This is about accessibility champions' networks, about building an army of people who believe in the same things as us. We have a brilliant panel. I will introduce Christopher, Emma, Cassandra and Emanuella. Christopher, if you can say more about your role in Google and a little about the champions' network as it represents itself in your organisation to get facts about where you are coming from.

CHRISTOPHER: I am Christopher, the lead, I guess, now the head of the accessibility programme at Google. In regards to what that means is that we set how it, how Google is accessible, the definition, the training, the teaching and auditing and ensuring that everyone knows what they need to do, how to do it. We have a great team but the team alone can't work with 100,000 folks at Google. So, we had champs for years. What we found people at Google would be super-excited then jobs happened and it tapered off. So, we have a couple in the team who do Jujitsu. They were think being how to simplify this and get people involved, so, let's do a dojo. That sounded fun. It ignited inside Google so we now have 400 people who are active champions in this dojo and at each belt there are different classes to teach, presentations to give. So, it allows us to scale the work that we do through hundreds of people in the organisation.

MARK: Thank you. I will leave you to the obvious next question, Emma.

EMMA: Hi, I joined the team about four years ago after a few years working at the BBC as a web developer. About a year later, I got handed the reins of the accessibility champions network that existed, so I have been there for three years. When I joined the team there were 27 champions, somewhere in that region, we now have over 200. Probably an alumnus of 90 champions, and some who are not championing but advocating, there are about 75 championing accessibility in other companies. I have done a lot of the taking on, the onboarding of the champions in the last three years. but we have not formalised it in the same way as our HR are with any levelling process, we are looking to do that sometime in the near future. But we keep track of what the champion have done.

What we struggle with is trying to get them to engage back to us to tell us the things that they are doing. I will have occasionally, somewhere, I will run into someone in the lift, a champion that I have not spoken to for a year, so I have no idea what they are doing, for all I know they have forgotten about it but I have a fantastic conversation of all of the thing they are doing to make their product accessible, so I would like to make that better to put that together. I joined the BBC about 13 years ago. Gareth was there, he would turn to meetings that my team had, I had no idea what he was there for but I knew who he was. He was not sure either! But we had a conversation, apparently, he was involved with accessibility. He was a product donor for the accessibility toolkit that a guy called Fraser Piers was working on. He would develop stuff and ask how was something doing, I would food back to him. So, Gareth was the product donor for that, and several other accessibility things. Somewhere a couple of years later, there was an accessibility group feeding into the standards the guidelines, then around the same time, half of the BBC moved up to Salford, that accessibility group was resurrected again. I joined that accessibility group and to some extent the people involved in those, many of them are now champions. I tried to be a champion, I be didn't, so I ended up joining the team. My line manager would not let me be a champion for a reason. The champion thing, it is not going to be that highly polished thing straight away. It is something that will grow and you have to find the people interested and somehow or other keep tabs of them and to be aware of them. The big things we changed with ours was to get them to network, to talk to each other, to help each out so the cross-product things were happening. So, somebody who figured out how to do something here could figure out how somebody could do something over there. That has been a big part of success in our network.

CASSANDRA: I'm a modern communications product marketing manager, I come to this with a different view from these guys. I'm an accessibility champion. I am part of one of the VR team force Microsoft that drives and leads with accessibility. I'm one of the 0% people in the UK that has gone through an accessibility action batch. That is a training programme we have set up in order to empower, I guess, is the best word to describe it, to empower and enable employees to be more comfortable to talk about accessibility, what it means. And to drive the accountability and the transparency and really accessibility should be a standard, it should be a part of what we do. So, through that champion's programme, that is one of the activities we have focused on. There are many other things, as you said before. It is about learning and sharing from each other. There are two angles that we do, one of is the internal readiness. Jenny mentioned we are on a journey, not a destination. We want to learn from each other. Internally we have accreditation, support networks, employee resources groups and many other areas and externally we are working with customers as we are keen to show what we are doing and learn from what they are doing. We had recently Purple Tuesday, last week, if my maths is correct. We had a number of people in the room, retailers and people that in other context, competition even, we are all in the same room discussing the same topics, how to enable a more accessible workplace? I think that it is great the way that we have been driving the moment. For me accessibility is something that is very personal. I always say when I talk to other people that you have to make it personal. It is not necessarily personal, it is not about knowing someone with a disability, it is more about caring it should be equal for everyone. I came from being a parent with a child with a disability. For me it is incredibly important, we talked yesterday, the carrot and the stick, the first trial was the schooling system. I knew he needed support in certain ways, however when it came to the school, he needed a paper, something that said that is what he had being diagnosed with, ASD, in his case. So up to the point there was a doctor's letter it was about, actually, he is being defiant, he doesn't like what he is being told. So, this is about hidden disabilities as well. This is a huge part of what we are focusing on. It is everything that we can drive. So, I think we have a huge momentum, like you, we have an enormous champions' network, we are about 450 people at the moment. In terms of champions but in the reality, like Jenny said, there are 145,000 people in the company that are accessibility champions, whether they are horror less active. So yeah, that is me.

