Steven Scott: Hello, and welcome to the AbilityNet Procast. I'm Steven Scott from RNIB.

Robin C: And I'm rubbing Robin Christopherson from AbilityNet.

Steven Scott: It's good to be back with you, Robin. TechShare Pro 2019, it is a blast.

Robin C: Really good. Super high energy, high octane event. Definitely.

Steven Scott: It really is. So much exciting conversation going on about the world of assistive technology, accessible technology. Loads of great people coming together from all around the world, Robin.

Robin C: Absolutely. It's crammed with brains and people being really enthusiastic about doing things in an inclusive way.

Steven Scott: And that's of course what it's all about isn't it? That it brings people together, it starts conversations that will last long after TechShare Pro 2019. It starts the conversation going and it really does help all of us. I mean this is what it's all about. I have to say it's been quite humbling being here as well, meeting some amazing people. I know you've been enjoying yourself, speaking to everyone here.

Robin C: Absolutely. So yeah, it's part way through day two here, we've had loads of people coming into our glass box to be interviewed. Going to bring you some of those this week, some more next. But, yeah. Really, really good.

Steven Scott: And not only that. We also are going to be joined by our intrepid reporter out on the field, out on the floor at TechShare Pro 2019. Just outside our glass box we have Adi Latif from AbilityNet... I'd say I can see him wondering about Robbin but we both know that's a lie.

Robin C: He'd have to be very close for you, and for me he'd have to slap me in the face.

Steven Scott: Pretty much. Yeah, I think he'd have to do the same to me, and he might enjoy that as well. Anyway, tell us about some of the people we're going to hearing from over the course of this program.

Robin C: Well, we're absolutely going to hear from some top-notch people today and we're going to start with Caroline Casey, who was actually the keynote speaker. Really amazing person, very, very inspirational. Are we allowed to say that? Anyway she is. She's absolutely brilliant. She's the founder of the Valuable 500, which we'll explain a little bit more about later on. But, yeah. This first clip we hear how... She's talking to Steven here, Steven's asking her about coming out of the disability closet.

Caroline Casey: It was no accident that I didn't know about my sight loss until I was 17, because my parents made a conscious decision when I was very, very young. That they didn't want me to be... They didn't want my life to be defined by a label or a medical condition. And they knew the world wasn't designed for difference. So they decided to do a human experiment and send me to a normal school and see how I did, and I did okay. I mean, I survived it. And so that's it just self perpetuated in and that's how I found out at 17.

Steven Scott: It's interesting you use the phrase, "You came out of the closet." I've used that myself a few times. And it's an interesting comparison to make, isn't it? Because you're admitting to people. Is it perhaps different for us in the sense that if you're coming out of the closet, say as someone who's gay, you might not need to do that every day of your life with people. Whereas if you are visually impaired, you kind of do, don't you? You have to tell the world every day because the next person you meet doesn't know and the next person you meet doesn't know.

Caroline Casey: Yeah. It's one of the hardest things, and I don't want this to come across the wrong way, but because I don't look like I have a vision impairment at all, and I don't behave like that at all unless you see me walking into glass doors, or falling down steps, or coming out of the gents toilets. And all the usual things that happen with someone who's visually impaired. And that happens all the time because I have just about two feet vision and everything beyond that's very blurry. And I walk around in really high heels, and the first thing I'm often asked is, "Well, you're visually impaired and you wear high heels?" And I'm like, "Yeah." And like, "Why would I not wear high heels?" So this coming out process that you talk about, it nearly has to happen every day, and sometimes five or six times a day.

And so it's very hard because I'm Caroline, right? You're Steven. I don't like, I'm Carolyn, the visually impaired girl. So in a way when I finally owned my cane, right? When I got my cane, it took away a lot of the questions. And I know that sounds really strange, but it's sometimes when I was in the hiding phase I used to really wish that my eyesight was worst. Does that make sense? Because then people would know and I wouldn't have to explain and I wouldn't have to justify or be so frightened that I was looking like I was trying to get attention from you. And for me, my biggest issue around my acceptance of my sight is lack of confidence and lack... I'm such an independent spirit, I am a rebel. I mean I am a rebel, a rebel woman. So this independence piece was really hard. Asking for help was really hard.

