



# AT Banter Podcast Episode 244 - David Dame

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

disability, accessibility, microsoft, accessible, people, building, technology, mismatches, thought, assistive technology, clippy, ai, ryan, accessibility features, release, workforce, products, podcast, world, hardware

## SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, David Dame, Ryan Fleury

- R** Rob Mineault 00:34  
Hey, and welcome to a another episode of at banter, banter, banter. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and hey, look who it is joining me today. Mr. Ryan Fleury,
- R** Ryan Fleury 00:50  
it's me again.
- R** Rob Mineault 00:52  
And Mr. Steve Barclay.
- S** Steve Barclay 00:54  
Where I don't see him. And there's my phone.
- R** Rob Mineault 01:02  
Never happened.

R Ryan Fleury 01:03  
Never.

S Steve Barclay 01:06  
It's Jackie and she knows I am doing a podcast. .... Okay, oh, we need eggs and mayonaise.

R Rob Mineault 01:19  
And wine.

S Steve Barclay 01:22  
Thank you. Bye.

R Ryan Fleury 01:23  
Now he did like a run. Yeah. How did he do? Okay.

R Rob Mineault 01:27  
Oh, yeah. secret. Look at the Barclays. What are you making?

S Steve Barclay 01:38  
Making pub food tonight. So I'm doing up some wings on the barbecue and we'll toss me some sauce. And then the earlier today threw some baked potatoes on the barbecue and all of them out and we're gonna make potato skins.

R Rob Mineault 01:52  
Wow, nice. Wow. Look at you fancy. Yeah. See, literally you should go over to your place for for pub food.

R Ryan Fleury 02:00  
I think barbecue at the Barclays.

S Steve Barclay 02:03  
That's a good plan. Yeah.

R Ryan Fleury 02:04  
As soon as we get our second vaccine here.

S Steve Barclay 02:07  
Thinking September 8.

R Rob Mineault 02:09  
Did you guys get any? Did you guys get your appointment yet? For a second vaccine?if you've been contacted?

S Steve Barclay 02:15  
I've had mine.

R Rob Mineault 02:16  
Oh, yeah, that's right.

R Ryan Fleury 02:17  
Now we're supposed to get our booking email, I think around July 2. So in the next week, we can probably book

R Rob Mineault 02:24  
Wait, does that mean so you got that text message you got? Or no?

R Ryan Fleury 02:29  
Not yet.

R Rob Mineault 02:29

Okay. Okay.

**R** Ryan Fleury 02:30  
So that's what you're waiting around July 2 and waiting for that? Yeah. Yeah.

**S** Steve Barclay 02:33  
I didn't think I was gonna get a text message. But I did. Because I was earlier but yeah, they figured it out, I guess.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:41  
Cool. Well, that'd be nice. Huh? Good. doubly vaccinated.

**S** Steve Barclay 02:46  
Yes.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:49  
Well, how? How are you guys? I feel like I haven't talked to you guys for ages. How? How's everything going?

**S** Steve Barclay 02:57  
Oh, it's been interesting.

**R** Rob Mineault 03:00  
I was worried when somebody says that because it's very loaded. Interesting. And in what way?

**S** Steve Barclay 03:07  
I am currently trying to have the police track down a fraudster in Quebec, who has fraudulently ordered with a stolen credit card and OrCam.

R Rob Mineault 03:22  
Oh. And you wait, you've already sent it like its been delivered?

S Steve Barclay 03:30  
Yeah. Yeah, the chargeback came through today.

R Rob Mineault 03:33  
Oh, no. That sucks. Yeah. Yeah.

S Steve Barclay 03:37  
So trying to track them down.

R Rob Mineault 03:40  
Yeah. And I guess that as a business, you really don't have any recourse for those for those chargebacks like the business always has to just eat it. Right.

S Steve Barclay 03:48  
Yeah. I mean, the very first thing they're gonna say is what Id did he give? And he didn't he just called in with a credit card over the phone. I yeah.

R Rob Mineault 04:00  
Well, two ever that was in Quebec. For you?

S Steve Barclay 04:04  
Yeah. Yeah. He tried to do it again. Two weeks later. Really? Yeah. The only reason I caught it. The only reason I figured it out is using the same phone number both times under two different names.

R Rob Mineault 04:18  
see, he got greedy.

- S** Steve Barclay 04:19  
Yeah. And there was a third there was a third attempt for a different product on our website, but also being shipped in the same same city. So I think it's probably probably the same guy.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:34  
So before we dive any farther down, he did a few things that I want to talk to you guys about. Uh, let's tell the fine folks what we're up to this week.
- R** Ryan Fleury 04:44  
Today we are talking with David Dame who is the director for Microsoft accessibility in Canada.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:51  
Very cool Microsoft. Staying in our good books by coming on the show. You can learn a lot Apple,
- S** Steve Barclay 04:58  
Amazon
- R** Rob Mineault 05:01  
Ryan, should we should we break the big news to our audience?
- R** Ryan Fleury 05:05  
Oh, yeah. Yeah, I actually forgot we were announcing that this week,
- R** Rob Mineault 05:11  
So okay. Very exciting news on the at venture podcast, front. We've decided through a course of several meetings, and just discussing it amongst ourselves for this has probably been going on for a good six months, we've decided that we are going to rebrand the show.

R Ryan Fleury 05:48  
I thought you're gonna say shutting it down.

R Rob Mineault 05:52  
You're part of these meetings, Ryan.

S Steve Barclay 05:57  
That's so four days ago.

R Rob Mineault 06:00  
This has been a conversation we've we've actually been having internally, God for years, because we realized about maybe 15 episodes of this podcast that we were straying away from just being an assistive technology podcast. And it really it hasn't really described what the show is about for for years and years, but we just didn't want to rebrand because we'd already gone down that road, it's a lot of work to rebrand. We didn't want to confuse our audience. There's just a bunch of different reasons that we found that, that we, we didn't want to sort of rebrand and rename the show. By, you know, we got to a point where we wanted to make some other changes in the show. And it just, it just kind of made sense to roll all these things together, and kind of give a new spit and polish to the, to the show. So we you may be asking, dear audience member what, what that rebranding is going to look like? Well, we don't know. We're not sure yet. We haven't decided on a name. We have some ideas, some of them bad, some of them horrible. Some of them may. But you know, we had the idea that I thought, well, you know, who might have some good ideas? And that listen to us on occasion. Is the audience.