EMANUELA: I'm from the digital accessibility team at Barclays, my experience is different from everybody else's experience. I joined the team 2.5 years ago now. It was the very first time I started working in a large company like Barclays. The first time I was working in house, I was always an accessibility consultant before. So, it definitely was a challenging role for me to have in Barclays. Six months after I joined the team, I was given a task to create an accessibility champion network. I was really excited about it, I thought it was are really great idea but I had no idea whatsoever how to do it. In the past couple of years, I basically tried lots of different things, some worked, some failed but when I did something I didn't particularly work well, I learned from it, so it has been very good and useful. I guess the very, very first challenge I had when I had to start the network was OK, we have 80,000-plus employees, how to recruit people to become accessibility champions. I tried two different things. One was to charge people who had interest in accessibility, by sending a newsletter that my team sends internally, the other approach was to send out these emails to all of the product owners and the masters in Barclays and thousands of them, luckily we had a list and ask each to nominate a person in their design or development team to become a champion. That way there would be a champion in each team. I thought this was a great idea. As it turned out, it was not the best idea I had. So, it was an important first lesson. What I realised is that when someone is nominated to be a champion, often it does not work that well. to be a great accessibility champion, as with all of us just saying, you need to have the desire to be a champion.

No-one can tell you need to be an accessibility champion. So, it was a first important lesson to learn. Something else that I had to do, I tried out and it worked well, it was outlining very clearly what the benefits of being an accessibility champion is, even when someone has the desire to be an accessibility champion, it is beneficial to explain that there are lots of benefits of being a champion other than doing the right thing, clearly. Such as you really get knowledge that will be very useful in your career in any company, you will move on later on, in any company. There is momentum around accessibility, I hope that in the next few years what we will see is that all companies who start, will start asking the developers, the designers, the UX people, anyone, really to have accessibility knowledge and skills, so it is useful to get the knowledge as you work in Barclays being an accessibility champion. So, by highlighting some of the benefits I managed, I think, to get some people interested in the role. But also, what was probably the most important is that these benefits could be used by the people who wanted to be a champion as a selling point to the line manager, as Emma said, if your line manager does not support you in your role as champion, they will not give you the time to be a champion nor the resources to be a champion, so, for example suggesting that the champion would an add an accessibility objective, like at the begin of the year employees must set up objectives to reach by the end of the year, if they added one or more accessibility-related objectives, then the manager will have to give them the time and the resources to achieve those objectives.

So, these are some of the things that seem to have worked well when I was trying to attract champions. I guess, the next challenge for me now would be now that I do have, even though it is not as big as your networks but I have a network of champions in Barclays who care about accessibility, what do I do next? How do I make sure that I keep on growing? How do I make sure that they keep on being advocates for accessibility? That is something that I was hoping that I could learn from other companies here today.

If it is not fixed, potential you will you could then be escalated to the equality and human routes Commission.

GEORGE: I think that's the other part of the equation. When people are not being worried enough about that sort of outcome, so as soon as these findings and results are published, you expose your vulnerabilities in the organisation, scoping in secondary challenge under the Equality Act, you are laying that out and open, so expect those secondary challenges to rise.

AARON: I have seen some FOIs emerging...

ABI: Yes, freedom of information.

AARON: Yes, I have been keeping an eye out on the freedom of information requests coming out. Many bodies are receiving questions about how they are moving towards becoming accessible. It is on the increase.