Robin C: Now this is such a brilliant interview. I mean a flavor of what Caroline's likes, coming across there. She really wears her heart on her sleeve. It's absolutely brilliant. Everyone that we spoke about afterwards, referred back to her and how inspirational she was. Now, what she's trying to do with the Valuable 500, is sign up 500 organizations in a year, by Davos next year. To commit to disability inclusion at all levels by getting a CEO to sign. So she's trying to sign up 500 CEOs to say, "Yes. We're going to talk about disability at the board room, at C level meetings, at the highest level." And she's kind of driven, she's doing this herself, but at the same time she's admitting to all these kinds of weaknesses. The bit that we'll look at, we'll hear now. So the conversation turned to tech, and you asked her about the power of tech how does she feel about tech? And she actually admitted to being terrified of tech.

Caroline Casey: The fear that I've had over technology stopped me moving forward. It's the same fear that exists in CEOs and business. And so if I want to get them to come to my side, well I better start facing my fear.

Robin C: So we carry on. This is the final little clip from a much longer interview that will obviously go into the feed very soon guys. And you asked Steven about what success would look like to her.

Caroline Casey: Success looks like to me that disability is part of normal. It's a normal part of humanity. It is a normal part of business that we are not having Valuable 500s, we're not having Caroline Casey speaking. We are talking about inclusion and we're talking about accessibility for all. We're talking about design for all. We are not talking about disability. And that is part of everything that we do in the same way, I don't know that we breathe air. Wouldn't that be amazing? And that I am not around. That is what success looks like, for me anyway,

Steven Scott: Caroline, it has been great having you on the show today. I think a lot of people will be inspired by hearing your story because I think the acknowledgement of the challenges, especially by someone who has risen to such success, I think will play very well with people. Will really resonate with people who are sitting at home listening, thinking or watching, thinking, I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if this is something I could ever achieve or could I ever achieve much? I think people will take from what you've said that they can.

Caroline Casey: Well, all I'd say is, to end on my father is, "Be yourself and everyone else is taken." Every one of us has a unique and separate journey and my question is, you only get one go at this. Actually, if you go inside yourself and hear what it is that you uniquely want to do, oh just try. Just try

Steven Scott: Quite remarkable woman, Robin.

Robin C: Oh, man. The interview that you had with her was fabulous and people should definitely listen to the whole of that. She's one in a million. She's absolutely brilliant and I've got no doubt at all that she is going to meet her target there. So, yeah. Really, really good. Brilliant start to the event, for us to be able to interview her after her keynote. So, yeah. Check that one out.

Steven Scott: And don't forget the full interview coming to the TechShare Procast feed very soon.

Okay. Now I think Adi is out on the floor, Robin. He has managed to corner someone, to find out their thoughts on how TechShare Pro is going for them so far.

Adi Latif: Hello. Can you just tell me your name and where you're from and how you're finding today?

Shilpi Kapoor: So my name is Shilpi Kapoor. I'm the CEO of BarrierBreak. We're based out of India, Mumbai.

Adi Latif: What does BarrierBreak do actually?

Shilpi Kapoor: So BarrierBreak is an accessibility consulting firm. We do testing, document mediation, inclusive design practice, strategy for companies and help them become more inclusive in the digital space. Innovate, in a small nutshell.

Adi Latif: It sounds like you do a lot, Shilpi.

Shilpi Kapoor: Yes, we do. We love that 70% of our team is people with disabilities, and we are about 230 of us today. So it is exciting.

Adi Latif: I love the way it's 70% so you're actually... You've got more people with disabilities than in the general population, right?

Shilpi Kapoor: Yes, we do.

Adi Latif: We usually say 20% of the population is disabled. If you look at the workplace, it might be 2% of people, but you've got 70. That's incredible.

Shilpi Kapoor: And what's also amazing is, it's across all disability types. So you have deaf people, visually impaired, autism, physically challenged. Everybody working together. And that's what's lovely about it.

Adi Latif: And how are you finding TechShare Pro?

Shilpi Kapoor: Well, I quite love it. Interestingly we used to do TechShare India in 2016. So it's great to be at TechShare Pro.

Adi Latif: That's fantastic, we've carried the mantle forward then.

