# Transcript for Accessibility Insights with Natalie Tucker of Spotify – November 2022

EMMA WHEELER: Hello everyone.

Welcome to today's webinar.

It has just gone one o'clock so I'm going to give everyone a chance to

join.

Do feel free to drop into the Q&A box and say hi.

We’ve disabled the chat feature as we discovered it can cause problems

for some people using screen readers.

So I can see that everyone is starting to arrive now so I'm really

glad you could all make it.

Great, we're going to make a start now so hi everyone.

Welcome to the third episode in series 2 of our accessibility insight

session where AbilityNet's head of Digital Inclusion Robin Christopherson

hosts a monthly online chat with individuals working to improve digital

accessibility and Digital Inclusion.

This month he is chatting to Natalie Tucker, Senior Accessibility Lead at

spotty find I'm Emma Wheeler.

Marketing manager here at ability neat I'll be running you through

today's session.

Just a little bit of housekeeping.

We have live captions provided by MyClearText

can turn on the captions using the CC option in the control panel.

We have additional captions via streamtext.net/player?

event =AbilityNet.

Slides are also available at slide share.

net/ability net and on our website abilitynet.org.

uk/spotify-insights.

Now if you have any technical issues and need to leave early today don't

worry yes will receive an email in a couple of days time with the recording

transcript and slides.

Depending on how you joined the webinar you will find a Q and A window

if you want to ask any questions, please drop them into the Q&A panel and they

will be addressed after today's session.

And they will be available on abilitynet.org.

uk/spotify-insights and please feel free to leave feedback in the

webinar survey.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Thank you so

much Emma.

Thanks all for joining us and we are really pleased to be talking to

Natalie here.

Natalie, how are you doing?

NATALIE TUCKER: Great, thanks for

having me.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: What have you

got for your beverage of choice to get you through this ordeal.

I've got a nice cup of tea.

NATALIE TUCKER: I'm sticking with

water this morning to stay sharp.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Very valid

choice.

In fact, it is the best choice on lots of levels.

Ok let’s get straight into it, first question.

Obviously, Spotify is massively dominant in the music streaming

industry and I was wondering if you could tell me if the principle and

role of Digital Inclusion and accessibility has played a part in

that growth.

I would love for you to say yes.

NATALIE TUCKER: Well absolutely.

So I'm, as you are aware or may or may not be aware Spotify's mission is

to unlock the potential of human creativity so that making a million

creative artists able to receive to share their art and having billions of

fans enjoy and be inspired by it and so, you know, with Spotify available

in more than 80 places and all of the languages it is in, making sure that

everyone can access the art has been an important part of Spotify's mission

for a long time.

But 2 years ago, rather than disparate efforts rounds the company

are centralised digital accessibility team was formed and that's when I

joined Spotify.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Brilliant

so, it is obviously been important and had, has been prioritised which is

really good so how do you think you got to that point.

I know you haven't been with Spotify that long.

Less than 2 years.

NATALIE TUCKER: Yeah.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Do you know

about kind of historical side of how they were able to prioritise

accessibility to the point of creating a dedicated team and what can you pass

on kind of top tips wise for other organisations where people are, feel

like they are not really making that progress.

They haven’t got that level of commitment and resource behind them to really make a

difference.

NATALIE TUCKER: That’s a great

question.

Some years ago, Spotify has groups within the organisation that come

together to focus on particular things and about 5 maybe 7 years ago Phil

Strand, amazing researcher and now leading accessibility somewhere else

decided to pull together folks and really focus on digital accessibility

so follows from engineers and designers and researchers and content from all

over first contributing to this effort.

Teaching each other.

Celebrating accessibility awareness day and all of that.

So building that champions network if you will, really made a huge

difference in expressing the importance of ensuring that folks can, all kind

of folks can access the platform and to the various apps that Spotify produces.

And so, you know, Philip was instrumental in making sure that

accessibility was top of mind and ensuring that the centralised

accessibility team got created and helping us sort of from the beginning.

So you know, like having access to all that institutional knowledge

and many champions are still part of the organisation today.

Made a huge, huge difference for me when I walked in.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Brilliant

so the ball was already rolling but you picked it up and really ran with it.

NATALIE TUCKER: Absolutely.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: So the

dedicated accessibility team, the champions network, which by the way

every organisation should have, call it whatever you like, your accessibility

tribe, your accessibility Ninjas whatever you want to call them to make

them really cool is so important as well, you have obviously got a diverse

workforce because everyone organisation has whether they know it or not.

