... inform their decisions and... everything about it. And you
know, do people
challenge their decisions? The reason it's important
for people with disability is... people assume that everyone
communicates in the same way, that if they can
see the website, everyone can see the website,
and access the website. So please welcome Mark Warren. Mark, thank you. [Mark]
Thanks Narelle for

that lovely introduction. Yes, I, go on. [Narelle] Yeah.

Look, Mark, just... tell us a bit about yourself. Obviously, you and I've

been friends for a while now. And yeah, just tell

us a bit about you and why you're interested

in this type of information. [Mark] Um, so, yeah, I'm, I'm early 40s. My disabilities are

diastrophic dwarfism, and hearing, hearing... hearing loss, I guess. She'll do the

better words in that. So my hearing and my

physical disability affects... every facet of my life. And... yeah. I think much like... much like yourself in, in

the vision impairment area, my hearing, um, tends to have a large impact on my engagement with people

out in the community. So, um, yeah, having a hearing

disability definitely... it creates issues for myself. [Narelle] Yeah. I know, like the last time

we were at a cafe together, Rocket, my guide dog must have

been getting some treatment. He wasn't there.

And I will tell you, Mark has a wicked

sense of humour, because we were going up

to the counter or something, I didn't know

where the counter is, so I had to say to Mark,

look, I'll follow you. And I forgot Mark uses

an electric wheelchair. Well, I mean, I needn't have
to say, Mark, make a sound. And yeah, it was
a certain friend that's rolling up to the counter
going, beep, beep, beep, beep. And all I could
think is, God, Mark. And I think everyone else
in the thing was laughing, but I'm walking along thinking,
well, at least I can hear it. It's a solution for the
problem we had that day. Outside the square,
it worked, didn't it? Mark, [Mark] Yes. Um,
it certainly did. I don't remember it
quite that way but... -I believe you.

-[Narelle] I can assure you. No, no, no, no. I believe
you that it happened that way. I have a terrible memory,
so my apologies. But, um, I do remember
another time where I took off, and not took off on purpose, but I think you were
left behind, and then, yeah, I think that might
have created an issue. So that, that last time, I made sure that I, you know, I made
sure that
you were following and guided the right way. [Narelle] Yeah. Because... one of the
things

that people have, what we've talked about before,
and we've talked about a bit, is people's beliefs
and perceptions. Like we both work full-time. People really think that people
with disability don't work, however? [Mark] Oh, definitely.
I get that all the time still. They'll ask me
what I do for work, or if I work, and
I'll tell them, and... and then they'll be surprised
and like, that must be hard. And I'm like, No, not really. It's a job, you know? I have
the capacity to
work, and I work, you know? [Narelle] That's it,
isn't it? And one of the... big things with that is... and I liked what Emma Bennison, she
used to be the CEO
of Blind Citizens Australia, and she's one of our
podcast guests from last year. And she said people have a low
expectation of what we can do, and that builds
into their beliefs and their their
perceptions, doesn't it? [Mark] Yeah, definitely. It's
something I still struggle with, even in my early 40s, is to... not, not, try to believe
more in myself. [Narelle] Yeah. And look, I
struggle with it, too. One of our conversations, or a few of our conversations, as we,
we both end up at the

same expos, disability expos, NDIS expos, network marketing things. And we come out of it, and then we'll have one of our lunches afterwards. And we both struggle with similar things, is you go to an expo, obviously you're working a table. For me, I'm just going around and talking to people. They really don't think about how we communicate, do they? [Mark] Yeah. So, um, I guess... for myself, I may not hear someone's cue that they want to talk. So for myself, that's, that's something I have to be aware of before. [Narelle] Yeah. And it affects all parts of our communication. For me, and I've mentioned it so many times, how I get given business cards or flyers, and they're on paper and I can't read them. And I actually have two options, or three options. One, use the tools I've got on my phone to read it. Or two, the second option is pay someone to read it for me. Or the third one is just don't worry about it. And that's sad, because, yeah, I'm missing out on information that may help me. But that business is also missing out as well, because they haven't

taken into account... the many ways that
we all communicate. [Mark] Definitely,
and I have to say, we're not perfect either,
as the company I work for, but it is something
we're always aware of. We know that Braille
may not be widely used, but we've started adding it
to some of our business cards. [Narelle] Fantastic. [Mark] So we started doing
that in the last year or so. So that's something
we've added as a company. [Narelle] Yeah. [Mark] I guess a wider
issue for it, I see, is that... we kind of, and I might
be getting off track, but we've become a commodity
for for the for the industry, which has now been
created around the NDIS, and they will talk the talk
but they won't walk the walk. [Narelle] I agree. You know, for me, you know, if it's
someone,
like I trust you, or like the
friends that I trust, and I might say,
go use this support worker, or this plan manager, or whatever the service
is that I'm looking for, you know, if it's you that
says I use this, they're great. That's fine. However, if it's someone I