Shilpi Kapoor: You have. I think the content has been brilliant this morning and I think, from yesterday yours and [Jennison's 00:10:58] talk. And this morning I think Haben, has been fabulous to hear. I think these are the most amazing things when you come to events like this, you can learn technical stuff everywhere or online, but it's these kind of interactions that make TechShare Pro quite unique.

Adi Latif: Well, thank you Shilpi.

Shilpi Kapoor: Any time.

Adi Latif: Thank you so much.

Steven Scott: He sounds like he's enjoying himself, Robin.

Robin C: Yeah. Adi will hopefully grab more people throughout the day, but brilliant. So next we are going to go over to Jenny Lay-Flurrie. She's the chief accessibility officer at Microsoft. She wasn't able to be present at the event herself but from over the pond she has sent a video presentation, and we're going to bring the audio of that to you now.

Jenny L-F: So, hi there. I'm Jenny Lay-Flurrie. I'm the chief accessibility officer at Microsoft. I am deeply sorry for not being there. I know you're having just an amazing day, but I have been asked to pop a few thoughts on camera as to... Just advice points and learning that we've had on accessibility. And it's such a fascinating industry to be in at this time. I think it's a very exciting time. If there are kind of to capsulate a little bit of our approach and synthesize it into a couple of key things and learnings. I'd really say firstly, lean into your people. If there's any learning that we've had from the journey that we've had at Microsoft, it's that if you don't lean into your people, you miss out on an amazing amount of expertise and wisdom that helps you to prioritize and build amazing, crazy products.

My journey into this is that I joined the disability group, I joined the deaf group first. About 15 years ago when I came to London to work on Hotmail, I still have a Hotmail account. But by joining the deaf group, I then got into the blind group and every other part of the disability group and actually formed and chair the Disability ERG. And really learned in many ways a lot of what I know on accessibility through that. It was through listening to people, building a better understanding. That disability community 2005, was six groups, it's now 20 different groups. And our annual conference, which is not just the ERG, but really brings together all the experts on accessibility around the company. We had 2,500 people at in May this year. I'll be our 10th anniversary next year. So we've definitely realized that if you empower people to self identify, understanding that a lot of disabilities invisible, about 70% of it. You really get a massive asset and that asset is expertise.

So one is really just build your community of people and not just within the disability sort of employee sector, but also within your accessibility community as well. We have an accessible leadership team, my team, it's more [inaudible 00:14:11] and sort of incredibly powerful of course. But more important is how it works across the company. I don't create Windows code, so there are leaders across the company and then champ communities that sort of span out from that. You've got to have both to really create an ecosystem.

And I guess that's the second point. This is an ecosystem. It's also a business that needs to be managed and if you can't measure, you can't manage. So the other key area that we've learned is to think about this as an operation. I do have a methodical sort of rhythm to it within Microsoft, whereby we pull and sort of measure all of our products, both digital and physical on a quarterly basis. And we have that rhythm with our senior leadership team, which is deeply invested in accessibility. I don't have to convince them as to why accessibility is important, which is a very privileged position, something we've worked very hard at and we've not always had by the way. But what it does mean is that if you think about accessibility and compliance as a minimum bar, we look at how good or bad we are in different areas.

We prioritize engineering resources and bug lists, and to make sure that we're going to deliver on what people want and need. And so really just making sure that you're managing this in the same way as in any corporate infrastructure you would with privacy or security, and clearly from a charity and advocacy perspective. You are vital to that because as much as we invest in our people internally, we invest in our strategic and partnerships with nonprofits and charities around the world to also give us that input.

I think the third is to look at this as a hearts and minds, carrot and stick kind of effort, and you can't have one without the other. If you're going to motivate and imbed accessibility into a company, then it can't just be a taskmaster kind of a job. There has to be some dividend to that. The way that we've done that is really by helping 140,000 nerds at Microsoft to really see the potential of accessibility as a way to innovate and create new futures. We've got a mission that's to empower every person, every organization. And accessibility just plays beautifully in to that. And one example is our Hackathons. We've been hacking for five years and those hacks have now grown. So this summer we had 1,900 people hacking on disability, which is crazy. It's my favorite week of the year and the actual grand prize winner... So out of sort of 3000 hacks across Microsoft, was a hack on epilepsy and helping, leveraging all of the beautiful goodness in AI right now. And Azure, and a whole bunch more to help us and help parents, as well as people with epilepsy track that.