ALISTAIR: I talk about a 60‑second vulnerability with the organisations I work with. I say if a disabled student came to me, if I was a solicitor or a lawyer and a disabled student came to me and said I'm having real problems accessing this page or this content, it would take 60 seconds for somebody that vaguely knows what they're talking about in terms of accessibility to be able to say, yeah, it doesn't meet the accessibility requirement. Immediately, because the Act, paragraph 12 of the Act links directly, it is a failure to make a reasonable adjustment and it gives a whole bunch of sections of the Equality Act and so on that will have been broached. My fear would not be the EHRC. My fear is students who know what they're talking about and parents that wants the best for their kids.

ABI: If you don't have an accessibility statement, that's the cabinet minister responsible for that so it will be a quite quick yes or no you haven't got one, or if you think you don't need to have one, you will have to justify that. It is the question of do we put one up or not? Well, that doesn't go through this monitoring process, it is very easy to find there isn't one there.

MARK: Thank you. I will have to draw that to a close, I'm afraid. It is lunchtime. I would likely to say a huge thank you to Abi for managing that so well. Thank you, all. That's about the busiest Slido we have ever seen. If you put a reply into the question in here, it disappears. It is why we have not got them enabled. It is a really obvious question; this is not necessarily the best tool for this job. It is very good for the incoming things so we can keep tabs on it, but it is not a live forum, there are some answers to the questions on diversity later on. They are further down because if you put the answer down it would have disappeared and previously, we got accused of censoring that question. We will be back in here. The session in here is the ‑‑ sorry, I will just check ‑‑ I normally get this wrong. So, I'm looking on our website now. I can see the time... the timing is wrong. The timing is wrong on that, you see. The session is correct. We will reveal the time in a second. So, we will have a session in here about how to build an accessibility champions network. We will have a session in the other room about inclusive travel, back to the smart home of today. It is a demo of smart home technology led by RNIB. The session in here is how to build an accessibility champions network with various people who are doing that within their organisations. Please thank you very much again to the panel. Enjoy lunch!

[LUNCH]

MARK: This are lots of questions coming up. Before we get to that, I'm interested in yourselves and your roles and your work. What particular skills and knowledge do you think have been relevant. You obviously have some accessibility skills between you. But what skills are particularly helpful in terms of building the network? Is it that you have to be the best person at accessibility and you have to go and talk to them or are there other skills that you need? What skills are you using every day and encouraging people from your own point of view?

EMANEULA: I think the most important or the best way to approach these is to try and understand the constraints and challenges that your champions may have because what's probably most frustrating for me to see is when we have champions who are really passionate, they may also have a lot of, like, technical knowledge about accessibility, they really want to do it and somehow maybe they're not given the time to do it, maybe their line manager is giving them other priorities, or there may be technical limitations with the platform they use, for example. So I think you really need to have a dialogue to understand what it is that is preventing them to achieve the results that we're all hoping to achieve and trying to provide them with the support that they need, keeping in mind there may be limitations that at the moment you may not be able to overcome.

CASANDRA: I completely agree, the support side is absolutely key. The way that I see it as well is that you need to have a sufficient representation from across the business and each and every one will bring something different. If we were all the same, it would be a pretty boring world, right! We need to all ‑‑ it is not about everyone being technical, some people may have better presentation skills, some people may be better people’s person. It is about really taking the best out of each of those. I think it is important because accessibility should play a part if it is not already in all of the areas of the business and, you know, if you are talking about marketing, it is about how do we go to market and the collateral you actually put up. We should all know about that. If you are talking to customers, what about inclusive meetings, whether it is with subtitles, whether it is a transcription, whether it is breaks, it could be a number of things. If you're talking from a more technical perspective, you have the developers and all of those guys that are incredibly excited about how they can actually build upon each other. But I think it is about understanding the different skills from the individuals you have in the organisation and then supporting them in that journey. If I think from a Microsoft perspective, we have actually set up an accessibility library, you go in there and you select your role and then you'll get a number of tips that are specific to your role. If I go there and I select my own role, it will tell me potentially about inclusive meetings, constant collaboration and a number of other things, and how to speak about this. It is about supporting that journey of if you want to be an active evangelist of accessibility, how do we support new that journey? You don't have to be excellent. Practise makes that perfection, right. We need to allow the employees to have that support and the same for anyone else. I think it's important that there is variety and you have representation across the board.