S Steve Barclay 07:23  
What our audience? Exactly? No way. I mean, they're listening to us. How bright could they be?

R Rob Mineault 07:31  
Well, we thought that we would just we would Well, first of all, we wanted, of course to tell the audience's full transparency. And ahead of time, we're not rebranding tomorrow or next week. This is something that we're looking at maybe at the end of the summer, we'll roll this out. But we thought it would be an idea to just put the question out there to

people what what do you think? Do you have a suggestion for what we might want to rename are the podcast, he sent us an email

**S** Steve Barclay 08:03  
the strayed beyond its original mandate podcast?

**R** Rob Mineault 08:06  
I love it. See? It's not gonna fit on a business card.

**S** Steve Barclay 08:10  
It's not even a good acronym

**R** Rob Mineault 08:12  
what do we what are we going to how are we going to do the you know, banter banter thing on that straight? speed? We need at least needed to make up a good acronym.

**S** Steve Barclay 08:28  
Yes, maybe? isn't a good one. Right?

**R** Rob Mineault 08:31  
No, not at all. So um, so that's coming down the pipe, we wanted to share that with the audience wanting to be fully transparent. And we'll certainly keep you posted in that sense, but that's coming, that's coming. We're going to we're going to rebrand a bit, maybe shift the format of the show around a little bit. But listen, if you have any sort of suggestions for a name, or even for some stuff that you would like us to talk about anything at all, any sort of any sort of suggestions that you have for the show, now's the time, email us [cowbell at@venture.com](mailto:cowbell@venture.com) and throw your hat into the ring. And hey, you never know. This could be your your 15 minutes of fame where you are responsible for renaming our podcast. And just a side note,

**R** Ryan Fleury 09:16  
I would like to have all submissions in by end of July. So we do have time to complete the rebranding process.

- S** Steve Barclay 09:23  
If you listening to this in August, suck it up. You missed.
- R** Rob Mineault 09:28  
You missed it, and you're already you're listening to the strayed from its original mandate podcast anyway. What else we got in the news? Oh, hey, so am I got this right. Did bill 6, the accessible British Columbia act did that pass? Isn't it law?
- R** Ryan Fleury 09:46  
It's law. No.
- S** Steve Barclay 09:49  
It's not really a law. It's more of a framework, I think from what I've read.
- R** Rob Mineault 09:55  
Well, sorry, go ahead.
- R** Ryan Fleury 09:56  
Yeah, no, I was just gonna say it. It sounds like it has become a little But there's nothing in place yet. There's no enforcement. There's no standards. There's nothing to that law at this point. Yeah. But it has been tabled. It has been approved. And
- S** Steve Barclay 10:09  
The law says you will strike a committee.
- R** Rob Mineault 10:13  
So for those for those who haven't been following, we talked a little bit about this a couple of weeks ago, but so the accessible are so bill six is the accessible British Columbia act, it's, it's, you know, it's bcws own accessibility framework. like Steve said, the part of the frustration behind this is that, if this went is went into law so fast, so the disability alliance

of DC, you know, they when when this when Bill six was first proposed, they had all kinds of suggestions. And then, you know, they opened it up to a lot of different advocacy organizations. And they all submitted suggestions, but it seems to us that this was just kind of pushed through. And they didn't seem to take much into account in terms of those suggestions. This is all just sort of very surface level assessment of this. But the long and the short of it is this act really doesn't have a lot of teeth, as it has now been passed. There's no enforcement mechanism. There's no timelines in terms of when a lot of these suggestions and frameworks will be in place by so

R

Ryan Fleury 11:25

You're missing the big point, too, is they actually left out the learning disabled, and the non verbal disability groups as well, they aren't included as part of this Accessibility Act.

R

Rob Mineault 11:36

Yeah.

S

Steve Barclay 11:37

I think I think I've talked about that on a previous podcast, too. governments across the country are terrified of the learning disability community, because if they recognize them, they will have to do something about them. It's a travesty. But that's the motivation. They don't want to spend that much money, because it's gonna take a lot of money to address the needs of that population properly, and equitably.

R

Rob Mineault 12:02

Yeah. And it's a real shame. It's, yeah, so in this is frustrating. I mean, I guess, I want to look at this positively and be like, well, at least we have an accessible bc act. I mean, that's something but the same time, like what good is an act like this, if it if it falls, so short of actually being something that's effective, and that people are going to pay any sort of attention to?

R

Ryan Fleury 12:24

Well, this is something to keep in mind this past, I think, last week or two weeks ago, so there is still a lot of work to be done before there is any enforcement before the standards ironed out. Before the other groups come back to the table, there's going to be ongoing discussions. At least I'm still thinking two or three years before we actually see what that's

accessible. BC Act looks like.

R

Rob Mineault 12:45

Yeah, well, yeah. And that would be great. But, you know, because I keep thinking of the of the Ontario version. And at least they had a timeline, though. They said, you know, by 2025, we want to make Ontario, you know, an accessible province, fully accessible province. And they've they've they've staggered out timelines, and it wasn't there just recently, like July 1, was, that was the The deadline for is it was a website's I think it was digitally?

R

Ryan Fleury 13:16

I think so.

R

Rob Mineault 13:17

Which they're not even close to it. Don't get me wrong there. That's, it's that's a complete and utter pipe dream. And, and again, I think that they fall short in terms of Well, no, they did. Let's,

S

Steve Barclay 13:28

Let's also keep in mind that act was passed in 2005. You have been 16 years. Yeah. To get to the point that it's at right now. Ours has been passed now. And granted, it's not much as it stands. It's a baby step. But it's some kind of step at first. So if I'm going to, if I'm going to throw a positive spin on it, that's going to be it at least we've done something to take this step, but because we've done nothing before.

R

Ryan Fleury 13:54

Yeah, we have something to learn from now.

