**Transcript for The Valuable 500 Accessibility Insights webinar – 16 March 2021**

ANNIE: Hello, welcome to today's Webinar, it is just gone on 1 o'clock,

so I will give everyone a chance to join. Do feel free to join into the Q&A box and say Hi, we have disabled

the chat feature, it can cause some problems with people using screen readers, glad you can make it. I can

will give everyone a chance to join. Do feel free to join into the Q&A box and say Hi, we have disabled the chat

feature, it can cause some problems with people using screen readers, glad you can make it. I can see the

numbers going up. I will give it a few more moments for everyone to join. .

Okay, so I am, I can see a lot more people joined now, we will make a start. So, welcome to the 9th session

in our ability insight series, where AbilityNet Head of Digital Inclusion, Robin Christopherson hosts a chat with

 individuals which are each working with accessibility and inclusion. This month’s he is talking to Caroline

 Casey, the founder of The Valuable 500 campaign. I am Annie, we have live captions

provided today by MyClearText and you can turn the captions on via the CC option. We have additional captions

 available by the website link. We have slides available at slide share.net/ability net and on our

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If you have any technical issues and you need to leave early, don't worry, you will receive an email in a couple

of days time with the transcript, recording and the slides. And then depending on how you joined the

 Webinar, you will find a Q&A window. If you want to ask Caroline or Robin questions, drop them into the Q&A

 area, to dress, they will do that in a follow-up session. On our website. Then just lastly we do have a feedback

page you will be directed to at the end, invites you to tell us about future topics, so let us know if you can. So, now over to Robin and Caroline.

ROBIN: Thanks Annie and thank you

Caroline for joining or for agreeing to be grilled today, I mean chatted to. Caroline is one of my favourite people guys.

CAROLINE: You say that to everybody.

ROBIN: Pleased to have you on. First of all then, the tradition, what have

you got beverage wise to help you get through this ordeal?

CAROLINE: It is not an ordeal, you are

 genuinely one of my favourite people and forgive me for being a luddite. Thank you. I discussed going through

 this with an Irish coffee, I didn't. I come with a cup of tea, tea, nothing more exciting.

 ROBIN: I don't you hope don't regret for going for the straight option.

 Brilliant. I haven't got a mug today because I am fasting at the moment for my religion. For the first time I am

not able to tell you I have got. It is usually a boring cup of tea. Brilliant. Now first question, the

whole remit, the whole point of The Valuable 500 is to encourage accessibility leadership at Board

 level. Tell us, tell the audience why it is so important to get buy in at the highest level and you know, how

does that help accelerate or drive the accessibility agency forward? CLAIRE: It was about breaking the

CEO silence, getting the intention, the attention of CEO's and leadership, accountability. Why it is so

important is because we know that two things, culturally, the choices that leaders make, affect the cultures of

the organisations that they are heads of. That means how much people are willing to invest and to innovate and

to see and to support disability business inclusion. So without that, without that cultural leadership it is

not going to happen in the business. The second thing is, there is a really good known expression, leaders make

 choices. But they also in the shadow and light of a leader. So if the leader is not willing to put that

 put that intention into accessibility, or give the, their intentionality things won't get done. Most of the

 business will operate to the shadow and light of the leader. What a leader gets done, gets done and what

they don't care about doesn't get done. So putting the attention so we can support the business in integrating

 accessibility and inclusion across the supply chain. Not make this strategic but making it niche, the way the

 business works the only way to work, is if the business believesin that and understands it and is willing to be

accountable for it. Otherwise it is discretionary and it gets left aside when they leave the business.

ROBIN: Absolutely a lot of passionate within people organisations, who feel passionate about inclusive design and

 design and accessibility. Unless you have a top down approach they might not be supported.