Is there an overlap there.

Do you leered arrange employee lived experiences in these teams and what

you do?

Do you prioritise accessibility internally and well as obviously with

your customers?

NATALIE TUCKER: Absolutely.

So about a year and a half ago.

Maybe a little bit less than that, Spotify joined the valuable 500 which

is a consortium of organisations from all over the world who make a public

commitment to workplace inclusion and digital accessibility, and you know,

like that mandate for inclusion comes from the very top, very bottom

everywhere in between.

And so I work very closely with our DI B, which is diversity and inclusion

and belonging team, focusing on disability inclusion while my team is

principally focused on product accessibility, many of us have

disabilities and like the employee experience matters to us as well.

So we support that work a complete, and a sort of holistic wrap around

treatment of inclusion and digital accessibility.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Great, they

are a brilliant resource to ensure you are not just compliant, you are real

life accessible, bridging that gap between technical compliance and

really excellent users experience.

Under extreme conditions.

Fantastic so before we went live we were talking about having to go back

IR L, now that things are opening up again and people want to meet

face-to-face, et cetera.

Obviously the last few years have been a really, really strange.

What has the pandemic do you think.

Taught Spotify and what has changed within the organisation in say the

last 3 a years?

NATALIE TUCKER: Oh that's a great

question I think Spotify was moving towards a sort of work from anywhere

model before the pandemic but once the pandemic hit it like, everything went

into car.

So and the way it works now is that folks, employee can choose to be, work

from home to work from the office, or to have a mix of both and so that is

required us to think differently about how we can act as teams, how we work

with each other.

How we stay on top of water cooler conversations if you will, from afar,

which I think is always a work in progress.

If we're doing it right we're always tweaking and adjusting.

In the last year business travel has opened up so it is possible to travel

to, for meetings and see folks, but there is a lot of focus on how do we

make sure that the experience is equitable across folks who are

attending virtually as well as folks who are there in person, making sure

there is the opportunity for virtual sort of like

a hybrid experience for most kinds of events and that sort of thing.

It is really, you know, been lovely.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Yeah, there has

been benefits and challenges, hasn't there with remote working a hybrid

working, not so I much although obviously we're kind of costing the

planet by commuting again at travelling long distances for client meetings

but as far as isolation when it comes to working complete remotely and

different employees who really value those interactions around the water

cooler and that sort of thing or maybe just need physical actual support to

do their role, that has been really challenging a has there been any

really big take aways.

Wins and challenges in this area?

NATALIE TUCKER: One of the cool

things about Spotify is the culture of Fika, where this a Swedish thing where you

get together over coffee and just kind of talk and gab and catch up the.

Within Spotify this an institution so you can put a Fika on any anyone's

calendar if you just want to get to know them as a person so it is not

weird or unusual to have, you know, random folks wanting to talk to you,

or like a pop up conversation about any old thing, and I think that

spontaneity and flexibility and also it makes the structure a little flatter,

right?

If you can reach out and have a conversation with anyone, it makes it

possible for folks to reach across imaginary silos in order to get things

done and connect with all parts of the organisation.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: That is amazing.

I don't know if you use Teams well the organisation but I can feel

someone running with this and creating a Teams plug in which randomly

schedules meetings with 2 random people.

Maybe 3.

Could be the CEO.

Could be, across all levels, that sounds absolutely amazing.

It probably would go down like a lead balloon but it is amazing.

NATALIE TUCKER: Sounds like fun.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: It really does.

I don't know if everyone knows this, I actually didn't that Spotify

delivers more than audio content.

My excuse is that I'm blind but that is no excuse.

So you do exclusive video series obviously music videos.

Documentaries that kind of thing so when it comes to Digital Inclusion

we're talking about the platforms they are delivered on but we're talking

media broader than just audio so how does Digital Inclusion factor into

your projects that are visual as well.

I'm thinking captions.

Suspect titles and maybe even audience description for blind users.

NATALIE TUCKER: Absolutely.

You know, we -- my mind is going.

I just recently had like an incredible conversation with the team

that building out our transcript services and, you know, like looking

at a roadmap for what is coming next at how we make sure that increasingly

more accessible and beautiful and so like those have always been concerns

right now principally captions are available for our original and

exclusive content, though linked to transcription are available for all

kinds of content.