R

Rob Mineault 13:56

Yeah. Well, and that's why I was a little disappointed because when they'd really didn't take all these suggestions to account and it didn't even really feel like they looked at something like Ontario's act, and really like went okay, well, what did they do wrong? Or what can we learn from Ontario to and not repeat that here? And I don't really get the feel like they did much of that. And I could be wrong. Who knows?

- S** Steve Barclay 14:24  
Yeah, I don't I don't know what the process has been to date. So it's hard to really be right.
- R** Rob Mineault 14:29  
But you're right. I mean, at least we have something it's it's a step. Lino, I am hopefully this is something that we that the plan is to build on. And to use as a sort of a template to build out something that's going to be really, really make a difference in the next say, 20 years of in the province.
- S** Steve Barclay 14:49  
Absolutely.
- R** Rob Mineault 14:51  
What else you guys got anything else interesting to talk about. Nothing else happened this week. Now.
- S** Steve Barclay 14:56  
A building collapsed in Florida. Yeah. That's crazy.
- R** Rob Mineault 15:04  
That is crazy.
- S** Steve Barclay 15:05  
That's just weird to think that it would just fall down like that. Yeah, that's no, I'm never trusting a high rise again.
- R** Rob Mineault 15:14  
Yeah, I know. And I live in one I, I've always worried about that living in a high rise like we were an apartment just being like, what would happen if you just the building just collapsed?

S

Steve Barclay 15:24

Well, you know, Mike, Mike Calvo from Pneuma solutions. His cousin lived in the building homeowners, and she's okay. But, yeah, I mean, it's just it's crazy. They, they apparently were having some roof work done. So I have a theory that what happened was the the the contractor probably piled up too much stuff in one place on the roof and collapse the roof. But it's the only thing I can figure would cause a collapse like that. Yeah, we're not talking about why k dub? They don't know.

R

Rob Mineault 15:58

Yeah, well, I'm sure that will come up. I mean, I wonder I just getting curious to like, how old the building was, and all that sort of stuff. I mean, I think that that's going to be the real rush to because like, like, I heard somebody say like, yesterday on the news, they're just like, this doesn't happen in first row country, like buildings don't just fall down by themselves.

S

Steve Barclay 16:17

Like this is this is this is an affluent building, too. It's not like rundown housing or something. It's this is this is where rich people live.

R

Rob Mineault 16:25

I tell you, the news is just depressing. Yep. I gotta get I gotta get off my news addiction. I just got to stop. Stop reading the news

S

Steve Barclay 16:35

Just start going to the Good News Network,

R

Ryan Fleury 16:37

Or start watching Disney stuff.

S

Steve Barclay 16:39

Or videos of stoats on Netflix?

- R** Rob Mineault 16:43  
No, you know what the Disney isn't even escape because they keep making those shitty live action version of all their earlier movies. Terrible.
- S** Steve Barclay 16:56  
Go back and rewatch Animaniacs
- R** Rob Mineault 17:01  
Classic.
- S** Steve Barclay 17:02  
Hey, hey, Ryan.
- R** Ryan Fleury 17:04  
Yeah, Steve?
- S** Steve Barclay 17:05  
Let's do a segueway
- R** Ryan Fleury 17:08  
Okay, how do we do a segueway?
- S** Steve Barclay 17:10  
One of us has to say something like, coming up next.....
- R** Rob Mineault 17:15  
Alright, like, I like the voice. Say coming up now.
- R** Ryan Fleury 17:20  
Sure, give her.



Steve Barclay 17:21

Coming up next...



Rob Mineault 17:29

That's it. Leave them with that. This isn't segway Pay no attention to it. Pretend this is smooth introduction of our this week's guest.



Steve Barclay 17:41

That was my impression of the Segway going off a cliff...



Ryan Fleury 17:46

Joining us now is David Dame from Microsoft. Dave, I want to thank you so much for taking some time today to join us to talk all about Microsoft and AI and accessibility. I am Ryan Fleury. And in the room with me today are Steve Barclay. That would be me. And Robin. Oh, hello, gentlemen. Joining us is Dave Dame who is the director of Microsoft accessibility for Canada.



David Dame 18:13

Hi, everyone. Why actually I live in Canada, but I reported to Seattle.



Ryan Fleury 18:17

Okay, perfect.



Rob Mineault 18:20

Seattle is the closest thing to Canada. Like they we pretty much their permit honorary Canadians.



David Dame 18:27

Well, them in Minnesota, right.



Rob Mineault 18:29

So true. Right?



Steve Barclay 18:32

Seattle's getting a hockey team next year. So our takeover will be complete.



David Dame 18:36

Exactly. It starts with sports. And then I get them to love bacon. And now they're all ours. Excellent.



Rob Mineault 18:45

Well, listen, why don't we start off with just learning a little bit about you and what you do over there at Microsoft?



David Dame 18:53

Yeah, so I've been at Microsoft for 11 weeks now. So I'm a relatively new employee. But I've lived with cerebral palsy for 15 years of my life. So probably like a lot of view, hosting this show. I was born with a disability in 1971. Before, there was a lot of infrastructure policy and anything to support, having a really meaningful, fulfilling life. But what I've liked over the years is how things have changed. And, you know, unfortunately, sometimes you're ahead of the curve. Sometimes you're behind the curve. But I've always worked in technology and really been able to work my way to senior levels navigating the world in a power wheelchair. So when I turned 50 this year, I was a vice president at a Canadian bank. I 50. You see the world differently, right. When you're young, you start thinking about what do I want to be when I grew up at 50 Like, what do I want to achieve that my time of working and when is Microsoft opportunity came up, it gave me a calling to really be able to work in an area that's going to help people with a mismatch in their environment, achieved great things. So it seemed to be a calling, I'm glad to be there brings my love for technology, and humans and inclusion and diversity and accessibility all together.



Rob Mineault 20:34

So tell us tell us a little bit about what life is like over there at the at the Microsoft accessibility department?