Any tangible examples of the top down approach? CAROLINE: I think your last speaker

was Sarah, from Apple, I think this is the best place to point to. Whether you loved or loathed Steve Jobs right

in his right at the centre of him was the principles of design for all and inclusive design, creating beautiful

products that everybody could use. And so we know so many people with disabilities and their family members

often turn to Apple products, Apple weren't designing them for that reason, but showing the beautiful

express how universal design can benefit all. What makes it so compelling, Apple was one of the first

companies in the world to trigger a trillion, it isn't just about putting products in the hands of everyone, but

the business imperative of everyone. That intersection between the humanity and the business case, that is best

 made or certainly was pioneered in my mind by Apple. ROBIN: Absolutely, certainly no fund

 no fundamental conflict between inclusive design for people with disabilities and better products for

 everyone, in fact they are pushing in the same direction. So we will cover a little bit more about how things

worked within organisations a little bit later on. But we were lucky enough to have

update last tech share pro about how The Valuable 500 was doing. Have you got an update. When you reached the

magic 5 hundred what is next? You are on your world domination? CAROLINE: The Wizard of Oz curtains

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open - no, AbilityNet are support I have of us, you are teachering us, it is all about collaboration, what has

 made us be sitting here at this moment as of this morning, with 441 companies joining The Valuable 500 representing

17 million employees, 35 countries, 64 sectors and the power of 7 trillion in the supply chain and we are talking

big brands and they have to have over a thousand employees. I want to come back to what you said

when we talked about the first question, why is leadership so important? Look, we need to transform

our business system that we are speaking about accessibility and inclusion as just the normal way of

doing business. That we are integrating and enfusing business, accessibility and inclusion mindset

and behaviours throughout our business and that can only happen when we get this leadership. But what is really

exciting for us, is started as that campaign. So get leaders to support the business and to resource the

 business. Now, what we are looking at is we will be launching phase 2 of The Valuable 500 in literally weeks and

that is activating this very unique community which is supported by the CEO's to drive that system change,

right throughout the business. So it is kind of like getting 5 hundred CEO's and their businesses to hack

solutions for integrating disability inclusion in their business. That is the exciting piece for me. We

are excited about it. What happens if we get beyond 5 hundred? Well okay this is a point of discussion and I

open this up to everybody, we really want other people's opinions on this. Look first when we started with 5

hundred. Everybody said, you are off your mind, who you think you are, to get 5 hundred CEO's and their

 businesses, yes we were crazy, looking, at the Apple expression, those who are Kray sill enough to

think they can change the world, they can. We will stop at 5 hundred. I want to

acknowledge the pioneering leadership of the people within the businesses that have signed. It is a community

and it is a community at a we need to work with, to scale their change. However, if the community and the

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work with, to scale their change. However, if the community and the CEO's in that community and the

leaders in that communities say, no, we need 5 hundred. - you will get the announcement on May 12th 13th and who

 is in the 5 hundred and the plans for the future. ROBIN: My next question about follow

through, once people have, you know, sponsored accessibility and digital inclusion and disability awareness at

the Board level, at the C level, is that just the beginning of the journey? Have you as an organisation

had to follow through to help them with that, you know, the journey that they have embarked upon to embed a collect

 as collective responsibility for owning the journey across the organisation?

 CAROLINE: Accountability is a huge part of this. I hate this word pledge

Have you as an organisation had to follow through to help them with that, you know, the journey that they have

embarked upon to embed as collective responsibility for owning the journey across the organisation?

CAROLINE: Accountability is a huge part of this. I hate this word pledge - can I tell you people people thought

we were going to create a pledge or tick box thing, not at all. When we began this, the idea of

breaking the CEO silence on disability, inclusion and accessibility, that was fairly audacious in itself that we

 could get 5 hundred CEO voices and global voices remember. So if we were to tell them right from

 the beginning actually, so we have a trick up our sleeves we are going to get a campaign but really what we want

to do is create this global community for change, to redesign and architect our business systems, do you think

they would have come on? Probably not. We always had in the mind there was

 going to be a phase 2, but slowly, piece by piece, so how the accountabilities for phase 1 which is

the commitment of these companies, is actually our collaborators are partners like yourselves we have

 created the community, multiple people around the world, brought to their companies, working with Ford and that