EMMA: I think for myself and the skills that I have, one of the key things that I learned when I transitioned from being somebody who would have been a champion or could have been a champion or was trying to be a champion into somebody who was kind of managing this network of people was realising that actually I don't have all the answers because I was supporting and helping people in a whole bunch of different roles and it took me a little while to kind of get to that point where actually I'm quite comfortable to go into a situation and know that I am not going have the answers that they're going to ask for because they are going to ask and they do! How do I code this? I don't know, that's your job! I'm not a coder anymore. I know the things you need to think about and I know the questions I need to ask and I can help you understand those. I have learnt where my role is different now to what it was before. Where I'm going in with designers and with testers and with editorial people, I don't come from their background at all and that is the only answer I can give. It is nice to know that I have a whole bunch of reading that I have learned and I can guide you. Being able to guide others and being approachable... I'm really bad with names, I'm very good with faces, I know if I've met somebody before, but I'm really bad with names. With the champions for a long time I seemed to be really good with names, it seemed that way. We're getting now to numbers where I'm struggling especially if I haven't met them in person, oh, that's one of our champions, but for a long time I could walk over and I didn't have to remember their name necessarily but I could remember what team they were in and I could ask how it was going and getting that update as a lift conversation. Being approachable is another thing that is good.

I totally echo the sentiments you are giving, you've got to help your champions kind of know what those first steps are, know kind of what ‑‑ how to make accessibility really easy for them, so there is still a lot more to learn but here's where you can start. So, we have, like, a little task that we ask all of our new champions to do, it is different depending on their role, that effectively does two things. One, it gets them looking at our guidelines and thinking about it in relation to their role, so that they actually start to understand those guidelines a bit and what it means for them in their role. Two, it gives me an idea of what they understand and how much support they're going to need. That's all that task is doing. Like I say, it is slightly different depending on role. It is a good place for them to start and they kind of go, oh, I can do this and then point them to a whole bunch of resources and champions they can go to.

CHRISTOPHER: I agree with everything that is said to date. In terms of personal skills, two of the things that come to mind for me, one is generous in terms of praise and it is important to reflect the success and what people have given, what's done, because incentive is part of it. You have to have people do something out of the goodness of their heart to so long, but if you give them thanks, you give a nudge to their manager. Being generous with praise is another thing to keep things going. Being an over communicator, you have to let people know this new law has been passed are, or this new lawsuit has been happened, keep the excitement going, but it is one of these things that you don't want too much but you have to keep them engaged and keep the community engaged and you make it fun and enjoyable. Those things help.

MARK: Thank you. You're stepping into an organisation tomorrow that doesn't have an accessibility champions network, what's the ‑‑ I will give you a couple of steps ‑‑ what are the first couple of things you should be doing? I will tie it into ‑‑ I will connect it to a question that has come up about how much senior buy‑in you need. I guess there is a question of what you have uncovered enwhen you start. What are the first steps?

EMMA: Gareth did a good talk about this on GA Conf, if you want to look it up at YouTube. You need two things to start this off. One, you need to find a senior stakeholder, somebody who gets it, understand it and it will back you up when you start asking for support, money and things like that. So, you do need to find that person who will be your sponsor and who will be your senior person. They'll get other people in as well but you need to find a person that gets it and understands it.

The second thing I would suggest you need is that you need to find who your people are who are already doing that. Who are the people who are already advocating accessibility and already championing it? Find them, get them talking to one another, get them effectively ruminating and kind of building a little underground movement that effectively is a champions network, even if it is not formally called that yet. Get them involved and support them with their work and get them to talk to your colleagues. One of the key things that has changed in our champions network in the time I have been there is changing from a concept of being a one person per product ‑‑ and that's sort of coming back and we have a couple of accessibility leads which is great ‑‑ but rather than one person per product who feels like they are banging their heads off a brick wall because people don't have time, we have several people in a product and they build each other up and they build it into their job so it becomes a cultural change and it is part of their job, and it is doing their job better. It makes it easier to do. You have to find those people who will share that with their colleagues and let them know that this is actually doing your job well, it is not some difficult thing you have to fit in at the end of the process.

MARK: Casandra?