don't know as well, or you just get referred
by someone on Facebook, or LinkedIn or whatever it is, I always like to go and
look at their website. And you know, the moment I can't
access all of their website, it doesn't make me trust them. We're inviting them into
their
home, into our home, aren't we? They have to come to
our home to help us out. [Mark] Having an accessible
website is definitely... every company should have. And it's something we try to do.
And again,
we're perfecting that. Even I struggle with someone who
can use both mouse and keyboard. And I still struggle on a
lot of websites sometimes. It's definitely something that's
a much wider society issue. [Narelle] Where do you
struggle with websites? What are the
issues that you find as someone who can use
a mouse and a keyboard? [Mark] I guess... some pages are not
very clear on the directions on what they're showing you. So it's just unsure
of where to click or where this page is
taking me, type stuff. [Narelle] Yeah,
it's, as you said, that's an issue that every

person will experience, not just us with disability. When you said it's a society-wide issue, I agree with you. But do you think society is interested in fixing it? [Mark] I think society has always been about themselves and taking the easy road. [Narelle] Yeah. [Mark] You just look at the having standards, and, and now they're supposed to build to a certain standard. So, but they're still yet to agree on that, and for implementing that widespread. So that definitely shows you a little bit about... having to bring... bring society along kicking and screaming for something that benefits everyone. Like a ramp isn't just for someone in a wheelchair, it's for someone who's gonna grow old and... -[Mark] Not gonna be mobile. -[Narelle] People with prams. -[Narelle] People with prams. -[Mark] Yeah. Yep, and prams. [Narelle] Yeah. There's so many issues there. And it's even, like the, the tactile markers on the ground, you've got dots, your dots, and what we call Braille trails. I mean, they're a good indicator of the kids. For skater kids,

don't cross those dots. They're saying there's danger. You have to stop when you see those dots. And check,

you know, the tools are there, that people can and do use. One of the big ones at the moment, and frustrates me is captions. And do you use

captions a lot, Mark? [Mark] Yeah. I love

captions in my daily life. Until I find out some

songs, their lyrics. [Mark and Narelle laugh] [Mark] I struggle

with a lot of songs with not being able to

hear what they're saying. Definitely captions on the music

videos and stuff like that. Definitely helped me, and for my TV habit watching

Netflix and stuff like that. So it's definitely

something I use every day. [Narelle] Yeah. One of the

things, being hearing impaired, do people automatically assume

that you know sign language? [Mark] Actually, I don't. Maybe once or twice in my life, I've had someone sign, like someone who, who is... the right terminology, sorry, someone who was

born without hearing [Narelle] Yeah. [Mark] And I'm like, I'm sorry I

can't read or do sign myself. But other than that, not really. [Narelle] Yeah. [Mark] I'm not sure what I

would do in that situation. I mean, I'd do my best, but it's not really something

I've had to deal with. [Narelle] Because the fact is, hearing is quite an

invisible disability, isn't it? [Mark] Yeah. Definitely. [Narelle] Yeah. Yeah, whereas, as you said, dwarfism is a much

more visible disability for me. My sight impairment

is quite a visual one, because I have to use a cane. Or, like today at the shopping

centre, I had to get led, because there's too many people

to use a cane, so it is visible. [Mark] Yeah. On my... like most NDIS plans, you have to have

one major disability, and for me, that

would be my dwarfism, which allows me to get

funding for a lot of things. Then I do have, like, a little

bit of scope for my hearing, but it's not something

I really look to for my, for my hearing

in the NDIS plan. It's more of a governmental

benefit stuff I get there. [Narelle] Okay, yeah, for me, I've only got one,

which is vision impairment. And you know, for me, the number of people that

assume I can read Braille. [Mark] Yeah. [Narelle] And again,

it's a perception, isn't it? It's that assumption. [Mark] And until a

couple of years ago, I had that perception as well, until I met someone who, like