And so I think there's just a wealth... I could talk for a long time, I'm going to stop. But I wish you just the best with the rest of the panel, with the rest of the session. And I'm with you in spirit from the other side of the pond. Thanks.

Steven Scott: Jenny Lay-Flurrie, of course from Microsoft there. And Robin, one of the takeaways for me anyway is when she said that the supports that they have now, regarding accessibility, making products accessible, making software accessible. But something that wasn't always there.

Robin C: I noticed that.

Steven Scott: That's an interesting pick up on that, isn't it?

Robin C: Yeah, definitely. I mean it's an acknowledgement that whilst they were first to the party, I would argue, with Windows 3.1. I've been using it since then and obviously DOS before it was nice and accessible, but then it was just a character based interface, a UI. They kind of went off steam until recent years when they've definitely built up that head of steam again. And you can see from what she said there, how much they prioritize it now. And obviously in the pre show we heard some more from her and in the feed that's already gone in, the full interview with her. So, yeah. This was her message to delegates at the conference at TechShare Pro here. But, yeah. Full commitment, full steam ahead from Jenny Lay-Flurrie, and from Microsoft there.

Steven Scott: Should we switch sides now? Should we go from Microsoft to across the road?

Robin C: Yeah. So we've had head of accessibility at Microsoft, let's have all round superstar of accessibility at Apple, Sarah Herrlinger. And she's going to be talking here about how important it is. This is obviously from a much bigger interview guys, 25 minutes this interview that we'll drop in the feed coming soon. But this is, the first clip we're going to bring to you from Sarah, is where she's talking about the importance of going into businesses and telling them about how crucial it is to think about accessibility.

Sarah H: One of the reasons why I love the conference that we happen to be sitting at right now, TechShare Pro's a great conference for bringing the message to other companies. For us, we've always viewed accessibility as one of our core corporate values and a basic human right. So to get up in front of other companies and talk about not thinking about this as a compliance issue, but thinking about this as a customer issue and a human issue I think is important and something that I always appreciate doing. On top of that as you mentioned, is we are the sort of platform upon which many other companies build their products, build applications and such to run.

It is also important that our company talks about accessibility and so as we work with even our developer relations team, on going out to talk to everybody who is making their own apps to run on our platforms. That they understand the basic APIs that we provide to make accessibility a seamless part of their design process. How to use the accessibility inspector in order to better, to figure out where they may want to improve their accessibility along the way, and whether they're doing all the proper things that they need to, to make an app accessible. And then just talking to them about engagement with the communities as well. I feel like that is something that I want to do a lot. I feel like we should be doing that in order to help other companies understand that big corporations care, that having a foundation of ethics and morals and core corporate values really matters. And accessibility is a huge part of that.

Steven Scott: And that's such an important message to send out there, isn't it Robin? That-

Robin C: Yeah. And we know.

Steven Scott: It's a caring company.

Robin C: Yeah. But they walk the walk, it's very clear to everyone with a disability that Apple, if you cut them in half, they say accessibility or inclusion, right all the way through the middle. So yeah, it's brilliant. And a little bit later on in this interview she goes on to talk about, there's just the natural assumption within Apple and all the teams, that people with disabilities are going to be using every last facet and feature of their products and services.

Sarah H: One of our goals every year is to try and increase the number of individuals or the communities that we support so that no one is left behind. And more people have the opportunity to live productive, creative lives using our technology. So I think there's a lot in terms of looking at what are new types of assistive technologies to build, but then there's also just the fact that we are a consumer products company that's making really awesome technology for everyone to use. And as part of that process, we look at how does this apply for individuals with disabilities? How do we make sure that everything that every other engineer at Apple is creating, is something that works for individuals with a wide range of accessibility needs?

I think when you were talking about some of the way that we think about the design of our technology, instead of having a view of why would someone want to do this as a negative, it's why wouldn't someone want to do this? And so as we look at really any of the things that we create, it's, there's never a limitation of someone with X disability would never want to do such and such. It's why wouldn't they? How do we figure out how to make that happen? How do we take this really cool thing and make it accessible to as many people as we possibly can?

Steven Scott: And that's the point. Every device, every piece of software has got accessibility built in at its core. That is a question that Apple has clearly asked, which is why shouldn't it be there? Why wouldn't it be there? Really, really positive discussion with Sarah of course. More on that interview to come, Robin.