is a place of accountability. The second companies are posting their commitment on the website, the media

can see it, employees and we can see it, we hold them to account. This commitment was signed by CEO that is

 is an honour code. In the sense this commitment to get into the community is the first step,

you are right, to wet the appetite. To invite them in. It was the invitation, now, now it is about, now

what can we do collectively and clackively. Can we have change if we innovate together, what would it look

like, the multiplier effect of the campaign side, 5 hundred companies to do one individual thing. But what

 happens if we can get 5 hundred companies to do several different things in the same direction? Is that

not the exciting bit. Yes the campaign was the beginning and the second case or the second phase is rank formative

system change and nothing less. We do not apologise for that, we are creating a family and a community, a

supersystem around the world to support our business leaders doing that. ROBIN: None of your signatories should

object to that. They have signed up for change and this is about helping them to realise that transformation.

 CAROLINE: What we didn't expect is, gave us the courage to do phase 2

asigh from the... what has been interesting companies have come to us and said, please do another phase or

we have already achieved our commitment. What can we do next? I think that was exciting, they started

 to feel that they were in a community or a collective for change, they are hungry for phase 2. So, whereas we

were a little nervous at the beginning, saying, didn't ask them to sign up for phase 2. It is the opposite. They

are saying, help us more, our job is at C suite, we are not competing with other things in the world. I hope we

 are opening up doors and doors for many of our organisation’s to walk into.

 ROBIN: Great answer. This next question I don't think you will like.

 CAROLINE: Hold on, let me have some tea.

 ROBIN: As a leader yourself and that is the bit I think you are going to

shrink from, because you are so kind of self-effacing, as a leader yourself, what tips do you have for other

 leaders to help drive the accessibility and inclusion agendas? Any top tips?

CAROLINE: I am lucky enough to meet many of the leaders in the face of accessibility, everybody knows I stand

back and go, will you teach me? No truly, because look, I don't ever claim to be anything that I am not.

So what my, what my encouragement is, is to have a real sense of confidence about the insight that you have and

confidence is different to arrogance as we know, I know the leaders around the accessibility space, I have taken the

time to know where I am in that space, to meet me there, to not make me feel, you know, less than and therefore I

get excited in that process of learning. So if you just take that with me and

 then you think about okay, how do leaders in this space really accelerate the change, bring it up to

the point of power and influence of business, it is exactly the same thing. About having the confidence

and insight and experience and being generous and willing to share it. Not about trying to overintellectualise

it, and to judge someone because they don't know. That is really powerful.

 For me as a leader, a few things, one is, I always hope, I am sorry if I

 don't do what I said I would do. I think we need to stand by what we said we would do and if we don't do it, own

 it, I think we have to say, I am willing to learn. We need the confidence to share what

we do know. I think that is about creating an energy and an excitement around it. Be willing to share again

and again and again about what we know. I think for me, if there is one piece of advice about the courage to lead, I

have always been uncomfortable with this. Valuable 5 hundred, why didn't it need a Caroline, it has loads and

 loads and loads of people. People connect with people. When we are leading, I think leaders who lead with

their head and heart it is so relevant right now. I think we are in an era of human centred... R accessibility is

 about removing barriers for everyone, I have learned not to apologise for my heart, but to have the stats and the

 science that backs things up. So don't leave one or other at the door, bring them both to the table.

ROBIN: Brilliant answer and you have brought so much heart to The Valuable 500 campaign. Just.

 CAROLINE: It has a heart in its logo.