CASANDRA: I completely agree. Sponsorship is one of the key things around any change management, right. So, we're talking about culture transformation and culture has people at its heart. When you talk about people and changing the way they're doing things, you need that sponsorship because you're asking them to take away some of their time and focus it somewhere else. The key thing I would say as well is you need to have your champions to have a purpose. Why are they there? What are they being asked to do? How are they going to do it? If there is no clear purpose, you really need to have that very clear from the beginning so you can actually enable them to do their best. I think those are the two ones. It was interesting because I had Michael Vermeersch, my colleague, share with me as to how things started off. In 2005 there was this mum of a ten‑year‑old that actually sent an email to Bill Gates: My son is really clever but he is being shut out of all of the courses he is applying for because of his disability, is there anything that you can actually do. Funnily enough and to the surprise of this lady, Bill Gates actually reply to them offering a number of resources to actually enable it. Michael was just telling me that 20 years later this person is actually a developer, you know, really well embedded into it. You have to have that person there at the top and you can start it from the bottom too. You have the two approaches that work really, really well. Yes, that's mine. Have purpose.

EMANEULA: I completely agree with all of these. I would add two things which I think are quite important. First of all, it is to remember that everybody can be a champion. So when you build a champions network, clearly you need to give champions a purpose and it must be clear what it means to be a champion, but not all champions need to be developers or designers, or need to know about accessibility, as long as someone has the will to advocate for accessibility they're perfect to be a champion. For example, in the champion network that I've created we clearly have lots of people working in digital but we also have, for example, some of the champions are PAs and you may think what do PAs have to do with accessibility championing but they do a great job. They are the people who see all kinds of the slide decks that come through and they make them pretty ‑‑

CHRISTOPHER: What is a PA?

EMANEULA: A personal assistant. When they come to them, they can actually notice this colour really is not good with this and we need to change the colour here. Maybe there is a big image containing lots of text so they may go back to the person who created it and say you know you should not be using these images without text. They are great champions and they do the job brilliantly. Do not limit the number of people who can become a champion.

Then, once you have that support from the top and you start recruiting the champion, the best way to actually get the network growing is actually ask the people who are your champions to do the job for you. Go out and recruit other champions for you and I think in that way the network can really grow fast and become wider and wider.

CHRISTOPHER: I want to echo two things that are particularly resonant for me. One, you don't have to start with an executive sponsor but I find it is sometimes easier to get an executive sponsor because you have some momentum. Get a couple of wins. I wouldn't necessarily start with one but have one in your back pocket. So, what's even better is if you could have one of your executives be part of the group because then they could start sharing amongst their leadership team and that's really helpful but you don't need to start with it. But you can't grow past a certain point without it.

EMMA: That's right.

CHRISTOPHER: And also, what was said is that you can't be just [inaudible], you want to embrace everyone. It is an inclusive conversation. Someone who is blind may be myopic ‑‑ a strange expression ‑‑ about blind issues and may not be aware or thinking of other issues so you want to have a large group of people. So, one thing that I would start doing is work with the employee resource groups, these are people are allies or people with different disabilities, this is a place I would start. Okay, we want to kick off a group, let's focus on this, is anyone willing to step up and work with us? And then that's a very fertile field.

MARK: A related question because we saw yesterday in the panel ‑‑ Jenny was a good example and she's not here so we can talk about her! ‑‑ how important is the high-profile leader joining? There is this difference between working on the ground but you all work in organisations where there are known people. Christopher, it is probably you now in that role! But the organisation recognises the value of this and presumably someone is in there continually banging away and someone like Jenny, you know, clearly is using some of her force of personality to get that across, do you see that in your organisation they are known within the organisation and you are known to be working with them? Is that an important part of the change that comes further down the organisation?

CHRISTOPHER: It is an accelerant. If there is someone you are inspired by, someone you like, having a cup of coffee with it helps to focus the attention. Inside Google our CEO has made for the first time in Google IO, in the statement how important accessibility is to us. And he spent ten to 15 minutes in an hour talk talking about the different things that people were doing that accelerated the people inside of Google. The cooler it is, the more people want to do it. So, having the person on top really accelerates the process.

MARK: You are still working on the coffee appointments?

CHRISTOPHER: I'm down to tea now!

MARK: Are you aware of that in terms of your organisation, the profiles of the leaders, the different ways, it is the good or the bad, and saying you are hooked on to that as that person is doing it? It comes both sides?

EMMA: It is useful places like this, people don't always know me but I work with Gareth and Jamie and say I work with them, and people know where I am at. I would rather Gareth answer the question in terms of is it useful to be known around the BBC? Do you feel like you are known around the BBC?

