

The Heumann Perspective Podcast
Accessibility and Inclusion in the Tech Sector with Kate Kalcevich and Carrie Morales
Transcript

Kylie Miller:

Welcome to The Heumann Perspective, a podcast with the internationally recognized, bad-ass, disability rights activist, Judy Heumann.

For our second episode of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Judy interviews two people from Fable. Fable is a company based in Toronto working on accessibility testing with a platform powered by people with disabilities. This episode, Judy is joined by Kate Kalcevich and Carrie Morales. Kate is the Head of Accessibility Innovation at Fable and Carrie is one of Fable's Accessibility Testers. In this episode, you'll learn more about Kate and Carrie, what they do at Fable, and their journey to employment. You'll also hear more about Fable Pathways, a skill development program for people with disabilities interested in working in the tech sector. Kate and Judy have both taught courses on Fable Pathways and you can sign up to take them online for free at fablepathways.com.

The Heumann Perspective is produced by me, Kylie Miller, and Judy Heumann. So let's roll up, lay down, dance around, whatever makes you feel best. And let's meet this episode's guest.

Judy Heumann:

All right everybody, welcome back to The Heumann Perspective. Today we have two very interesting guests, Kate Kalcevich and Carrie Morales. Both of them are with Fable, and we'll get into discussing more about that in a minute. Let's start off by having each one of you introduce yourselves. Kate?

Kate Kalcevich:

Sure. Hi, I'm Kate. I live in Toronto, Canada. And at Fable, I am the head of accessibility innovation. I help with things like training organizations on how to build accessible digital products, and I'm also working on something called Fable Pathways, which I think we'll talk about in a bit.

I spent most of my career in government, interestingly enough, and that's when I got into accessibility. So I started off in the Ontario Provincial Government, which would be the equivalent of state, and they introduced legislation around accessibility. So I had to learn about it because I was required to do it for the work that I was doing, which was building websites for the government. I actually spent 19 years in the government, and then I decided I really wanted to have a bigger impact in the world of accessibility and inclusion. So I left my long term government job and I went to join a startup called Fable. And that was a year and a half ago, nearly two years now.

Judy Heumann:

Great. And do you have a disability?

Kate Kalcevich:

Yes, I am hearing disabled. I wear hearing aids in both of my ears, but they're super tiny, so it's a somewhat invisible disability.

Judy Heumann:

Carrie, could you give us a little bit more information about yourself? And there's some very interesting aspects to your life that I think the audience will find intriguing.

Carrie Morales:

Hi, I'm Carrie and I am from Philippines, but I moved to the United States when I was three. Many of my family members are also blind and visually impaired since birth. We have something called aniridia, which is the lack or partial lack of an iris. I grew up with a lot of disabilities. My brother is also deaf. My mom was the only one who was able bodied in my family and she was our eyes and ears. I started working at a low vision center where I helped people find the technology and the services that they need, as well as helping a low vision specialist. But then I had a son and I decided to stay home with him. And I started a YouTube channel called Live Accessible where I talked about technology and disability. Then I found Fable from a friend of mine who is also blind and works at a Lighthouse for the Blind in New Jersey. And so now I'm a Fable tester as well as a freelance accessibility tester and still a YouTuber.

Judy Heumann:

So maybe we could go back to you, Kate. Do you know why Fable set up the tester program?

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah, it was really important for Fable to elevate the voices of people with disabilities. In the accessibility field, oftentimes we have specialists who are reading standards and guidelines and applying those in their work, but we miss out on that human connection, which is what are the lived experiences of people with disabilities? Fable focuses specifically on people who use assistive technology, so using some sort of software or hardware to access their computer. We want to make sure that we provide a way for organizations to connect with people who are living with disabilities as testers so that they can go through their websites and applications and give feedback on how usable and how accessible they are.

Judy Heumann:

Carrie, why was it intriguing to you? And what was the process that you went through before you were brought on as a tester?

Carrie Morales:

So as a lover of technology, I love to review technology. I often get the latest phones and different things like that. I started working in courses for HTML and CSS. That's kind of when I found Fable and I thought that it would go very hand in hand with some of my experience reviewing technology and even websites, and kind of putting my experience at least a little bit on the table for Fable and connecting with the organizations that they work with.

Judy Heumann:

So Kate, how did you find out about Fable?