yourself, was vision impaired, and... and he said that, yeah, not all people use

Braille or or learn Braille. And so he, um, he

gets by using his phone. [Narelle] Yeah. [Mark] For every part of his life. Yeah. [Narelle] Yeah. I use, I'm, I'm so dependent on my phone. I would freak if I can't find my phone. Because for me, Braille, one of the problems with Braille, and why some people never learn it, I lost my sight later in life, but my fingertips are very work-worn. They don't have the sensitivity that you need to really... distinguish the letters in Braille, because they're dots that are quite close together. If you learn it as a kid, it's much easier. And it is another language. It's like Auslan. They're languages. One of the things that... was described to me in another podcast, was Auslan's quite a visual language, and so... the grounding, the wording... that is used in the Auslan... is very different to the wording that's used on a web page. The grammar, the punctuation. And that's the same if you come from other countries, you know? People... don't see why you can't, with a website, just use it. But for me, everything's gotta get converted to sound, and if it doesn't convert

to sound in the right order, I'm lost. [Mark] Yeah. I, what, now just to throw a question at you, what, what would be an ideal website for yourself visiting? [Narelle] An ideal website for me... is a website that has been made accessible, so meets the digital accessibility standard, but it's also usable. In other words, you know, I can use, I can get the information out. I can use my shortcut keys that I use for... using a screen reader. I did an audit on one not long ago, and it was the Australian energy regulator website. There were some minor issues, but it was mostly usable. I could hop on, and if I needed to find out some information, I could do it.

And it was, it was such a pleasure to audit. But then, if I go and try and look at... the people that supply our electricity, that where we pay the bills to, or the distributors, their websites are so hard There's so much information crammed into them. They're not well structured. It's all I can think, it's like, you know that shop front where they've said, we need to put one of everything that we sell in the window, and so you've got this

really cluttered window, and then they've got pick this,
pick this, over and over again. It's too much information. You know, categorise it. Put
section headings
so I can say, well, I'm interested in fruit. I can go to the fruit section
and see, yeah, that's the fruit. But if you've got, like, just listed
in alphabetical, it's too much information. It does my head in
so I just leave the site. And it's the same
that any NDIS provider. When I look at, if I look and think, okay. I need to get a
different
support worker team or whatever, and I start Googling, they make it look
pretty but it's just not... completely accessible. [Mark] Yeah. And yeah, I think, I think,
you know, companies
are open to this feedback, but, um, I guess it's whether they'll
actually use the feedback. [Narelle] Actually,
that's the point. It is. And the other thing is, you know, companies that you
use, they do expect it for free. That's another
perception, isn't it? Because we've got a disability, we should give them
the information for free. But would we pay have a support
worker to work for us for free? That never happens. [Mark] Family. [Mark and Narelle
laugh] Family if the government
would like it that way. -[Mark] Family.

-[Narelle] Yeah! [Narelle] Yeah, that's it. And really, what we're really talking about, isn't it, is people's beliefs, as they get a belief that people with disability don't work, or everyone can read the website because they can read it, or everyone can read a business card because they can read it. Or everyone knows that they want to speak to you because they can hear. What, I mean, what do you tell people? How do you deal with that situation? I don't know. I guess if they're case by case, you know? I'm very fortunate in my role. I get to meet all sorts of people and try to help them on their NDIS path. [Narelle] Yep. [Mark] And if I don't have the answer, I will send them to someone within the same vicinity, if we're on an expo. And try and help them get the answer they need. [Narelle] Yeah. But that's reliant on them, you knowing that they want to talk to you, And that's the issue.

It's that thing there, because... I don't necessarily see people want to talk to me, unless they say, oh, Narelle. [Mark] True. -[Narelle] I don't see it.

-[Mark] And... [Mark] I spotted you at the last Brisbane disability expo. [Narelle] Yeah. And you came to me. [Mark] Yeah. 'Cause I knew that you

may not get around to me, because you're such
a busy person as it is, so I knew I had to
come help you out. [Narelle] Yeah. But that's
what it's all about, you know? But you also do the one
thing that I really love, it's always, hey,
Narelle. It's Mark. Mark Warren. [Mark] Well, that's
something I've taught, I've learned, you know,
over the years, because I've had, you know, a few
visual impaired friends, and so it's just something
that's become second nature with the way I address people. Even sighted people. I'll
go, hey,
it's Mark or whatever. -[Narelle] Yeah.

-[Mark] So, um, yeah, and... there are, there are a few
apps popping up and about, like, um, that, that are, um, will tell you
where like for, for, for the disability Expo, and then the
company that do an app that register
every store holder. [Narelle] BindiMaps. [Mark] Yeah. [Narelle] Yeah. They're
awesome, aren't they? [Mark] Yeah, they're great. And I've talked to them
a couple of times then. Yeah, I think, I think that's the great
usage of technology. -[Narelle] Yeah.