D

David Dame 20:41

Well, what life is like is really, it's an interesting, continuous learning journey, because we're always learning about different disabilities, because, you know, I think there's other disabilities other than cerebral palsy, so trying to learn about the different disabilities and the cross sectional disabilities and the variants of that while learning what assistive technologies out there, and really trying to understand the current gaps in technology, it's always a great opportunity to learn and to do, and to be advocates within the organization to help bring to reality to engineering teams, about opportunities to to make our products more accessible, initially for people with disabilities, but like we've all seen, right? People like using accessibility features to enhance the way they work, live or play. So and I'm still in the honeymoon phase, right. So it's been really good, great support so far. And I will, I won't lie, sometimes it gets challenging and frustrating. But, you know, we're stubborn, we want to continue to push through. And it's been a great experience so far.

R

Rob Mineault 22:02

So even working within the assistive technology field for many, many years, as the three of us have, one of the challenges can really be is literally like trying to keep up with with the technology that's out there. And even and sort of related to that the the needs that are out there for people is that is that what you guys find there is that part of the part of what you guys sort of have to do is find out what new technology is coming down the pipe, and then try to try to use that to build more functionality into into Microsoft products?

D

David Dame 22:39

Well, yeah, and it's you're exactly right. It's an ongoing to understand when new technology innovations are there, and what opportunities are there. Right, because sometimes, you know, in technology companies, we build a solution, then we're chasing a problem. And really, as you know, when you're working in accessibility, and you can see where technology can solve the fundamental problem that we've learned to live with, that we can remove that friction, that's when there's a great opportunity, right?

R

Rob Mineault 23:16

What kind of what kind of technology? Like do you guys sort of latch on to in that sense? Like, what what are you guys sort of on the lookout for? Or are you? Are you more focused in on, like listening to the community and trying to find their needs? Or is it sort of a balancing act?

D

David Dame 23:36

Well, you just mentioned what the complex the of our role is. So I said exclusively in the surface hardware division, where we're focusing on hardware. But we know hardware is just the entry point to experiences. So we work with our partners and windows in office to understand, but that's where you're right there is a balancing act to really understand where the community is needing right, what they're doing. And we like to actually talk to real user like real people with disabilities to understand where are we missing the mark, what are the struggles and, and trying to capture all that information, and then try to blend it and, and get it into the roadmaps that we're building to to create experiences for a whole variety of users. So you're right, you feel like you're on a treadmill, going in multiple directions, and you're just trying to keep up.

S

Steve Barclay 24:39

Ryan, have you sent Dave your Manifesto? Ryan is a great guy for feedback on when things are working and not work.

D

David Dame 24:47

Well, these are what we need, right? We love hearing from the community. What I like well, Microsoft is, what they've learned and where we've come to the tip today, and what By no means saying we're perfect. But we're always striving to be better it is that constant. Pretty much Frank feedback that we get. So we want to champion and do and what's interesting at Microsoft is what I've noticed for many worlds I've worked is the number of pockets where accessibility exists. We have it in our in our corporate, external Legal Affairs, all the way to the different software divisions to where I said in the hardware division, we have many different pockets with their specific focus on accessibility. But we're continually working together to get that holistic view, to remove those roadblocks and friction, to really try to engage into new enablement as quick as we can.

R

Rob Mineault 25:58

So I can only imagine what a challenge it must be like to sometimes to get that holistic view, especially in a, in a company as big as as Microsoft with so many things on the go, is that some of the challenge like you know, you you're working in, say, hardware, for example, but then you've got like software, guys, then you've got UI guys, and like keeping all of everybody sort of on the same page, when it comes to something like accessibility? Is that a challenge? Or has Microsoft got it down? where, you know, accessibility is just baked into all the processes? And it's always like, do you guys have to meet a lot? And like,

do the software guys ever come to you with something be like, Oh, geez, guys, like, what are you doing? Like, this isn't accessible back to the drawing board? Or, like, how does the process work?

D

David Dame 26:47

Well, you just mentioned, we have, we tried to do accessible by design, right? So we do it upfront. And, you know, we put together these touch points where we have frequent connections and conversations, where the real challenge actually gets is, as humans, we have our own opinion on what is the best way to handle that accessibility thing. So it's that diversity of opinions that come together, where we ideate to come up with really, maybe the best solution to do that, right? Because it's when we weigh in the different opinions. Is this an OSS challenge? Is this a hard word challenge? Is this a separate application challenge? It's really getting that cross diverse perspective, even though an accessibility you think would be clear cut. But it's that different thing of ideation and opinions that I think really becomes Microsoft's magic size, and bringing the right accessibility experience to the market?

R

Rob Mineault 27:57

Well, you know, what's interesting, and what I what I kind of really admire about Microsoft is that they're also willing to, you know, put put the money where their mouth is, in terms of, you know, not only, you know, externally, are they are they building accessibility into a lot of their products, but they've also really embraced the idea of inclusive hiring. Um, can you speak to us a little bit about that?

D

David Dame 28:19

Well, yeah, that's interesting. Like I said, in the beginning of this show, I have cerebral palsy, and I'm in a power chair. And, you know, there's not too often in the workplace where I get to see other people with disabilities, like, sometimes they might be in, in the call center where they tend to be, but not too often do you see it spread out in different areas. And what I really liked about Microsoft is, I've actually gotten to meet and see people that are like me, right? So I can have conversations with them that we can really share a common understanding with our non disabled colleagues. Right. So that's been great. And that's where I think the pandemic also helped. When Microsoft reached out to me, they asked me about my interest to relocate. And they said, well, Ray, now I'm not really interested in relocating. But I love Microsoft, I want to be there. Is there anything we can do from a remote perspective? And they were very accommodating. They say, yeah, we'd like your experience and knowledge, and we'll accommodate that. So it was

interesting that it was an interesting hiring process, where they knew I had a disability. They did their research, they googled and stuff. But um, that isn't even really become a question because they're really asking you about your ability and stuff. They really want to make sure that they're not excluding people with disabilities. Which is great in its parent in their diverse workforce that we have. But they really tried to make sure people can bring their best selves to work, because they have a great accommodations group that whatever you struggle with, like, personally, I struggle with putting slides together that, you know, you can get assistance to that. So they're really huge on ensuring that they do have people with disabilities within their workforce, because that's how you really get understanding and empathy. Right? I know previously, to joining Microsoft, people would ask me like, can you tell us the difference from working on diverse teams and non diverse teams. And I said, well, by default, every team I become a part of, it's a diverse team, because I'm a person with the disability. And every engineering team I've worked with, built that empathy when they watch me navigate our technology, application or platform. So I think their reason for trying to build a great, inclusive workforce with disabilities, not only to get cognitive diversity that we bring, because of our lived experience with disabilities, but to really amplify the understanding and empathy for all employees that may not have been exposed to a person with a disability.