Kate Kalcevich:

I was first introduced to the founders of Fable, Alwar and Abid, with my work in the government. I was really known for leadership and accessibility and inclusion, and Fable wanted to get on one of our vendor lists in the government, and so a meeting was set up by other folks with myself in Fable, and that's when I first met with them. Shortly thereafter, maybe a year or so later, I left the provincial government and I went to work for Canada Post, which is the mail delivery service for all of Canada. And they were customers of Fable at the time. So I became a customer of Fable through joining Canada Post. And so I got to use the product to do testing on Canada Post tools, and we also got an accessibility strategy from Fable, which I helped to implement.

Judy Heumann:

And what do you do at Fable now?

Kate Kalcevich:

Now, as head of innovation, I run experiments. So we are doing things to kind of push the limits of accessibility. One of those major experiments is called Upskill and it is online training for organizations, and it's innovative because it takes accessibility, which is typically pretty dry, not that interesting, based on standards and technical guidelines, and we put a really high quality spin on it where we're doing videos recorded in a studio kind of masterclass style, and we're mixing up video content with written content and quizzes, and just designing a curriculum that's really engaging and really practical so that people are walking away from the learning with skills that they can apply in their day to day role.

Judy Heumann:

And how is that linked into the testers?

Kate Kalcevich:

We feature a lot of the testers in these courses. So when we're working with a company to build a course for them, we customize it based on their products. What we'll do is we'll bring in testers from our community and have them do demonstrations using their assistive technology on our customer's products. And that way they're learning directly from people with disabilities about the accessibility of their product.

Judy Heumann:

So Carrie, did you apply to be a tester for Fable?

Carrie Morales:

Yes, I did apply back in December, and I started working with Fable in January.

Judy Heumann:

What was the process?

Carrie Morales:

It was really interesting. I filled out an online application. Within a day I was contacted, and we already scheduled a meeting and it went very smoothly. I think there was a secondary interview about a week later, and I already went ahead and started training right away. It was a really quick turnaround, and it was really nice to talk to an interviewing manager that seemed to at least understand disability and didn't have all those questions of, "Could you do the job? What does it mean that you're blind?" And all those kinds of things. It was really refreshing.

Judy Heumann:

So Kate, if we could just step back for a moment. You're hard of hearing and you are identified as being hard of hearing when you were six. Did you receive any type of accommodations while you were in school? Did you need any accommodations, like retrospectively, when you think about it? If you could talk a little about that.

Kate Kalceovich:

Yeah, I actually identified as hard of hearing sooner than that. I was under a year old. But I didn't get my first pair of hearing aids until I was six. I guess they just didn't fit babies back in the day with hearing aids. And as far as accommodations, I had my hearing aids, but we didn't have technology. I'm 42 years old, so way back then, we didn't have computers in the classroom the way we do now, so I didn't get things like transcripts. There was no online learning. I had to do my best to just follow along. I don't know sign language, so there was no way to give me an interpreter to help with that.

I really only succeeded in school because I was very good at learning independently. I read a lot and I could just read through the materials and kind of learn on my own because I didn't hear that much. And in fact, all the way through college, I didn't hear most of the lectures, and I wouldn't even bother with the course textbooks. I would go out and buy a book on the topic, read it myself, and manage to pass the exams and all of the tests. It would've been great if I had accommodations, but I didn't know to ask for them, I didn't know where to go for them, and I'm not sure I would've gotten them even if I had asked.

Judy Heumann:

So when did this start changing?

Kate Kalcevich:

Really things have changed for me since joining Fable. Fable is the first company I've worked at where they were really inclusive. They made such an effort to make sure there were captions in Zoom. People make an effort every time I join a meeting to turn them on so that I don't have to be the one asking for it. And even when we're doing something in person, they're making sure the venue is quiet, that I can have a spot at the front. Everything is set up for me so that I don't have to ask. Because sometimes having not had accommodation for so long, I don't even think to ask for them. I'm used to just doing my best to get through things, and it's lovely to have a company where they think of what I need on my behalf. They check in with me and make sure I have what I need.

Judy Heumann:

So if you were to ever go get another job, would you have higher expectations for what that company should be doing?

Kate Kalcevich:

Oh yeah. Now that I've known what inclusion really feels like, I definitely would set a higher bar. And even now if I'm having a meeting outside of work, I will ask people for captions and transcripts. And if they don't have it, I'll insist on using a different tool. So it's helped me just to advocate better knowing that I can actually get help. I don't have to figure everything out on my own has made me ask for help more.

