

# FACEBOOK LIVE WITH MICROSOFT CHIEF ACCESSIBILITY OFFICER, JENNY LAY-FLURRIE

## Video Transcript

**Dan Ellerman:** Hello, my name is Dan Ellerman and I am with Accenture. First before we get started, just wanted to mention that if you need a caption version of this broadcast, you can go to the Facebook post and there is a link; we are providing life captioning so you can follow along forward. Also, we have in the room Belle, and I wanted to mention Belle first. So we do have a sign language interpreter for everyone and so hopefully I just wanted to say thank you and welcome to everyone out there for joining us.

This is our fourth session and final session in the celebration of International Day with Persons with Disabilities. If you do not see the first three sessions I suggest you scroll down through the Facebook feed posts and take a look at those. They were amazing sessions. We have been doing them around the globe. We started in London and Buenos Aires as well as Mumbai, India to talk to Accenture around the globe about what they are doing around including people with disabilities in the workforce.

And I think we saved the best for last today. And joining me is Jenny Lay-Flurrie from Microsoft. She is Microsoft's Chief

Accessibility Rockstar. And I changed our title a little bit because I have had the pleasure of seeing you present and speak at numerous events, and you are like a rock star. You leave these events—leaving people energized about making sure people with disabilities are included in all aspects of work and life, so I thank you for that.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** You are very kind and maybe I can change my job title now, from Chief Accessibility Officer—maybe it's Chief Accessibility Rockstar, which is CAR—I like the acronym. Game on.

**Dan Ellerman:** That's right—Microsoft's CAR. That's right. So the focus today is on accessibility and I think you are the perfect person to have with us. So let's start from the beginning and tell us a little bit about what Microsoft -- how Microsoft defines accessibility and what it means to the future workforce.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** People with disabilities is a massive segment. We all know there's a billion-plus in the world. Accessibility is not a new concept. It is a very aged concept because it is about embracing people with disabilities and enabling—



whether it is a building, a piece of tech, whatever it may be—to be fully inclusive of everyone. And so for Microsoft, that means we're looking at *Windows* and *Office*, we're looking at all of our key components, we're looking at how to ensure our own disability community is fully included in whatever they are doing in the workplace. So it's how we can empower people. The mission of the company is to empower people and organizations, and we have a 20-year history here. If I go back, 1997 was when Bill Gates said this is an imperative for us, and some of the first features were in the early '90s. So yeah, it's a big gig, and I think it's really about reflecting humanity. Disability is a part of being human, and making sure you build products that are truly inclusive—and also really embrace disabilities as frontier for innovations. So, it's a really fun space and very cool space as well.

**Dan Ellerman:** That's amazing that Microsoft has been working on accessibility for so long. Tell me a little more about Microsoft's journey. So I know you are the second Chief Accessibility Officer—and the first CAR, right?

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Absolutely.

**Dan Ellerman:** Tell me more about that accessibility journey for Microsoft.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** I think in any journey you have moments of sheer brilliance and moments of not, and you learn from both. When I joined the company 13 years ago now, in London, I came not into this space. I came in as a person working on things like Hotmail in Europe (if anyone remembers the nice butterfly), and what I learned as I joined the deaf community with my own deafness—

and I joined the employee community—was that accessibility was something that everyone was talking about. And back then, 13 years ago, we had six employee communities at Microsoft. We now have just over 15. And really the power of accessibility and what we have been looking at is how we lean into that expertise. How do you take the wisdom from the huddle community—the deaf community, the autism groups and now bipolar and eating disorders, whatever it may be—and help it to leverage and build better infrastructure.

And so we're very proud of our employee community. In fact, I think one of the proudest things, as I reflect back on that 13 years, is being chair of that group for as long as I have, about 10 years now, but also then as I slipped into accessibility full-time, to really lean into that. Three years ago when I came into this role, it was really about how can we reboot it, and make sure accessibility was proliferated across every division of the company, we could lean in that opportunity to innovate, we could bring more talent into the company, and we could really build education materials and training and role models to help us to empower—whether you are a student, a person in the workplace playing at home on the Xbox or whatever it may be—you feel included, you feel empowered and you are able to be productive in whatever you want to be. So you can communicate, you can create. And so really, how we have evolved now is accessibility is just, and my job is, to ensure accessibility is a sustaining, endemic, and systemic approach in Microsoft. So yeah, I've got work to do.

**Dan Ellerman:** That must be a huge culture change, culture shift, endeavor that you are

on. Can we dig a little bit deeper and talk to me about how you're working with designers, developers and the whole ecosystem to get it to make accessibility be a norm, and a practice versus remediating tools that are already created for accessibility?

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Yeah, the bottom line with accessibility is a couple of key things to keep in mind. If you don't know if your stuff is accessible—and when I say stuff, I mean your apps, your website, your *SharePoint*, your product, whatever it may be—it's not. There is no middle ground here. You have to invest time and resource to ensure that your product is accessible. And clearly one of our things is to make that easier.

And so one of the beautiful things even on a pure, everyday level is "Accessibility Checker," which is included in *Office 365*. One of the things we did was move that from a deep, dark menu, is to live right next to spellcheck, and that increased the use 5X. So people know there is a way of testing and checking. People then are able to send inclusive emails, inclusive *PowerPoints*, inclusive *Word* documents, because you never know if there's somebody on the team that has a disability. Over 70 percent of disability is invisible.