But we're looking to expand that.

Make sure it is easy for folks to in jest.

Transcription into the platform.

Make sure there is those captions actually, you know, provide rich

information, especially for certain kinds of the content where there are

multiple speakers or there is particular kinds of storytelling and,

you know, there are new and exciting things happening all over the place,

like you mentioned video content that is available like podcasts that are

also videos and making sure that those can be

experienced and really enjoyed by a wide variety of folks.

It is always top of mind and the cool thing is that it is not like, O ok the

centralised accessibility team is excited and committed about that, but

there is a lot of pull coming from the actual engineering and product teams

that are creating these tools, like coming to us like we want, are we

thinking about this the right way, how do we prioritise that work a this the

so delicious to me.

I walked into in organisation that was deeply hungry to make sure that we

can fulfil our mission and considering accessibility a first class way of

doing that.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: That is so

refreshing to hear a that is almost unique I think within organisations

where the teams are pushing for inclusion and they are really hungry

for it.

NATALIE TUCKER: Yeah.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: I'm not saying

it is complete unique but it is a testament to the amount of awareness

raising.

The champions network, the kind of activity, the comms, everything around

making this a nice topic to be involved in, a sexy topic maybe, I don't know.

NATALIE TUCKER: Yeah.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: You might have

already answered this next question so what is on your to do list going

toward further improve your services to reach every single customer or maybe

on your wish list.

NATALIE TUCKER: Oh my goodness, do

you know our team is small and mighty and like we're just doing

extraordinary work and it is really fun.

And we get to work with, you know, like an incredible crew of folks.

So for example Spotify recently acquired Hurdle, which is a gamified way of music discovering and Shepherding those folks into making

sure that that game of fully accessible and improving the experience was

really fun.

And challenging.

So a new company drops into the orb and one of the first things we look at

is there are some things we need to do in order to stay alert for

accessibility, for all of our apps a so working with new acquisitions and new

teams to sort of on board them to how Spotify thinks about accessibility,

make sure they have the tools and processes in place, and training of course.

Like working on and making sure that

experience we were pulled in from the very beginning before launch so it has

been some time to test and make tweaks and there is always room to grow,

there is always room to grow, but it is pretty exciting to be at the beginning

of that.

I'm thinking a lot about the work that we've been doing over the last

few years and will continue to do around our design system on board to

make sure our product teams' engineers and designers have robust accessible

components across platforms and devices as building blocks for building

accessible products.

Let's see.

I mean there are so so many interesting, exciting things happening.

We're doing a big push around training to make sure that specific

roles understand where they fit in to the accessible development life cycle

to make sure they have the tools and understanding to do that, because

Spotify is growing rapidly.

Here are new folks coming into the products, development process all the

time at we want to make sure that not only

are we helping folks to who may have come from back grounds where there

wasn't as much few of cuss on digital accessibility but supporting folks who

have been a part of the initiative and levelling up and really staying fresh

on top of what it takes.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Wow, that is

really pointing towards a level of maturity when it comes to considering

Digital Inclusion that it really embedded, that sounds amazing.

All of that definitely needs to be in place and it sounds like you are

really getting on top of it so that's great.

Well you have alluded to audio books and going to be a games platform or even more significantly in that area, is there anything else in

the future about service delivery, new developments that might be

coming along and how accessibility is going to be prioritised going forward.

NATALIE TUCKER: I'm super excited

about work we've done to make sound shop accessible and sound shop is a

programme that folks can use to create audio so whether that is music to like

make beats or to do interviews so working to make sure that that

incredibly feature rich online tool is accessible for a wide range of folks,

it has been incredible, incredible, and while we've concern from zero to 60 we

have big plans for what is to come.

And you know, I just cannot say enough about the dedication, the

commitment, the willingness, the resourcefulness of that team in making

sure that we're thinking about things correctly and can include lots of

folks from reaching out to external folks with disability to provide

feedback on the work that we're doing, to you know, user research where

artists with disability for, you know, Spotify for artists for example, we're

just laser focused on making sure that our, you know we put our money where

our mouth is in terms of our mission, right, like nobody gets

left behind.

This is a platform for everyone and somewhere in the neighbourhood, 15% of

the world's population have one or another disability or access needs it

is just like crucial.

How can we do what we're doing otherwise?