R

Rob Mineault 31:33

Yeah, and that's, and that's really what, what we need in general, you know, in order for, for, you know, something like inclusive hiring to really spread out throughout the business world ended to become really normalized and standard. You know, we need these big corporate leaders to embrace it and to, to sort of build a model to show everybody else that something like this is not only a great business case, but it it can be a huge benefit to the company.

D

David Dame 32:06

Well, I always like to share this story. In my first job braid, I graduated from university. And it took me nine months to find my first job because, you know, in 1994, and not a lot of workplaces were accessible. And when I found my first job, I found out the first day that I couldn't get in the washroom, I didn't think to check it out before I started my job. So instead of mentioning something, I didn't feel safe. So I chose to not go to the bathroom all day while I was at work, I would choose to hold it every day for and I had to work 12 hours a day, because I was doing an administrative job that was really reliable, but on my hands, which looked very arthritic, to do the training logistics to book and train training manually on papers and folders. And the rest of my peers could do it in eight hours, it took me 12 given that I was already ahead of using technology, like most people with

disabilities, our technology was level setter, my decided to build a website and use technology where people could self enroll, and then vendors could sign up for what they want. So what was taking me 12 hours a day was nail when we take me three, were the rest of my peers was still taking eight. And it wasn't that I was smarter than them. But because it was a problem for me first, my diverse perspective, I was able to fix it where everybody could benefit from it. And now that it was only taken them three hours a day, which gave that introduced productivity that maybe wouldn't have been discovered so quickly if they hadn't hired somebody with a disability. So not only do disability bring different insights into seeing mismatches of environments, but it also makes people closely relate to seeing the world differently, which only makes the workforce a lot better. And I like how you mentioned inclusive hiring because everybody always says diversity and inclusion. But I think until you have inclusion where I feel welcome, we will never have that diversity.



Rob Mineault 34:30

It's one of those things that just makes so much sense that you know, you slap your forehead and go well why didn't people think of this ages ago, but to be able to, to put out into into space like new assistive technologies and utilizing those technologies into existing products, you know, having a segment of your workforce that intuitively knows what the needs of the customer are. It's just yeah, it makes total sense,



David Dame 35:01

Right? Because I always like to say I have cerebral palsy, but my money doesn't. So if you want my money, you better buy a product or service that I can use, or I'll find one that I can buy.



Rob Mineault 35:14

Ryan, you need to use that you need to steal that and use that next time you you're fighting with a company.



Ryan Fleury 35:19

Absolutely. Yeah.



Rob Mineault 35:21

Talk to us a little bit about the the just announced the five year initiative that Microsoft

has announced.



David Dame 35:30

That is fabulous, isn't it, like I was so proud of an employee that announced their commitment to really close the disability divide, right. And they're trying to do it from many different aspects of technology, education and programs. And like you said earlier, they're trying to lead the way that we all have a social responsibility to do this. And it's only going to give them a bigger, deeper workforce to draw from. And one of the things I liked the most about it is and it sounds so simple, but it says so much. They move the Accessibility Checker rate up, mix spellcheck, and at first, you might think well, yeah, that makes it more visible and usable. But they're gonna turn it on by default.



Rob Mineault 36:28

Well, you know, it's, you know, it's funny, you say that, because, you know, my mind immediately goes to Twitter. So Twitter has, you know, the ability to alt tag pictures. But that functionality is not turned on by default, you have to dig into the settings and you actually have to turn that ability on having it on by default is what is that's that should be the default state of any given program. It makes no sense to bury it in the bury that functionality in the settings and have it turned off by default.



David Dame 37:08

So exactly, it almost makes it look like accessibility should be a privilege and not a foundation. And what I like about it brilliantly there, it's almost like saying, it's almost is in appropriate, to send an email that you didn't spellcheck, as it would be that you didn't check for accessibility. Because now if we see a spelling error, we're like, well, that's sloppy. Like there is no reason today to ever have a spelling error, which makes it look like you're very sloppy tonight, have your spellchecker on. But by having accessibility on by default, you're telling the world it's no longer appropriate to send something it's not accessible. It's almost considered as sloppy as not really checking for spelling or grammar before hitting said, and I think that tells a lot.



Rob Mineault 38:09

You know, you should have you should have a little paperclip that pops up and says hey, it looks like your document is inaccessible. Would you like to not

- R** Ryan Fleury 38:15  
look like a knob. now? We're not bringing Clippy back.
- D** David Dame 38:20  
You know, I'm looking forward to when I do my first trip to Seattle. I want to see if they have any reference to Clippy at all the campus. I imagine they got this like prison down in the Microsoft headquarters, where there's this little Clippy behind bars where they three times a day, and it's the greatest apology.
- R** Rob Mineault 38:47  
That's really interesting. You're right, wherever you happen to be.
- D** David Dame 38:51  
nobody's heard right. Only on rare podcast, he gets brought up other than that nobody talks about him.
- R** Rob Mineault 39:01  
I heard a rumor that he had a gambling problem. In some hotel somewhere in Vegas, you know, all unshaven and bathrobe and those bottles...
- D** David Dame 39:16  
Exactly he's doing a Leaving Las Vegas ... . In the shower.
- R** Rob Mineault 39:23  
Well, there you go. I smell another hashtag campaign guys.
- R** Ryan Fleury 39:26  
Right #WheresClippy. What happened to clippy?
- R** Rob Mineault 39:33  
We're getting sidetracked once again. Sorry. I got no, that's great. I love it. What were we

talking about?

D

David Dame 39:42

Well, I think we're talking about the closing the disability divided mission at Microsoft announced a little while ago and you know, we're talking about the technology. The second part they're doing is education, because with education becomes opportunity. Right. So by them really trying to get down and make reading more in our learning more inclusive and accessible, we're really starting to close that gap and gateway for employability and getting people out into the society and community. So I really glad they picked the they really took the lead on this. But to be honest, my hope is, every other company catches on. And we're just another one of them. And we're not the first one. That's what I would like to see. Right? I know, I should say Microsoft should always be on top of this. But as a person with a disability, I want to see the world do this where we're just part of the status quo.