Judy Heumann:

There is it about an 11 or a 12 year age variation between the two of you. Kate, you grew up in Canada, and Carrie, you grew up here in the United States. Carrie, were you in New Jersey when you were a child?

Carrie Morales:

I first moved to New York. In the middle of third grade, we moved to New Jersey.

Judy Heumann:

What were the accommodations like that you had in school?

Carrie Morales:

My parents advocated for me from a young child. They first wanted to put me in the special needs classroom, but my parents insisted that I stay in mainstream. Part of this was because I did not know English at all, and so I basically learned it right there in the classroom. I had no idea what they were saying and then all of a sudden I understood. I don't know how children do it, but that's what happened.

I had everything enlarged on the double sized paper. I had a CCTV that was on this rolling table. A CCTV is basically a digital magnifier with a screen and a camera, and you put the paper underneath and it shows on the screen and you can make it as large as you need with different color filters. I also, in some classes, especially math, I had a

scribe copy down what was on the board. I also sometimes used a recorder. Sometimes I used the laptop to write notes. And when I went to college, I invented the camera as an assistive technology tool and I would take pictures of the board and zoom in to the camera. That was before all the big nice smartphone cameras with the nice big screens.

Judy Heumann:

So would you say that the accommodations that you received at the university level were appropriate? Did you need more things than were available? Knowing what you know now, if you were to be going to college or advising somebody, what might you tell them?

Carrie Morales:

Now it's different. I think there's a lot of new technology, even since the time that I went to college. They have nice CCTVs now that are great for distance. I didn't have that at the time. The camera that I was using had a two inch screen, and now even if you just use your phone, you know you have a five, six inch screen where you can really zoom in.

I would really encourage people to ask for all the services that is available in their state or in their country because I know for me it was not enough in college. They did not provide a scribe or somebody to write down everything that was on the board. So it was harder in a sense than it was in high school and middle school because I had to kind of figure that out on my own. It takes a lot longer to use the camera and try when you can't see very well, take the picture and make sure it's not blurry and make sure you got the right thing and then you have to zoom in. It just took a long time. So I would encourage anybody now to get all the services and devices, technology that they need.

Judy Heumann:

And Kate, obviously many things have changed since you were growing up. What advice do you have for hard of hearing children and parents regarding what they should be looking for in school?

Kate Kalcevich:

I think it's really important for parents to advocate for the children. There's a lot that my parents did do. For instance, my mom worked at a hearing aid company because my parents didn't have benefits in their work, so it's one of the ways I was able to afford hearing aids and have them as a kid growing up. But I don't think they knew enough about advocating for me in the school system or where to go. And so I think if parents have a child that's disabled, you really need to do some research. There are all kinds of groups out there that you can connect with to learn from and really set yourself up to support your child. That would've made a big difference. I mean, I'm scrappy and I'm stubborn and I made it through anyway, but it would've been nice to not have to figure out so many things on my own.

Carrie Morales:

Could I add just one more thing?

Judy Heumann:

Of course.

Carrie Morales:

I also want to encourage anybody who's going through college or even any school, if something's not working, you have to fix that right away. They gave me a laptop and the screen was really something that I could not see. I did not tell anybody, so I struggled for years with the laptop. I wish that I could go back and just say that this is something that I can't see. And so I think it's really important to not only ask for services, but make sure they're the right one.

Judy Heumann:

Did your parents know that this screen wasn't correct?

Carrie Morales:

No.

Judy Heumann:

So you didn't even tell them?

Carrie Morales:

No. I think part of it is the Asian background that if you were given something, you should be grateful and you shouldn't say anything else and just work with what you have.

Judy Heumann:

Okay. So the lesson learned is?

Carrie Morales:

If it doesn't work, make sure to find something that does work.

Judy Heumann:

It's complex because when you're young, how you get that knowledge or even understanding, because you may not even realize that there's a better item that you could be using. I guess another point that you were raising earlier, Carrie, is that you grew up in a family with many other people who had your disability. And I think Kate, you and I, I mean I know I do, I don't know about you, but. I grew up in a family where there weren't people who had had polio. Did you have other people in your family who were hard of hearing?