 ROBIN: I didn't know that. CAROLINE: It has a V and then it has a

heart in its logo, that is the other side of the V, which is intersection that I keep speaking to, for any

change to happen, we must bring both. One, it is left and right brain. It is stats and story, it is head and

heart. That is what the logo represents, it is both sides but it is the intersection of those both two

 both two ying and yang. The sweet part of where innovation happens. ROBIN: Next question it says what is

your biggest success? You might want to say what is The Valuable 500 greatest success today. It might be

 getting well over 4 hundred organisations to commit to having disability and accessibility on their

 on their agenda on a regular basis at C level. Is there a big stand out thing for you over the last months,

many month says that you have been pushing for. CAROLINE: I will say there is a

launching on the main stage of the world economic forum. I mean against all the odds after remortgaging the

house and after thinking we couldn't get there, I am so proud of that moment. I can't tell you. Then we

take two years on, on the 29th January to be the recipient of the biggest singular disability inclusion grant

 inclusion grant by the Nipon foundation for phase 2. I can't tell you the sense of pride I had with the

team and partners. Thirdly, big moments from me are when people from the community and I can't,

look, my voice wobbles every time. They say, good job, well done, want to see more I am part of this community.

I hear members of our team we spoke about in high regard and that is important to me, I think honestly, I

can't, look, my voice wobbles every time. They say, good job, well done, want to see more I am part of this

community. I hear members of our team we spoke about in high regard and that is important to me, I think honestly,

I had a really important moment a few weeks ago, I used a wrong expression, I said something like, "hearing

 impaired" somebody picked me up on twitter, doesn't matter who it was. Holding me to account and I was like,

we spoke about in high regard and that is important to me, I think honestly, I had a really important moment a few

weeks ago, I used a wrong expression, I said something like, "hearing impaired" somebody picked me up on

twitter, doesn't matter who it was. Holding me to account and I was like, I wrote to them immediately and I

went, "I am really sorry will you teach me more? I am trying to do everything" one of my proudest moments

was yes, of course I will teach you. I am so grateful I am learning not to be defensive and I am not taking things

 personally and I keep trying to enfuse that value in The Valuable 500. We are here to collaborate. The more I

see that happen the more I am proud. The thing I am most proud about. The collaborators and the team willing to

help us be better. I get excited about that. ROBIN: And making twitter a nicer

place in the process. That is amazing. CAROLINE: I was scared, you know, I am

so worried I will say something and get cancelled out. Then I think a lot of our CEO's and businesses haven't taken

on strategically accessibility, I mean embedding that mine assessed and behaviour into business because they

are so worried about getting it wrong. If we don't deal with that, because we have to create space for them to fail,

 that really does worry me, I have to put myself out to be vulnerable. Please, likes the moments of when

people want to collaborate with us and teach us, I get proud of that. ROBIN: You mentioned about people

getting things wrong and the last question I gave you about your proudest moments or the biggest

 successes. The next thing is about things you have got wrong, what take aways you, what you have learned from

that. Whether you know, it could be applied to either the members of the valuable 5 hundred or, you know, more

broadly? CAROLINE: Oh listen, I am 50 years old this year, I will take this one

 personally and to say, I have got more wrong than I have ever got right in my life, in whatever field of work you

do, whatever your trying to change, number one, never think that you are insignificant enough to make change

happen. That is really important, it is a cliche oversaid and it is true. I stand here as evidence of that. But

the second most thing I can say is never go against your instinct, your gut instinct ever. Because every time

I have listened to somebody else and it goes against my gut intinct I screw up big time. Like, big time.

Then on the valuable 5 hundred side I will tell you what I feel I have done wrong, I, I think at the beginning I

wasn't maybe confident enough. You know, I kind of was nearly so grateful. You know what I mean? So

grateful we could do this. I feel there is a confidence now in our team and the community that surround us and

 support. Was so worried of causing offense and trying to step tore. Hold on, we were doing a great thing, I

over. Hold on, we were doing a great thing, I should have been more confident, me as the. Leader.

 Then the thing maybe we should have gone for the valuable 1 thousand. But

I don't know. ROBIN: You have chosen to stop at 5 hundred.