And then if you wind it back, the most important part in some ways of what we do is ensuring that designers and developers are thinking about inclusive practices all the way through. So we believe in inclusive design. There is a toolkit online: if you just go to [www.Microsoft.com.accessibility](http://www.Microsoft.com.accessibility), everything I am talking about is up there. Inclusive design is really about how you include all of humanity, including disability

into a design process. So you think about deaf, blind, speech mobility, and cognitive, things like autism and mental health, as you are designing a product.

And then as we look at things like Visual Studio, which is our powerhouse, and how do we ensure that accessibility is embedded into that dev process? How do we ensure there is really clear guidance on how to build an app using UIA, automation for UI? So how do you really ensure that you are using the right design principles?

And so we are really passionate about building education materials and getting those out. We did mandate training on accessibility in the company a few years ago and the whole population took that which is great. How do we get it deeper? So we do a lot of little two-minute snips. We do code snips, we put out a ton of training resources. And it's really important: if you build it in here, you won't have to test and remedy at the end of the cycle.

**Dan Ellerman:** You are really building it into your culture, so that's amazing.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Yeah, that's the goal.

**Dan Ellerman:** And 100 percent coverage as far as training on accessibility?

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Yeah, that broad, but then for every role—whether you are a developer, whether you are a product manager, whether you're a marketer—making sure you have the tools, making sure you know how to represent that space is very important.

**Dan Ellerman:** I think we have time for another question. So I would be remiss and



there are people that want to know about what is coming down next for Microsoft. What are the new products and tools that are going to be accessible? Or if it is not a product or tool, what programs are you doing for the employee experience with people with disabilities?

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Yeah, there is so much fun stuff right now. It is kind of insane and I get really excited about it because I think there is so much goodness there. If you just think about the powerhouse products we have—*Windows* and *Office 365*—so much beauty now embedded into those products. In *Windows*, whether you are someone with low vision or blind, we have really been working on our screen reader experience in that. And in the October release in *Windows*, we added eye control, so you can now move your mouse using your eyes. You can type using your eyes, which is a project that's really about people with ALS, or M&D. And we have been deeply embedded, we're so grateful to the Seattle community and many of those teams [inaudible] for helping us with that.

In *Office*, it is about ensuring that across all the different components of *Office*, we really build inclusive content. So when you now pull in (and the power of AI) when you pull in a picture and you do that in *PowerPoint*, it will give you automatic alt text with it. But also, it will give you, on the right-hand side, a whole list of design ideas, so you don't have to do multiple clicks. Great for people with mobility dexterity. And also when you're doing a *PowerPoint* presentation, click "Add Subtitles." This app is a little add-in, and you can automatically caption your presentation. Like, just, just super awesome stuff.

And then, and then one of our really fun ones, and I was in Australia a few weeks ago launching *Seeing AI*—and it's here in the US, it's in Australia, UK, Ireland and a few other countries and more coming—and *Seeing AI* is an app that came out of one of our hacks. *Seeing AI* gives you the—it's a free app, so go and download it; it is on the Apple Store—and it gives basically the power of sight to people with blindness. Whether you have a barcode or I am taking a picture of you, it will tell you that there is one amazing sassy individual sitting in front of me and give me an estimate of your age.

**Dan Ellerman:** Well, let me tell you, I downloaded it and took a picture of myself and I love it, because it took five years off my actual age.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Well, that's not cool, because it added 10 onto me. But it also gives an agenda, an expression and some other really cool stuff. And the other one I really love is Learning Tools. This is another thing that – Hacks being where you have a crazy idea, pizza, and a lot of coffee for a few days. You can help kids with dyslexia and as I am reminded by a couple of folks on my team, it is how you take a document and make it easier to read. It's really good if you have dense documents, dense legal documents. It will highlight keywords, it will segment the phonetics—it will really just empower that reading rate. That is now in Word and Edge, and yeah. So there is so much already there and so much more to do.

**Dan Ellerman:** Well, thank you, and I know we are coming up on time, but it has been amazing and I wish we had so much more time with you. I'm disappointed that this is coming to an end, but I think there is one



other thing we are going to have to add to your title. And I know you are not thinking about it as a technologist, but I really think you are actually on the leading edge of the new civil rights movement as far as ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access and equal opportunities within the workforce—and in society, in both work and life, right? So I think you are going to be seen as someone who is leading this charge in the technology revolution to ensure all people are included and I thank you for that.

**Jenny Lay-Flurrie:** Thank you to Accenture. This is the journey we are on. You've got a billion people and we've got an unemployment rate that's double that people with disabilities—people like me—and I want to see that change. It should change. I don't want to see any more underemployment or unemployment here, and I think technology has a big part to play.

**Dan Ellerman:** And I do want to leave everyone with one more thing to look forward to. In the coming weeks, Accenture, on the inspiration of companies like Microsoft, we have developed a white paper on Technology Vision around accessibility, which will be available in this screen, on this post. So you can come back to the Facebook Community post and find it there. And it's really focusing on how to bridge the digital divide for people with disabilities using inclusive design. So thanks everyone for joining us today. Thank you again, Jenny, and thank you again, Belle—we have to thank Belle—and hopefully everyone have a good rest of their week. Thank you.