Kate Kalcevich:

That's right. No. I mean I guess it's not true. My grandmother did wear hearing aids or was supposed to wear hearing aids but did not. But I didn't really relate to that experience. My grandmother didn't speak English. We were close, but when you don't talk to somebody, it's a different kind of closeness. So I didn't have role models. And then the one person who had a disability refused to kind of acknowledge her assistive device or use it and wasn't somebody I could talk to. I definitely didn't have ideas about disability that I do now, or an understanding that there's a whole community around disability. Knowing other people with disabilities as an adult has been useful to me.

Judy Heumann:

One of the reasons why we're doing this program together is because I've just done a course for Fable Pathways on advocacy. And Kate, you also did a course and your course is on management, and there's at least one other course.

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah.

Judy Heumann:

Maybe you could talk to us about why Fable has felt these classes are important.

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah, I think Fable Pathways is such an important tool for people with disabilities. It's about learning and it's free and it's accessible and it's online. We really feel strongly at Fable that there's not enough inclusion in the workforce. We know people with disabilities just aren't employed at the same rate as people without disabilities. And when thinking about how to change that, we thought, "Well, can we offer something educational to help people build their skills?" And that's what Pathways came from, that idea that if you could provide some free training for folks with disabilities, give them access to things that they don't have access to, to help them further in their career.

Judy Heumann:

What do you feel, Kate, is the value of these courses? Why should people take them?

Kate Kalcevich:

I think it's really important, especially in the tech industry. So our courses focus on, one of them is focused on web development and getting into web development. I think it's important for people with disabilities to be a part of the tech industry because there's so many barriers caused by inaccessible technology. When you have people with disabilities on your team, then you're going to start really building inclusive products. It's all tied together. You don't get access to jobs and services unless you have inclusive teams, and you don't have inclusive teams unless you're hiring people with disabilities.

We know the stats on people with disabilities. I mean, I guess it depends on which numbers you look at and what you count as a disability, but it's roughly 15%, maybe up to 25% of the population. And if that doesn't match with your organization, then you

know you need to do better. If your organization doesn't have the same number of people with disabilities or close to what's out there in the world, that's a pretty easy indicator that you've got work to do.

These courses help give people a bit of a foundation of starting place. My course on management is about people with disabilities not just being employed as employees, but actually moving into more senior positions, because we need to see change happening at higher levels of an organization. So when you have a hiring manager with a disability, I think you're much less likely to face challenges with accommodating other people, one would hope.

And your course about advocacy, I actually learned so much about advocating, and I realized I need to do more advocating. I feel like I've done my best, but I learned that I could do better and strategies for doing that. So the courses are really to equip people with the skills that they need to succeed in a world that really isn't set up for us to succeed.

Judy Heumann:

Maybe you could also, Carrie, talk to us for a few minutes about what your experiences are. So as a tester, walk us through how you would work with the company.

Carrie Morales:

As a tester, I receive requests. Once I accept those requests, it could either be a form online or something meeting based where I meet with researchers at the company and we walk through a specific flow that they want tested. And so I share my thoughts and my experiences and what are my challenges, what part of the product or website is accessible or easy for me to navigate and read. And from there, hopefully the researchers and that company will come back again and follow up and improve their accessibility overall. It's pretty fulfilling when I receive follow up requests and they fix some of the things that I previously mentioned.

Judy Heumann:

And about how many companies have you worked with?

Carrie Morales:

Oh, well I've done more than a hundred requests, so it has to have been at least maybe 50. That's just a guess.

Judy Heumann:

Will Fable send you information about a company for you to contact the company? Or is the company contacting you?

Carrie Morales:

All of it is done through the Fable platform. When a company requests a specific test to be done, then the platform sends it out to the different testers. The testers who accept

those requests, they're the ones who will work with the company. But it's all done through the Fable platform.

Judy Heumann:

What do you feel is rewarding about the work you're doing?

Carrie Morales:

My favorite part is when I get to talk to a company and show them assistive technology. Some of them are new to accessibility and just sharing the awareness of what can be done with technology, and also seeing the fruits of my labor by when they come back and they've changed and improved.

Judy Heumann:

And Kate, you are involved at the upper level within the organization. What do you see as some of the significant changes that Fable is striving to achieve? And how do you feel companies are responding?