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Absolutely

you know we need an hour we’ve only got half an hour but we need a lot

longer so I'm so sorry to try and bring this into the station but let’s last

couple of things.

One is where we always bring a question from last month's guest and

that was Heather dowdy of Netflix who I know you know really well.

Natalie firstly wanted to say she loves the fact that you both cherish

in your hearts the importance of Digital Inclusion and in teaching that

a spreading the word internal lined externally as so she wanted to start

off by saying that and then a question which you half touched upon.

Training within a really big organisation.

With loads of different teams.

They are working on such innovative projects that they may sometimes not

have the guidance or the guidelines to refer to when it comes to what best

practice look likes in Digital Inclusion so how do you train at

scale, how do you meet demands of such a big organisation who are

really trying to do the right thing when it comes to not leaving anyone

behind.

NATALIE TUCKER: That is a fantastic

question and the way, as I've mentioned, Spotify, we're talking not

just the Spotify app and web and we're talking about Spotify in the

refrigerator.

Inside game consoles.

A wide variety of platforms.

So lots of ways of working from various large teams and large

connected groups of agile teams to small and newer teams like for example

the team that came in from Hurdle.

So our team.

Our team really has an a la carte menu, support training services and

testing so that based on where a team is, whether we're looking at an

experimental feature or we're trying to tweak something that has been part of

the product from the beginning, or supporting new folks who are coming so

in we can sort of see where you are at, look, evaluate what you need and

really provide sort of the targeted experience or targeted support so

sometimes yes that will mean a bespoke training for a particular orb but

sometimes that means the accessibility engineers on my team

pairing with a team to understand the nuances like how different assistive

technology interacts with a particular feature or a flow.

It might mean like bringing internal experts to do for example training

around user research with people with disability so all that to say is that

while the technical standards for digital inclusion on the web and a

little less so for mobile phone are more established, you know, our, and

those standards are really important so where they are available we're

absolutely referencing them, but we consider the experience primary so

we're thinking about the people and the action usability of our product so a

first class citizen is user research in having teams be aware of the

experience and the concept for folks with disability on and folks who are

using assistive technology on their tick features.

So that is to say that we both have a wide variety of ways to support

different teams while also always keeping top of mind that we're

building things for people and if people can't use it, it doesn't matter

how technically accessibility alt accessible or not something is, yeah.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Brilliant

answer.

Thank you so much.

Ok.

Very last item is something to pass on to our next month's guest.

So here in the UKITV are a giant in the area of broad tass casting and

streaming and week talk to David Padmore.

Director of accessibility and ITV and Matt Simpson heat of technology

for accessibility and I wonder if you have any question to pass on to them.

A nice question that will really put them on the spot.

NATALIE TUCKER: Well you I know find

myself really, really curious with an organisation with that kind of reach

and in the disparate times of like content and creators that they are

working with, I can imagine that there are also having to tweak and change

how they work with different teams organisations and different

programming to include accessibility and I'd really love to dig into a

little bit of the nuances of how they are working with those disparate teams

to keep accessibility and inclusion top of mind.

ROBIN CHRISTOPHERSON: Fantastic

Thank you so much.

We will pass that on.

Natalie it has been an absolute pleasure, it is early where you are so

thanks very very much much for jumping on.

I we hope everyone has found that interesting.

I certainly have.

Thank you again and I'll pass back to Emma for the last bit of housekeeping

a thanks.

EMMA WHEELER: So thank you so much

Natalie and Robin, there are lots of questions and you will receive a link

to access them.

Just a bit of information that might be of interest to you.

We also run online training sessions on digital accessibility you can book

them and AbilityNet.Org.uk/training.

Some of on demand courses are accessibility testing in mobile phone

apps a how to begin your own accessibility testing and how to do

inclusive usability testing.

We also have the TechShare Pro conference coming up in the next

couple of weeks and it is your chance to join Europe's largest gathering of

accessibility and inclusion people and their allies a please visit TechShare.

com where you can by tickets and AbilityNet .

org/newsletter.

Don't forget about our up and coming webinars that you can find at

AbilityNet .

org/webinars which we have 2 coming up.

The Accessibility Insights with David pad more and Matt Simpson from ITV on

13th December and on Tuesday 6th December we have top tips on how tech

can help with hearing loss so thank you again Natalie and Robin and everyone

who has joined us a please do compete feedback form you will be directed and

to we'll be in touch with you soon.