R

Rob Mineault 40:48

Well, you know, and what's interesting, too, is that, I think that one of the really important things about about having accessibility such a such a standardized feature in things like Office products, and how that ties into inclusive hiring, you know, you think about it, and almost every company out there, they're using Office in some capacity, you know, in their systems. And so if accessibility is built into those functions, they're going to be more open to the idea of hiring somebody with a disability because they know that okay, well, this isn't going to be an option, because we're using Office and we know that offices accessible. So I mean, all these things trickle down into helping build this society that we're we're sort of fighting for it to, like you said you to, to bridge that disability divide or make it smaller.

D

David Dame 41:40

That's a brilliant point you just mentioned, Rob. By us creating this incredible digital platform, and devices. We're not building for yesterday's workforce, right of all able bodied privilege, white dudes, we're building for today's workforce that might have different abilities, or different disabilities and different needs with technology. And if we want to hire this diverse, inclusive, accessible workforce that represents where we are today, it's a society. It's got to be built in by default in the platforms that these companies and businesses are using to do their business where it becomes the status quo platform. And it's not seen of as an extra cost of, Oh, I hired Rob, I hired Dave, now we got to get this, this, this and this, by continually making it accessible by design. It's almost thought of

as a political platform for everybody to be on.

**R** Ryan Fleury 42:49

Just stop updating it every two years, or twice a year.

**D** David Dame 42:54

But is it more rapid updates better? Like I come from an agile perspective, right? So in trying to learn and to respond, I don't know, I don't mind updates. I think one of the breaks something that I can play. Yeah, I

**R** Ryan Fleury 43:09

think one of the one of the I don't know if it's a benefit or a curse, but with with organizations releasing multiple updates like that, it makes those of us using assistive technology, screen readers from third parties really hope that they're on the ball. They're doing beta testing, and that when Microsoft or whoever Apple releases a new iOS, that our products are still going to work and be functional.

**D** David Dame 43:35

Yeah, that's fair enough. I I never thought of it from that perspective. But you're right. It's and that's where agile and accessibility gets in stream is we got to be aligned with those third party vendors that that, you know, for me, I use Dragon Naturally Speaking. So whenever somebody goes, Hey, I haywire with that. I feel like my world is ended, right? Those say we'll try this different third party app. And I'm like, No, no, no. I've spent 20 years learning this thing. I can use it in my sleep. So you're right. It's that's another challenge to when you mention all the challenges. It's ensuring we're staying in alignment with our third party at as well to make sure we don't break something or if we do, we respond very quickly to it.

**R** Ryan Fleury 44:27

Well, in the last few years, you know, Microsoft has had a big push on accessibility narrator's gotten better and better, you know, dictation in Office applications. You know, I'm not sure where that's at, but it is there in Windows. But I do want to touch on the announcement yesterday of Windows 11, and possibly what accessibility enhancements have been made there.

D

David Dame 44:48

Well, I don't know how much I can technically share into the full release. But I know I work with the teams that are constantly doing it. We're really trying to look at as we move closer and closer to really address equitably, all the different use cases of disability in increasing new features and make things more crisp and clear. The big thing I think you saw on the promo video is the voice to tax getting better for tablets, right getting the hardware, Matt. I don't know how much I can speak to a new employee. So yeah, I'd rather take the safer route. Absolutely. Exactly, I might, you'll see, hey, anybody hiring out there? Well, what I know is, especially the windows team is a part of every release, they do. And these include accessibility features. And they you know, from, from visual impairments all the way to mobility impairments. And they have a two year plan to even do more. Unfortunately, I know you don't make those frequent updates, but I know they're more that they're doing, that's really gonna help the performance of those accessibility features.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:15

Well, unfortunately, I ran the windows 11 Accessibility Checker to see if my system met the requirements, and it doesn't currently, so I'm gonna have to get a new computer, Steve, I highly recommend you buy a surface. I might be biased, a little bit.

R

Rob Mineault 46:36

Well, but no, you bring up a that brings up a really good point, though. I mean, and this must be a real challenge when it comes to accessibility, because not only are you sort of trying to work forward and develop, you know, both new hardware solutions, to drive new accessibility features within multiple programs as well as an operating system. But you're also sort of going backwards and sort of building accessible functionality into say, products that already exist. And and you're you're you're you're doing all this from a from a hardware perspective, from a software perspective, from a UI perspective for probably a bunch of other perspectives that I don't even know about, because I don't work at Microsoft, but so that that must be just does it ever feel like overwhelming? Like you're just playing whack a mole with, with technology?

D

David Dame 47:36

Pretty much because my my, my wife asked me She goes, do you feel like you know, your your understanding and on top of these things, and it's just like you mentioned, it's like a whack a mole rageous? When I'm starting to see it from a hardware perspective, oh, wait,

we need to think about the software perspective. What does it mean for the hardware spec? And oh, wait a minute, what does it mean for this legacy app. So it's kind of that's why when a release comes are such a relief, because of all those dependencies are really trying to keep them fine tuned, tested and validated. When you release it, you almost at a loss, right? Because you almost miss all that time worrying and double checking and getting everything in. And then you hold your breath. And then when we get that, Oh, this is great. It makes this just even a fraction easier. It makes that whole kind of anxiety and struggle to get it designed, built leading up to release all worth it.

R

Rob Mineault 48:45

Yeah, I'm sure I'm sure release time for you guys must just be just like completely met nail biting them. It must be just months and months of stress. And then you guys release and it's just like, ah, feels so good.

D

David Dame 48:59

Yeah. And plus when like you mentioned earlier and talking with our third party vendors, like, Hey, this is what we got coming out, here's what we're doing. And sometimes we get aligned to what they're thinking and doing. And you're right, it just gets to be you think you got all your ducks in a row and you think you that everything but there's that reassuring feeling. Finally, when it happens, that you're like, Oh my goodness. So you know, and you know, I like where hardware is going. This is my first experience working in hardware and appreciating the it's really a lot more because you're dealing with material, right? So it's got to be much more precise and design before you start mass producing it and it's been a great learning curve to understand the complexities of what it takes to get. When you would think something was basic, like a tablet or a laptop, but all the nuances you need to consider to make it a naturally part of an extension of somebody's body, so they can use it naturally. And intuitively, it's been really interesting learning curve that I took for granted and taking this role that I really appreciated.