GARETH: It does not make you popular! I have been banging on about this for 15 years, setting up the accessibility team. But the person, it is always that person, the Director-General of the BBC. In some ways we have been privileged it is in our charter that the BBC is for everyone and accessibility enable it is to be for everyone. So, you turn around and say, well, yeah. At one point I tried to get to the job title of Head of Everyone! It was rejected quickly! But always work asking! But it is one of those. And every single Director-General talks about this as it is inherent in the organisation. You say well you have said it and I'm helping to enable that; you realise that the entirety of the Executive Board are those people. So, there is a board level executive champion, all they do is keep that conversation, reporting, understanding, the last two have been the Chief Financial Officer, incredible to have them as the accessibility champion with all of the money, now it is the Director of Policy. But it is the one that wants to take it up, learn about this, they never wade in. It is not policing but it reinforces culture. People have mentioned culture all the way through it, that is the key to all of this. It is not about necessarily an individual but if they can reflect that culture and encourage that culture and to be an example of that culture, then individuals are useful.

MARK: Thank you. Back to the justification bit, I guess, if there is a sense of if somebody were to ask you, how much time a champion would take up in their job, there is a question about how many hours should an accessibility champion be dedicated to being an accessibility champion? How do you justify the use of that team member in that way?

CASANDRA: It would be great if we talked about accessibility and it is just something to do, and not talk about the time that is spent. You can be a champion; it could be subtle as something you put in a signature that people reflect on and they take action. Or you are driving an inclusive meeting and everyone copies you as there was great feedback. That drives momentum. Or you could be someone like myself, and that we spend a lot of time empowering the field, it could go weeks the way you do a couple of days or to a full week or a full week of accessibility. But maybe I think you should spend about 10% of your time in changing around what you are doing, is that the right number? I don't know, what are you trying to do? Where are you in the journey? Then you can assess what is right or not. Anything that your employees does actively to drive accessibility is towards that, whether you are intentional about it or doing it as part of your day-to-day.

CHRISTOPHER: The efficiency of people, when you know what you are doing, you can be more impactful in an hour than just getting started. So, there is a skill aspect of it that should be taken into consideration with this.

EMANUELA: Being a champion, it should not take any additional time, if you are a developer you just develop something that is accessible. What may be required in addition to doing your job well, for an accessibility champion for example it could be to organise a meeting with your team when talking about accessibility or training up a new developer who comes in who does not have the skills as no-one taught him at university for example. So, there may be additional tasks that someone as an accessibility champion decides to take on but only that it is a part of your daily job, really.

MARK: Related, do you have a sense from the way you are an accounting for your time and other time how much investment you are putting into people in the network, rather than the time they are spending. Is there a budget? Is there a sense of how it is costed? If you start from scratch, it takes two years, it will take this time, I need somebody at this level. Is that scale of commitment made or do you worm away organically?

EMMA: It has been organic for us. Obviously, there were a team so people were paid to be worrying about accessibility and improving that. I know for the champions in the time from when it started as a formal network to a little time after I started looking after it, new champions were told, around 10% of your time, a similar thing, a one in ten you can think of it as, that was the concept there in the business. Use your one in ten time to be championing. When I take on the new champions now, they are explained it is a part of their job. So, I ask them to do three things. I explain it to them that we just want them to champion. So, when you are doing your job think of accessibility, make it is part of your job, if you are a dev you are thinking about coding, if you are designing it is that focus, so do your job that level up. Raise the bar on how well you do your job and encourage those around you to do the same thing. So talk about it with your colleagues and encourage them to do the same thing in their job and the meetings that you go to, I don't know what you call them, backlog shaping, whatever the meetings are that you are going it in the team, if you are thinking in the back of the head, what about that user? Make sure that is talked about, accessibility happens at the point where those conversations happen and a team of five people or however big we are cannot be in the hundreds of thousands of conversations that happen each week across the BBC, never mind the bigger organisations. But the people in the teams, champion accessibility for you, they are going to the meetings, they can ensure that the conversations happen when they should. That way it gets thought about and talked about really early in the process, not two weeks before the launch when you do an audit and you realise you are not accessible.

CHRISTOPHER: Please ...

CASANDRA: From my point of view I would ask the question back, what is the cost of not doing anything about it, not investing the time? We focus too much sometimes on how much it takes us to train, ready, to do. But if you are not doing it, how many customers are you losing along the way? How much money? How much profit? Think of it from a business perspective. We have to do it, it is more around the other question, rather than how much you have to put into it to make it work.