 CAROLINE: There is another great example from me how you manage getting

 things wrong, I think, Jenny and Hector, when I used to send out video files this was ages ago, shortly after

The Valuable 500 was launched. I would hate to leave anybody out but I didn't caption. This is before Co-vid, I

didn't caption my videos and Hector and Neil from ATOS, I realised it was so much easier. If you get things wrong,

if you are not defensive and are willing to hear what it is. It was like winning the lotto, it is our

relationship with failure is really important when trying to innovate and find change and you have got to find a

good relationship with failure, personally and professionally, it is up to us in the work we do, we have to

allow people to fail and we have to allow us to fail as well. ROBIN: We are running out of time, so

 awful. A couple of quick ones, so Co-vid, this shouldn't be a quick one, but anyway, do you think that Co-vid

 has impacted the reactions of business leaders to people with disabilities? Has it accelerated or indeed

otherwise? The the role of accessible digital products? I think I know your answer.

 CAROLINE: I will try and be quick. The business system changed, the one

they said it couldn't change, it did. No more excuses. Do I think, look we were doing

 brilliantly before Co-vid, I can't deny it. But the rational for why accessibility is no longer well, we

might do it? It is when you are going to do it? I think the imperative has been underpinned.

The second part for me has become, we are now on the path of this being as vital as health and safety in

business. I don't think this is ever going to be a choice again because I have never felt more blind as I have

through going through Co-vid. I have had to reassess how I feel about my visual impairment because of the

inaccessibility of a lot of the platforms we use. By the way the solutions are there. So, listen, the

solutions are there, it is the intention of the investment of the leadership. Do I think they are

 starting to get it? Yes I do. So I choose to see that this is a moment where we whole feet to the fire,

systems can change, what is the intention? ROBIN: We always at the end of these

fantastic interviews bring a question that was put from a previous speaker and you have mentioned Sarah last

 month's speaker, she had a comment for you and you said you are a luddite. Tech plays an important role. What

tech have you had to rely at most in 2020 and all that Co-vid has brought?

CAROLINE: From a tech perspective, like everybody else, I have been spending up to 10 to 12 hours on zoom, because

obviously we are doing a campaign and we are doing events. So, all of the on-line platforms have been incredibly

 important to me. Actually I will say zoom is probably my easiest but then Google has been fabulous because it

does the autocaptioning as well. What I will say because I can't see chat, because I can't see things, you know

what I have used? Is my phone, my smartphone, my Apple smartphone in conjunction with zoom. I go on to

 zooms and say, I can't see what you have, I will use my phone to enlarge images or pictures or to see stuff.

So I have become creative that way and that has become like, I couldn't do what I do without my phone. Helping

me. ROBIN: She will love that answer. And yes.

 CAROLINE: Sarah talk to me please, I want to talk to you!

ROBIN: We can make that happen, you guys I am sure have that power as well.

Okay final question is: What you will put to next month's speaker who happens to be someone from the BBC.

 Emma Pratt-Ritchins, a specialty in accessibility it is BBC. CAROLINE: BBC are the one of the value

 of The Valuable 500 and my role in phase 2. Where is the power shift in for representation, is it in front of

the camera and behind? What is BBC doing? Is it both? I guess it is both. What is BBC's plan in front and

behind of the camera, to integrate better representation for people with disabilities?

 ROBIN: Love it, thank you, absolute pleasure as always, thank you for on

 those incites and I will pass back to Annie thanks. ANNIE: Yes, so thank you so much

Caroline and Robin. There are lots of questions that have come through that we hope to answer in the next few

days. You will receive an email on Thursday with a link to access them. I wanted to share a bit more

information that might be of interest to you. We also run on-line training sessions on digital accessibility and

you can find out more about AbilityNet.org and I can offer you a 10% discount code as a registrant of

the Webinar. The training course is we have are available for various roles and this week's course are coming up

on Wednesday, how to deliver and sustain accessibility digital learning that is a new course aimed at higher

and further education professionals and then on Thursday we have our embedding accessibility at every stage of your

project course. Then finally sign up to our newsletter for the latest announcements about

 about digital accessibility visit our YouTube channel and download our podcast and we have a suite of

 accessibility services as well. Don't forget about our next Webinars as we just mentioned, our next insight

 session with Emma from the BBC coming up on the 6th April. Sign up for that, at AbilityNet.org.uk/Webinars.

Thank you for everyone that has joined us, please complete the feedback form that you are directed to at the end