R

Rob Mineault 50:27

Yeah, you know, and it's interesting too, because I feel like the whole notion of accessible by design, as silly as it sounds, it's a relatively new concept in terms of implementation. Anyways, um, for a long, long time, assistive technology has always been sort of an afterthought. we've engineered solutions to existing products to make those things accessible, like, you know, just sort of hammering in a square peg into a round hole and making it work. But this idea of, of, you know, universal design is probably another way of talking about this, but this still been accessible by design. Can you speak a little bit about,

about what that what that process is kind of like.

D

David Dame 51:14

What's good about this kind of process of accessible by design is, it's not looking like an after effect, right, we know from think about traditional architecture and buildings, right? We can tell when a ramp was is slapped up, kind of half ass, right? Oh, look, now we're accessible. But the doorways still too narrow, you can't get in, or we have to take the maze route to get somewhere because that's the alternate accessible path. So we've seen when we're dealing with physical tangible things, of how painful it can be, to when it was being done that way by technology, because you're right, it used to be horrible to navigate a website. It used to be terrible when they bolted it and did it and do that. But when we're doing it by design, people don't realize it is accessible. Like it's not, it's not as apparent, which then brings people closer together. And another thing I always like to say is, we're all going to be disabled someday, to some of us beat you to it, and we're early adopters. So bringing them into the fold to build something, they might be building it for us today. But they're actually building it for their future selves. So they're starting to be able to future proof that applications. So I would almost maybe eventually, the language might change from building it accessible to future proofing it so it's always usable.

R

Rob Mineault 52:56

Can you speak at all to how AI is really sort of changing the game in terms of accessibility?

D

David Dame 53:04

Yeah, definitely. What I like about AI is any of you on the call had to use voice voice services before, like either voice recognition or voice commands.

R

Ryan Fleury 53:17

Yep, yep, sure. Yep.

D

David Dame 53:19

Now, if you remember, we had to be very precise, right? The language had to be precise, you had to Mansi ate in a certain way, you had to make sure to leave spaces, you had to deliver it in such a rigid format. Or when work, the beauty of AI is it quickly learns the imperfections of how everybody might speak unconsciously or do and really apply that

learning in a way where we can naturally speak to our devices, we can naturally do dictate, because the best benefit I see for AI with disabilities is quickly learning for me anyways, is quickly learning that those high effort tasks I do to be able to easily do them that might not be the highest value. Like if you look at Do any of you use Gmail, and I guess I shouldn't be talking about another product. But what I like about g Gmail is it knows what my responses are and learns my responses. So that way, if when you hit Reply All and as I started typing in auto filled what it will think I might say, based on what I've said previously, and it makes it easier for me to have an ac creus correspondence that I don't even have to dictate, which makes life easier. And you can see that on LinkedIn too, right? When somebody messages you. It gives you some key Things of how you might want to respond, which might seem disingenuous, but at least it helps get the dialogue and collaboration going. And a more effortless way. What AI does is they can constantly sense the mismatches. And then quickly provide ways to to mitigate those mismatches. Even if it's as simple as auto suggest autocorrect, which could be a blessing and a curse, right? Because sometimes you're like, no, I met this where I want that.

R

Rob Mineault 55:34

Yeah, I believe me, we've all been burned by autocorrect.

D

David Dame 55:38

At some point, exactly. It's a blessing and a curse, right.

R

Rob Mineault 55:44

The other thing that I love, can you talk to us a little bit about the low cost assistive technology fund? It's part of the AI for accessibility program. And it's just aimed to drive down the cost of assistive digital technology and increasing access to it.

D

David Dame 56:02

No, and I think that's great, right? Because, and I think maybe Ryan mentioned this earlier, is sometimes when we used to have to run a system technology, at least on my end, I always had to have high end computers. and ran over top of office ran over top of things. So now the exclusion comes, can I financially or easily buy, the equipment I need. So I think through digital assistive technology, we can make it economically accessible to many, because you know, all our families struggled, if you're, if you come from a family, and you're somebody with a disability, you know, there's everybody thinks there's magical funding for everything. And there's funding for some things. But it does come at a cost or

a hit to a family, that makes it exclusive, to give their children what they need at an early age to be able to master it. So what I like about this is, and the better we get up marketing these things, right? My biggest pet peeve is a user with a disability is I don't always know about these accessibility features, unless I Google for them or search for them on the web. And therefore, if it takes that long for us to find something, what about our parents or peers that if they see naked, easily exposed to people? So I think by making it very cost, cost accessible, it's going to make it more visible, and people can start using it to struggle a lot less from an earlier age or from an earlier means.

R

Rob Mineault 57:56

Yeah, exactly. Because what you know, what good is the technology, if it has to be, you know, within a device that nobody in that demographic can afford to purchase? It's sort of useless. So you're right, it's definitely part of this component of this cycle that we kind of need to break.

D

David Dame 58:16

Right? Because sometimes the disability divide is economic. Yeah, right. It can be economical, it can be geographical, like when every place forces you dad, the degree, maybe somebody lived in a rural area where a university wasn't in their means of logistically being able to happen. So how do we get to start treating elearning as an equal component to your traditional university degree or college diploma? Right, we got a really appreciate learning for whatever format or hover means they get and really look at what is learned versus what piece of paper is going fade, I guess I would like to leave the audience with is, you know, always reach out to suggest new ideas, great innovation comes from users with struggles or mismatches. Please let us know right, wait, because I think disability is only a point in time until we figure out a way to solve that mismatch. So as quickly as we can, let's meet let's solve for today's disability so we can work on tomorrow's mismatches. So really, let's keep the conversation going. None of us are ever going to get this perfect. And I don't even think I found the call here today would know what does perfect look like in terms of inclusion and accessibility. But we all know what better could be. So let's not you know hang on perfection and let's all be human enough vocal enough and determined Enough to follow through to always be better.