Robin C: Yeah. And Steven and I were grilling her, as I say, for 25 minutes. We asked about Apple Glass, we asked about AR and AI and where things were going. Did she answer? Well, you'll have to wait and find out. But, yeah. Really, really good stuff. Brilliant messages from all the big names in tech and we're going to bring you lots more too.

Steven Scott: Okay. I think Adi, Robin has managed to corner someone else to find out their views on TechShare Pro.

Adi Latif: Hello, can you tell me who you are? What brings you here today?

Heather Hepburn: Hi Adi. I'm Heather Hepburn, and I'm from Skyscanner and I'm the accessibility champion there. So I'm really interested in everything that's going on today.

Adi Latif: And was there something that really stuck out for you today? Was there something you're like, "Ah, I'm going to really learn from that and take it back into my role?"

Heather Hepburn: Yes. There were a couple of things actually. The first speaker was so inspiring. I loved what she was saying.

Adi Latif: Caroline Casey, that was.

Heather Hepburn: Caroline. That was Caroline. She, yeah. Had a tear in my eye in that. She blew me away with her passion and her stories. I thought it was a great way to start. I want to get in touch with Caroline and ask her to come speak to our CEO for a start, because I at the moment I'm the one with the most passion and I would love our organization to hear it from someone else, someone like her. I think it would be really powerful.

And the lessons I learned at the end, I think the... Well, the thing that's sticking in my head right now is that you need to think about who you're talking to. And this became very apparent to me just this week when I was trying to get a meeting with our head of brands, and I know I'm going to have to talk differently to her than I might have talked to other people. So, yeah. It's all about knowing who you're talking to and knowing their motivations and appealing to those.

Adi Latif: Pressing their buttons in the right way, right? Pressing the right buttons.

Heather Hepburn: There's a lot, and there's so much we can talk about with this. There's so many good things we can say about it, but it's knowing what to focus on for the different people according to their drivers. And then the very last talk with... Or the panel about accessibility leadership. It's something that we're trying to really tackle hard at Skyscanner. And I wrote down almost every word that was said in that discussion, and I just can't wait to read it back and take some learnings from it. I was so intent of getting as much out of that as I could. It was absolutely brilliant and it was fabulous to hear from leaders in those areas, and such brilliant organizations I thought. I was amazed that they were here. I've not been here before, I didn't know it was this kind of a scale of event. And I thought I was really impressed all round.

Adi Latif: Thank you Heather. Thank you so much.

Steven Scott: I mean there's Heather telling us that she's an accessibility champion for Skyscanner, Robin. But of course the challenge is even within the companies. Yes, you've got an accessibility champion there. But if no one else is listening, what can you do?

Robin C: I mean, let's contrast that interview that little... The piece where he's managed to have a chat with her there, with the last two, which have full top to bottom commitment. And she's saying almost that she's a lone voice. So, yeah. Come on Skyscanner. Hopefully she'll be able to go back and get some traction there and employ, leverage some of the contacts that she's made at this conference. But yeah, contrast that. Thanks Adi. That was really neat that he's just managed to grab that. And it's not the same is it, in every organization?

Steven Scott: Doesn't that show you though, the value of this event? That there you have a situation where Heather can hear from Caroline, she can go up and talk to Caroline and hopefully get Caroline to go and speak to her CEO. And that can make... You think about the difference that could make down the line to all disabled people. If more of their services become more accessible and more available and the culture can change, that one interaction can make a massive difference.

Robin C: Absolutely. And this ties in nicely with another of the sessions, the carrots and sticks panel session. Expert panel that was chaired by RNIBs, Eleanor Southwood. Where some organizations... We all know about Domino's in the States recently, they decided to fight against the requirement and they got hit by the biggest stick in the land over there, The Supreme Court. We don't want Skyscanner to be on the list of organizations that the new regulations over here, admittedly they are for public sector only, but we're only going in one direction here guys. So, yeah. We talked to Ellie, she came in and gave us a really good interview as well, about quarter of an hour long that obviously we will put in the feed. And I asked her about whether the RNIB, have any plans to ask the EHRC, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, who are going to be monitoring the websites of organizations and reporting on their inaccessibility and potentially leveraging fines. Whether the RNIB plan on putting in a freedom of information request, which means that they could get the list and make it public.