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah, I think Fable is really all about inclusive design. So many other companies, they're just about accessibility. There's a real nuance to that. It's nothing about us without us kind of an approach, which I think is really important. And even just with the training and the idea, like Fable has this entire mission about having people with disabilities being able to participate in society and contribute to it. And just having that angle on it I think is really important.

We've gotten really positive reaction to that. So many people have never seen assistive technology being used or heard, a screen reader being used, and using Fable it's the first time that they have that experience. They can actually ask people, "How do they use their technology? What are the challenges they have? What are the barriers they face?"

We're really, I think, bringing a higher level of understanding to the people who are building digital products so that they are not just looking at, is there enough color contrast here? But they're talking to somebody who's low vision and finding out, can you actually see this? Is it easy to use? So it brings a different perspective and it really brings a broader awareness than I think typical accessibility type work does.

Judy Heumann:

Very interesting. What do you see now just in your life experience, Kate, the changes in the world of work? What do you see as some of the significant changes?

Kate Kalcevich:

I wish I would see more changes actually. I think a lot more companies talk about inclusion and they talk about diversity, but I still feel like it's hard for people to get what they need. It's hard for people with disabilities to get hired. There's still lots of hiring websites where you have to submit a resume and that's not accessible. Then you go to

an interview and you don't get the accommodations that you need. And then if you do manage to get a job, you don't get the accommodations that you need. There's a gap between what companies say and then what they actually do. I'd really love to see that gap closed because we're still not where we need to be with inclusion when it comes to hiring. I mean, the changes are people care about it and they talk about it, but I really want to see people do it.

Judy Heumann:

And Carrie, what are your experiences? Do you believe that companies are doing enough or that they're not? And when you talk to other friends of yours who are blind, what are some of their experiences?

Carrie Morales:

I think one of the biggest struggles as a blind person is when websites and hiring websites are not accessible, because that's the first step in looking for a job. But for me and many others, it's really difficult to break down that barrier of communication when you're actually in an interview. And then it's that moment if you choose to disclose, then there's always that question of, "Oh, you're blind?" And the whole thing starts, and you can just hear from their voice that there's so many things running through their minds. "How's this person going to do the job? Like, a blind person can't do this particular job."

So just that feeling of discrimination is very hard to overcome. I think that a lot of companies, it's all over social media that they want to be inclusive, but I agree with Kate that it needs to trickle down to the actual hiring managers, to HR, to the people who actually hire. And I think there needs to be a lot more training and awareness in that area.

Judy Heumann:

So Kate and Carrie, what do you think companies need to be doing in order to achieve what you would envision as a company where a disabled prospective employee could feel that they could enter the door without there being a bias based on their disability? Kate?

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah, that's a hard question. I think some of the things is somebody need to be accountable. I think when you have a policy around accommodations, who's actually accountable for that? I think that needs to trickle down right to the hiring managers and they need to be held accountable for providing accommodation. I think there needs to be flexibility in policies. There might be policies around, "We'll provide accommodations if you provide medical proof." And that can be harder than you think at times. A lot of people can't prove their disability for one reason or another. Sometimes it could take a year to get a diagnosis. It doesn't mean you don't need an accommodation.

I think there needs to be a willingness to accommodate beyond just, "What are the rules of the organization, and what do we provide based on our policy?" And more thinking, "Well, what does this person need to succeed at work in their job? And is it really that

hard to give them that thing?" I think if people just had this attitude of, "I'm going to give accommodations no matter what," everything would change.

Judy Heumann:

Carrie?

Carrie Morales:

I would agree with Kate. But I think that it's very difficult to get through to certain people that just have built their biases. As a social media content creator, I always struggle with those people that say, "You're not blind." There's even people that say, "A blind person can't do all this stuff." And that trickles down to managers, that attitude. It's sometimes even when they have to accommodate, there's this attitude of, "Oh, we have to do this," but there's not really a good intention behind it. I think that just raising more awareness of what people with disabilities are able to do if we had the right accommodations would go a huge step in the right direction.

Judy Heumann:

Yeah, I feel National Disability Employment and Awareness Month, it's important. I think we need to get rid of the word awareness. National Disability Employment Month, get rid of the word awareness. Because I think awareness is not strong enough. And I don't want to say this was my idea, it was a friend of mine's idea who used to work at the Office of Personal Management and had a disability herself.