R

Rob Mineault 1:00:03

Man that that was so well said. Man, I'm just gonna end the podcast right there. Just

- S** Steve Barclay 1:00:10  
like when we pop that
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:00:11  
David, the new host of 80 banter. We're done.
- D** David Dame 1:00:16  
Well, actually, I had a bug in Steve's room and this was the profound stuff. I thought I would steal it. Sorry for bugging your room, Steve. But I didn't want that cold. I get to go to wait.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:31  
I'm just surprised that you could hear anything over my Bulldog snoring.
- D** David Dame 1:00:36  
No kidding. No. But that's what I truly feel right. We don't know what perfection is. But we all have an opinion on better and I think we can always get better. But to get better means we have to engineer with the current to be able to give insight for tomorrow.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:00:54  
Now if Do you have any, anything that we can plug in? is there is there a website that you can you want to direct people to email? Yeah,
- D** David Dame 1:01:02  
if they want to follow me on LinkedIn, my LinkedIn is David Dame, my Twitter is @DDame. Continue to follow me. I have a website, [www.davedame.com](http://www.davedame.com) dot Give it a try. I haven't been on in a while, as you can tell. And if you want to learn more about me, I did a TEDx talk a few years ago, called sprinting with cerebral palsy. So do a search. That was a TED talk I did if you want to learn more, but reach out to me on LinkedIn, reach out to me on Twitter, reach out to Microsoft, if you have any ideas or you know how we could be better. Please feel free to do that.

- R** Rob Mineault 1:01:52  
Bring back Clippy that's all left. Dave, listen, it's been an absolute delight talking to you. Thanks so much for taking the time out and and talk with us and keep up the incredible work.
- D** David Dame 1:02:13  
Thank you guys. And thank you for allowing me to be on this show. This was actually a really great conversation. So thank you for kicking up my weekend. Well,
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:02:24  
thank you very much. And maybe once windows 11 gets released, we'll have you back on to talk about what's new. exactly that way. I'll be more than 12 weeks in that won't say anything. Looking for new employment. That's right. Next day. So you'll be saying things like, yeah, you can Bing it. Yeah, exactly. Like it started on being
- D** David Dame 1:02:52  
crazy there. Right. It's gonna take years of muscle memory that to get me to change that.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:03:03  
Alright, Dave, Well, listen, have a great rest of your day and a great weekend. And we will reach out again.
- D** David Dame 1:03:09  
Thank you very much. Take care. You too,
- R** Rob Mineault 1:03:14  
Oh, man, that was so cool. I love the fact that we have someone from Microsoft on the show. I always love it when the big companies, you know, pay a little bit attention to the little guys like us
- S** Steve Barclay 1:03:27  
Help get the word out.



Ryan Fleury 1:03:28

On it gives us a little bit of an inside look as to what's going on kind of behind the scenes, you know, they're not going to tell us everything, of course. But you know, we did, we did talk about the new windows 11 that was announced. And you know, he couldn't say a whole lot about it. But stay tuned for more as we progress through the year.



Rob Mineault 1:03:47

Yeah, I'm always fascinated by like, just the development cycle within such a massive company like Microsoft. But I mean, it really does sort of give you a sense of just how hard that must be to build accessibility not only into new stuff, but into the older products. And you know, you're have to tackle it from a from a hardware perspective, but also a software perspective, but also a user interface perspective. And, you know, it's, it is super complicated. And you're talking about working, you know, 1000s of people working all around the world together to try to formulate one seamless, smooth user experience. It's just, it's got to be so daunting.



Ryan Fleury 1:04:35

Well, and especially now that AI has come onto the scene, right? You know, if you link to that article in the show notes, Rob, that AI accessibility that Microsoft put out, they have a five year plan, and AI is a huge part of that. So it's gonna be really interesting to see what AI can do for us.



Rob Mineault 1:04:53

If you think about it. AI The only reason that we even need AI to help in that sense is just because humans are stupid. bid and machines are



Ryan Fleury 1:05:01

why we're slow, right? Like if you stupid if you go to YouTube and turn on captions I'm pretty sure all of that is done by AI in the background. All that captioning of videos. Yeah. Right. So it's pretty intelligent as it stands today.



Steve Barclay 1:05:19

Yeah, stop perfect.

- R** Rob Mineault 1:05:21  
Well heck even look at Otter AI which is what we use to build out our, our transcription. For as good as that service is like, I still have to go in and do an edit pass. And it's not because of a limitation of the software. It's usually because we're mush most idiot. Speak properly. And I have to go in and make all these corrections because the the algorithm can understand what the hell we're saying. Right?
- S** Steve Barclay 1:05:48  
Is it getting my banter properly?
- R** Rob Mineault 1:05:50  
Usually your banter come up pretty good. Excellent. So I'm usually the usually our guests are great. Like usually I have to don't have to do too many edits to just the name of the damn show. At a banter at banter. Say Hey, Ryan, Rob. Where can people find us?
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:09  
Well, currently they can find us atbanter.com
- R** Rob Mineault 1:06:13  
For now ... they can also drop us a line if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com, That's a shame where you're not gonna want to lose the cowbell email.
- S** Steve Barclay 1:06:27  
Hey, cowbell's coming with us.
- R** Rob Mineault 1:06:29  
Yeah, I know if that's Yeah, yeah, that goes without saying. I don't know if we can work that into the new name.
- R** Ryan Fleury 1:06:36  
We'll see what the audience comes up with.



Rob Mineault 1:06:38

Yeah, there you go.



Steve Barclay 1:06:43

I think it's also important to mention that people can find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. What are you thinking?



Rob Mineault 1:06:50

Yeah, they can for now. Yeah. Wait, there's anything after that? No, there's anything after that?



Ryan Fleury 1:06:57

Let's say no. Well, you can call us and say hi, if they want. They go. Yeah,



Rob Mineault 1:07:01

Yeah. 778...



Ryan Fleury 1:07:05

1-900 ...



Rob Mineault 1:07:11

Come on. No. Okay. All right. Well, guys, I think that is going to about do it for us this week. Big thanks to you, of course, and to our audience. And big thanks to Dave for joining us from Microsoft. And we will see everybody next week.