EMMA: From a business point, putting that training in place, those are the costs they are easy enough to cost and monitor. From a champion point of view, it is investing that time like with anything else that they would do in their career. Other than it is part of the job and then the time to learn.

CASANDRA: It goes back to what you were saying and I was saying earlier, don't have people nominated to do this, if you are doing it as you care and you want to do it, you will find the time, you put it in as part of what you are doing. If you are told, this is an additional task to tick at the end of my to-do list, that is us not make sense.

CHRISTOPHER: Our making it a part of their job, our champs, our 20%s but if you can make it part of your job, to do it well as you are being critiqued on it.

MARK: There is a related question the other way around. How to measure the impact of what you are doing? Even if it is not a part of somebody's job, but do you measure the impact of it?

EMMA: I don't know about how to measure the impact. But when I was moved into the team, we were still getting audits and having huge push backs from teams, not having the time to do it, worrying about it later. That was the culture, I have champions coming to me now, they have had a conversation another champion, and I can think, that is happening in our team. How many customer complaints do we get these days? They are few and far between. Then is a really good sign. I have dealt with a couple recently as we did take our stuff off Tune In. That did not go down well. But there were good reasons. But, yeah, those are ways that you can measure it I guess, what is the culture, are your new champions aware of accessibility because of what is going on in their team? Are your customer complaints down in regards to accessibility?

EMANUELA: I agree, I don't think it is something you can measure but something you can sense. So, when, even two years ago when I joined Barclays a lot of the conversation started with me saying, talking to a product worker, when ask about what we are doing about accessibility, it was, "What is accessibility?" That was depressing, so when you talk with a team and you ask what accessibility is, they are like, "Of course our developer is a champion." So, it may not be something you can measure but you see a positive impact.

CASANDRA: You can also look at employee satisfaction, your hiring process, there are so many things to look at, you could say that there are assumed correlations? You can only assume that whatever activity you took is correlated to that. But it gives the indication of the workplace that you are building. I think that is really important.

EMMA: Yes. When champions are coming and talking at events like this, you know you are doing something right.

>>: I wanted to appeal to your bean counter. There is a bean counter answer to this. To know how much, it will impact on the organisation first, you know I am no fan of audit but audit how much time and money is spent refactoring design and coat. And that was our entire business case to hand that back. It may take two or three years to get there but we will give it back to you as resource for a small investment. Everyone was like, where do I sign? If you are losing, and refactoring can be 30, 40% of the resources fixing the stuff you should not have broken in the first place. It gets around the auditing problem. Don't break it in the first place. The champions stop it breaking therefore you don't have to audit. That money flows back into the organisation they are able to build the cool stuff that they wanted to build in the first place but could not as they were refactoring the stuff that was broken in the first time.

CHRISTOPHER: And there is little ownership or responsibility. In Google we don't have [inaudible] hearing this makes me excited, I want to make that change, I think it is something we are missing to make it a part of their job. To give them the responsibility, the authors, to pull the rope, we need to stop, we need to do something. That would be helpful.

MARK: It sounds a bit like, I remember this conversation from about five or ten years ago, we would have been talking about a business case for accessibility. Are we close to that for a champions network? Can that be shared? That is something that others can use, crunching the numbers, this is what has come out, these are the extra costs, does it that exist?

EMMA: I went to a meet up of a bunch of testers in the Manchester tech community. Somebody from another company, if you can ask me, I will dig out his name. He was a tester; he did a talk. He had done an analysis of the wiki guidelines, when you first start talking about that in the production process. He was fed up of testing and nobody doing anything about it. He worked out 95%. Based on information in the WCAG pages. But he calculated that 95% of the WCAG guidelines you should start talking and thinking about before you write a line of code, never mind sending it to the tester.

It was an amazing stat to me of what is called shift left, that we were already thinking about doing it. We train our designers more than our developers! It needs to go in the requirements and designs. The developers need to have the skills to know how to do it but they build whatever they're told to build. It is a good stat to go away your business, 95% needs to be thought about before you even write one line of code.

MARK: Is Jennison in the room? Gareth has the microphone. It is a really good way...

CHRISTOPHER: Nicely done!

MARK: Can you introduce yourself?

FLOOR: Oh, my goodness. Hi. I'm Jennison, I'm an Accessibility Engineering Evangelist from LinkedIn. I submitted my question through the Slido. But I'm wondering if any of have different levels in your champion programme and if you do, could you describe what Level 1 looks like, what Level 2 looks like and that kind of thing?