-[Mark] And... [Mark] Yeah. Help

people like yourself. [Narelle] And

that's it, isn't it? You know, I suppose, we, everyone has their beliefs. And their beliefs are based

on the way they perceive... whatever's happened. Like me and you you've

got a different idea about... what happened with the, you know, getting me

to the counter last time, where I've got that one way. And it doesn't mean it's wrong. It's just each of us

has our own beliefs, But when decisions are

made based on beliefs, and the beliefs aren't tested, that brings into question

the decision, doesn't it? [Mark] Definitely and, and I think you're, you

know, we're only human. We all fall for that. I still fall for my own

beliefs sometimes, you know, and when

it's when I've tested, yep, I'll definitely

change my decision on, on whatever that, that thing is. And... I guess, appearances... and especially in

the sighted world, it's very hard to get past first... first impressions. [Narelle] Yeah.

[Mark] Just, yeah. So... I think, I would like to think... that the... the school and we're

getting better as a society, and being more acceptable, accepting not acceptable getting more accepting

of people with differences. I don't know how

you feel about that. [Narelle] I think,

generally, yeah. People are. They don't, I think because

we're out and about more. And it's just, we're

normal people. We're out,

we're doing the shopping, doing the groceries,

paying the bills, getting petrol. Well, you get petrol

for your car. I don't. They still don't

let me drive a car. -[Mark] Dunno why.

-[Narelle] We're out there. [Narelle] I think it's

discrimination, really. You know, I'm... you know, what can I say? Pure discrimination.

Why do

you need sight to drive a car? It's not a big thing, is it? -Really.

-[Mark] No. [Mark and Narelle laugh] [Narelle] But yeah,

it comes back to... Yeah. They're starting

to be acceptable, but the moment... someone behaves in a way

that they don't see as normal, I still, you know, people stop

and stare, don't they? -[Mark] Yeah. And...

-[Narelle] And that's sad. [Mark] Then that's

something I personally... let go of years ago, Now I'm just like, they've never

met someone like me before. Well, that's fine. I will... I'll do my best to make

a good impression, and maybe the next

person, they may, they may treat

them a little bit more... I don't want to say normally,

but yeah, respectfully. [Narelle] Yeah. Yeah, I'm with you on that. And, you know,

even with digital accessibility, all we can do is ask. And communication, you know, look at your belief patterns. Not everyone

communicates the same way. I mean... look at you and I, you've

got the hearing impairment. I've got the sight loss.

So when we have lunch, you use the eyes and

tell me what's on the menu. I use my ears and I can order

it, so we both get what we need. However, other people seem

amazed that we can do it. [Mark] Yeah. -[Mark] Well...

-[Narelle] We're just normal. -[Mark] Yeah, yeah.

-[Narelle] Very normal. [Mark] You just got to be

adaptable in this world, and... and, you know, we

can only do so much to try and mold the world

to the way we want it. And you know, like you said,

that's slowly happening. And I think we'll get

there one day, but... yeah, Rome wasn't

built in a day, I guess. [Narelle] No, and that's it. Mark, is there... a last message you want to give

people to have a think about in regards to beliefs
and perceptions and what we've talked about? Or do you think
we've covered it all? [Mark] I think we've done
a really good job today. -[Mark] Thanks for having me.
-[Narelle] Yeah. -Very enlightening, and...
-[Narelle] Yeah. Hopefully I've left your guests
a little bit more knowledgeable. [Narelle] Yeah. Look, can't not because I
think the last thing was... people being adaptable is the
best advice you give everyone. [Mark] Yeah. [Narelle] Yeah. Mark,
how can people contact you if they wanna keep talking about
what we've talked about today, in regards to the
way we live our lives, and beliefs and perceptions? [Mark] I love my job. So, yeah, I
work for a... group and plan management
company for the NDIS. They're called First 2
Care Plan Managers, Plan Management. And I think the best way
for anyone to contact me, if they'd like to pick my
brain or hear some more would be
mark@first2care.com.au. Then that's F-I-R-S-T, the number two, C-A-R-E. And that's
the best
way to contact me. And, yeah, I welcome anyone

to reach out and say, say hi. [Narelle] Thanks, Mark. Thanks for being on the show. I think, yeah, just even, I think even when we have our lunches, people do a bit of a double take at times. When you're I listen for your chair and I just follow you, and you read the menu, but we manage. We're normal people. And you know, one of the things I'm saying to everyone, break that belief. Everyone's normal because everyone's different. So if you like what we do, please like, share, subscribe, review. Share it with everyone, because... people with disability are out there working full-time, and one of the things... that is a barrier is people's beliefs and perceptions. And even with digital accessibility, with the way we communicate, the tools are there. We've only touched slightly on it as we wanted to talk beliefs and perceptions this week. But everything's there. The technology's there, that everyone can communicate. We'll see you next time. Bye, bye. [music playing]