But I think we very much need to move away from allowing people to not look at disabled people in a way that they look at other non-disabled people. They need to be looking more at the qualifications that we have, the contributions we can make. And if people have questions about whether or not people are able to do certain aspects of a job, they need to be learning. And it shouldn't be taken out on the backs of those of us who have disabilities.

I think many of us are really at the place now where we want more and more companies to be stepping forward. I think too often when we have these discussions amongst ourselves as disabled individuals, we come up with the same comments. "Not enough has happened. We are having to prove ourselves beyond what we should have to."

There's a presumption that we can't as opposed to a presumption that we can. And I think these are issues that are continuing to be discussed.

I think both of you made some points that result in my wanting to ask you this question. When looking at technology, right now we've been discussing it from the perspective of people wishing to work in the industry. But I think we should spend a couple of minutes on why it's so important from a customer based perspective for technology to be accessible. Are there features that you use, Kate, out of your job that did not exist when you were younger as computers came into being a prominent part of our lives?

Kate Kalcevich:

Yeah. I rely really heavily on captions, and I did not have captions. Even when you're a small kid, you can watch your cartoon and you don't need to know what's going on

because you can just follow along with the visuals. But as you get older, it's hard to watch TV if you can't follow the dialogue. And the same thing applies in a meeting. Especially when everybody went online, if I didn't have captions and transcripts, about five minutes into a meeting if I don't have them, sometimes we forget to turn them on, I just start to zone out because I just can't follow along the conversation.

It's really helped me a lot, the advances in technology and having fairly accurate captions. I'd love for them to get more accurate, because they're still maybe 85, 90% of what's said is captured accurately in the automated transcripts that you get in the meeting. It's enough, but it could be better.

Judy Heumann:

Yeah, I turn it on all the time. And because I do have hearing, I can listen as I'm reading to see where the discrepancies are. In some cases they're very minor, but in some cases they're very significant.

Kate Kalcevich:

Oh yeah.

Judy Heumann:

Which is why I think both more accuracy, and in the interim using live people do the captioning.

So Carrie, you're the youngest of the three of us, and so I think you've been growing up in a time where there is more technology being designed which is accessible. Do you feel that there's a lot more work that needs to be done in this regard, and that there are blind or low vision people or other disabled people out there who have the qualifications to go work with these companies?

Carrie Morales:

I think there are definitely people that I know personally who do work in the tech sector, and people who do it on the side as well, that a lot of discrimination has prevented them from actually getting into the tech sector. I think even though I'm the youngest, there has been a lot of improvements in technology. Again, when I was younger I had to lug around a 30 pound machine to help me see things, and now I can just hold my phone and turn on the magnifier there and I can see from a distance. Whenever I was younger I used to go to games and plays and things, especially in school, that I had no idea what was going on. I would just sit there and have absolutely no idea. Now I can actually use my phone. And now they have apps that take physical text and then can render it so that you can listen.

But like captions, it's hit or miss. And when I have to read a physical book, I have to use and rely on something like an app like that for OCR. Sometimes they do pretty well, and sometimes they do absolutely terribly. And even if you try, it's really hard to understand. There's also visual images that there are apps that try to tell you what's around you or what objects are. That AI technology is just not very developed right now. It can tell you

maybe that there's a person in the picture, but you have no idea what's going on in the picture and what's significant about it.

I think that there's a lot of places where technology can definitely be improved. I think that a big part of that is people with disabilities, if they know what's wrong and what could be improved, if they're part of the design process, then that would significantly improve accessibility overall.

Judy Heumann:

What's your vision for your son? Who is what, six years old?

Carrie Morales:

Yes, he is six years old.

Judy Heumann:

What is your vision and what are your concerns?

Carrie Morales:

He is also legally blind like I am. I think my vision for him is just to have the courage to advocate for himself, the independence, and just to put as much technology in his hands that he can use and find out what works best for him. Because even if you have the same disability or similar vision, different things work for different people. And I want him to be able to make those decisions and succeed in wherever he wants to.

My concern as a mom, I have many concerns, but one of them is definitely more of the environment and the people and their reaction to him and the accommodations he needs. And so as a mom, I of course advocate for him, but it's also hard to see when other children and other parents and other families don't really know what to do or how to act around him because of his vision. And just overcoming that is one of our challenges. It's a challenge to me even now.

Judy Heumann:

So Kate, we're coming towards the close of the program, but I'm wondering because you also bring many perspectives to your work at Fable and to your life overall. What are some of your aspirations for moving forward as far as opening the world for disabled people, not only in the area of employment, but more broadly?