CHRISTOPHER: I can go first.

MARK: People want to know if they get a belt from your dojo.

CASANDRA: Michael would be able to cover this, if he could.

EMMA: We don't particularly have levels but to some extent we have different roles. So, we have champions who are doing that championing, people who have stepped back from that who are no longer championing but they are still on side. They are referred to as advocates. It is not a formal programme but it is how we refer to them. We have a couple of people who because they've been such brilliant champions have now been put into a formal role of being an accessibility lead within their product. So, they're working on at it either full‑time or 50/50 agreement with their ‑‑ I'm hoping we will get a few more of them. There are a few levels. The next level is our team.

EMANEULA: It is their actual role.

EMMA: Yes, accessibility lead within their product, whether they're a developer or in another role, they are an accessibility lead. It came from them being such brilliant champions.

MICHAEL: We do. Is this live streamed?

MARK: Yes.

MICHAEL: Nobody at Microsoft knows this yet so this is a problem. We're going to announce it on International Day for People with Disabilities at Microsoft UK. We have developed a badge system where people can own badges and those badges will represent levels. Typically, it will be obviously at this point in time ‑‑ we are thinking of next levels ‑‑ one, two, three and four, where one will go that you know the basics, so you know how to present it an inclusive way, you know how to communicate in an inclusive way, all of those kinds of things.

Number two, that you genuinely do that as a practitioner and actually be proud doing that and you tell people. Number three is then how you actually implement that in your job and bring that forth in your contacts with your customers and so on. Number four is then when you are getting people like Casandra who are genuinely working in the field and things like that. Obviously, we will, because we are seeing that this is people ‑‑ because of the gamification and things like that, people seem to lap this up! We are going to heighten the bar and get more challenges as we go.

MARK: Turn it up to 11!

CHRISTOPHER: In Google we have a dojo with five levels. I know that black belt is the best. The white belt ‑‑ brown, white brown, red, blue and black. It changes around. The fact is that because I don't know, many people won't know the order of the belts but for the people who care about the order of the belts, they know! It matters. I'm number four, I'm a black belt, that sounds awesome. So, having this relationship, we actually started with badges and we realised with the different designs on the badges and understanding the relationship with them and the through line was really hard. And then we had numbers and then we thought it was effective but we wanted to prize it so then we did the dojo. No, we don't yet have belts but I'm trying to get us to do it. My dream is that we actually have a belt that you put little badges on your belt! Then you only have to buy one belt, it is cheaper than way! The important thing is it increases engagement and it increases responsibility and to your point, this is the best way to hire into the space. If you have someone who has taken the time and effort to get the black belt, when you have a job listing that's who you go to talk to, they're trained and they're passionate and they are exactly the person you want to come up and be part of a team. So, for us, that's not why we do this, we do this because it is just way more work than any one person or any one team no matter how big you are can do. You want to spread it around but to really move things forward, as you were saying, you actually want to have these dedicated leads of accessibility in these programme areas because they actually have the authority, they have the ability and they can go and complain. If someone inside the room is there saying I'm in the meeting at the right time, I asked the right question you can really cause change. So, this dojo programme is a great way to bring everyone together, train everyone and make them passionate and get them in the room. When you have them in the room, the magic happens. There was a question up there. I'm sorry, I can't sell these T‑shirts, these are made by... you have the bags, this is technically not ‑‑ We're streaming this, oh, shoot. We are not supposed to have a Google logo not in the Google colours, so this is contraband! You understand. This is technically contraband.

MARK: You've been caught with illegal T‑shirts.

CHRISTOPHER: If you look in your bags you have the same logo.

MARK: [inaudible].

CHRISTOPHER: It is not something we are technically supposed to do. We can't sell it. I'm not going to give you mine because it is cold outside, I'm sorry! But the swag, the things ‑‑ as part of the bribery that makes these things go so well, you want to make it fun and interesting. You want people to show up. We have stickers, we have T‑shirts, we have mugs, water bottles, beanies. This is where you need the money. This is why you need an executive sponsor. If you are going to do this gear, you need to have someone to check for it. You could do it without but when you have something that people can look at that, it increases the visibility of it. Oh, that's cool. I want that sticker on my laptop, I want that. It builds the reputation and momentum.