Eleanor S: I think there is definitely an appetite within RNIB, and a responsibility for us to start to be more proactive. We will always want to be led by what blind and partially sighted people tell us is important. So if we are working really collaboratively with an organization who happen not to be compliant right now, we might hesitate before naming and shaming them in the interests of the sort of bigger prize. But certainly, and in principle, I think that's absolutely something we should be doing more of. Especially now the information will be more readily available. I think that's the thing.

Robin C: Absolutely. It's not a naming and shaming exercise, but it kind of is.

Steven Scott: And that's the point, isn't it? That it is about, in some cases, naming and shaming. Because that is how you make change in some cases. It is unfortunate that we have to do that, but it is sometimes necessary to make changes. I mean we've all been naming and shaming Domino's plenty over the past few months and quite rightly too.

Robin C: Yep. Carrots and sticks. And I think that brand damage, whilst obviously isn't important enough to Domino's. I think it's very important to other organizations as well. So, yeah. Absolutely. And now on that theme we have another interview that you and I Steven, did with Malin who we heard from previously in the pre event show and a full interview in the feed. We've now got her back after that expert carrots and sticks panel with Stuart Seaborn, whether in a really litigious country like America, like the States, the threat of the stick is what makes the difference.

Stuart Seaborn: The one thing I'll say with a company like Domino's, is it would not have done something but for action in the courts. And there still are in the US we hear about it every day. Our constituent groups and client groups are constantly informing us of folks in terms of companies and even government entities that have the resources to make accessibility improvements. They just need educate themselves and be willing to do so. So I feel like the stick is necessary. We've had to litigate several of these issues. We're trying other approaches as I mentioned, the structured negotiations, which is essentially keeping it out of court. But I feel like you need the stick in addition to the carrots. I would love to see incentives for both companies and government entities, kind of built into some of the regulations so that we're working with... There's some kind of positivity that results when companies take action.

I'm also anxious to seize statistics when they evolve in terms of the market power of the disability community. I feel like the more that that's out there and public, the better it will be to make that kind of carrot approach. I love the fact that they did it in Israel, kind of without statistics first and it worked. So I feel like that's something we can learn from. But I would like to see the development and furtherance of kind of studying how you can demonstrate the market share and market power. Because the disability community is both with its buying power and its size, probably much larger than a lot of these folks think when they're doing their designs.

Robin C: That is a really good point that we finished with Stuart there. It's really important to get some more case studies out there, some more hard stats on the improvement to the bottom line for organizations who make their websites and apps accessible. There isn't a lot out there. The RNIB did some research many years ago now, where they tested a large number of websites with both visually impaired and able bodied users. And yes, the accessible sites were easier to use by visually impaired people. That's a no brainer. That's why they were accessible. But the really interesting takeaway from it was that the control group of able body testers actually were able to use those accessible sites more easily. On average, they were able to complete the tasks given on the accessible sites, 35% more quickly. That is staggering. So you get a 35% usability bonus for every single user of your website. And I'm sure it's even more for apps because that's extreme computing, isn't it?

So, yeah. I mean that kind of thing, but we need a lot more of that. Now, AbilityNet is a member of the OneVoice on accessible ICT partnership, which includes a number of other IT organizations, the WCIT, the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists. That's the London livery company for IT professionals. And the British Computer society, BCS and IBM and others like that. And a couple of years ago we put together the ultimate business case for accessible IT. So if you just search for OneVoice, one word, ultimate business case, then you should get that. So there's a lot of useful information in there, but it's not that current. That was a few years ago now. So, yeah. It'd be brilliant if we could get some really good compelling case studies because we know that it's going to affect the bottom line. There is significant ROI. We should up the carrots as well as the sticks.

Steven Scott: Robin, that is it for us for now, but we are back next week with another TechShare Procast. We'll be looking even more from TechShare Pro 2019, and of course lots more items to come. Lots of full length interviews to come in the feed.

Robin C: Yeah, watch this space guys. Stay subscribed. Please tell your friends. Please use the #TechSharePro2019 and tell people about the Procast, would really appreciate it.

Steven Scott: From me Steven Scott at RNIB, and Robin Christopherson at AbilityNet. Thank you so much for listening. We'll catch you next time.