Kate Kalcevich:

Just having people with disabilities as co-creators of everything and the innovations that come from that. I guess I didn't touch on this, but the people, not just myself, but people I've hired with disabilities have been really creative people. Like Carrie explained, using her phone as a magnifier, coming up with solutions to problems that other people wouldn't have thought of. I think if we put the combined creativity of people with disabilities that most of the problems in the world we can advance so much further. If people just keep doing things the way they've always done them, things are going to

stay the way they've always been. We need to do things differently if we want to see the world change.

Judy Heumann:

We're going to end on the following. I'd like you each, and I'll call on you, Carrie, first, to tell us something about yourself that other people don't know that really helped you move forward.

Carrie Morales:

I think that one of the things that really helps me is perseverance. My parents always taught me to keep going. This might be a little bit cliché, but even if you fail and you feel like there's no way to succeed, if you think and if you try again, you know you can keep going. For me, it's not only myself, but if you get the support of others and the collective minds of other people, whatever you're struggling with, together you can come up with some type of solution.

Judy Heumann:

Thanks. And Kate?

Kate Kalcevich:

I think a lot of people don't realize how stubborn I am. I'm like an incredibly stubborn person. My husband knows this because he lives with me, but you don't see it at work. I just won't let go. I'm kind of like a pit bull. When I have a thing I want to solve, I'll just grab onto it and I will not let go. In fact, somebody I work with said this about me. "If you tell Kate she can't do something, that means she's going to do it and she's going to do it really well." And that's the truth of it. I don't like to be told I can't do things. It actually kind of lights a fire under me and makes me try harder.

Judy Heumann:

Yeah, and I think that's one thing that the three of us have in common. Yeah, I grew up in a family where there was no such thing as, "No," you had to figure it out. And I think perseverance, strength, fortitude, the ability just to keep moving forward.

I want to thank you both very much and thank Fable for the work that it's doing in so many different ways, hiring disabled people within the company as testers. And I hope you like the courses that have been put out there thus far. Thank you very much, guys.

Carrie Morales:

Thank you.

Kate Kalcevich:

Thanks for having me.

Kylie Miller:

Now it's time for Ask Judy, a segment where Judy answers questions sent in by listeners.

I'm glad we finally got to sit down and talk with two people from Fable. We've been collaborating with Fable for a while now and it was really great to have them on the podcast for NDEAM.

Judy Heumann:

It was. It's been, as you said, a long journey in preparing for the project itself and then doing the project.

Kylie Miller:

I will link Judy's course through Fable Pathways on this episode so you can check it out. It's available now.

Judy Heumann:

I really hope people who watch are going to see the amount of work that was put into it and most importantly, that they like the product.

Kylie Miller:

Mhm. So for today's Ask Judy question, @rm.13.88 on Instagram asked "What do you hope to see from assistive tech in the future?"

Judy Heumann:

To me, assistive technology needs to be designed in such a way that everyone can use it. And that means that people with disabilities need to be involved with the design of the product and the development and implementation, and that we need to have people who are involved as things are being rolled out to ensure that the products are meeting the needs of the constituency. And to me, it means that we need to make sure that disabled people are being trained in the breadth of the types of jobs that we have today and that will happen in the future. And that really requires that we're also allowing young children, teenagers, adults to understand the field and where it's moving towards. And we need to make sure that products are not only accessible, but that they're not excluding or discriminating against people as is happening in the AI area.

Kylie Miller:

Thank you, Judy, and thank you to everybody listening. If you have a question for Judy, you can send it to us at media@judithheumann.com or on Instagram and Twitter.

Thanks for tuning in to The Heumann Perspective. Be sure to subscribe, rate and review our show on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. You can also follow Judy on Twitter at Judith Heumann and on Instagram and Facebook at The Heumann Perspective. If you want to find out more information about this episode's guest or resources relating to the discussion, check out the description of this episode or visit judithheumann.com. You can also find a shortened video version of this interview on Judy's YouTube channel dropping a week after this podcast is published. Otherwise, be sure to check back every other Wednesday for a new podcast episode. The intro music for The Heumann Perspective is Dragon, which is produced and performed by Lachi, Yontreo, and Jaurren. The outro music is I Wait by Galynn Lea.