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INCLUSION BRANDING

GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADER DEBRA RUH ON MAXIMIZING ROI

FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

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>> CHRISTINA REVILLA: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the webinar. Today we're joined by a proud mother, CEO, and founder of Ruh and an internationally recognized keynote speaker, a published authorized. Debra Ruh represents force for good. She began advocating for people with disabilities after her daughter was told she could never talk or walk with her diagnosis of Down Syndrome. Debra believed in the power of human potential and resilience. She immediately became determined to empower individuals with disabilities and open opportunities for them. In 2001, Debra created TecAccess, a company focused on creating accessible technologies. However, her work did not just stop here. By 2010, she formed Ruh Global Communications, which focuses on Global Disability Inclusion Strategies, Digital Marketing, and Branding among many other services. Ruh Global Communications’ key message centers on the idea that “the real disability is being unable to see human potential.” Today, Debra and her daughter are now world-renowned speakers, continuing to spread that message by speaking to the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities in corporations and government work. Debra has become an ambassador for the United States and North America, as the representative for the United Nations, International Labor Organization, Global Business and Disability Network. On top of all this, she has written 3 books and is the co-founder of the award winning AXSChat, which became the second biggest tweet chat in the world with a reach in the billions. Debra is a leader in advocacy. She strives for communication, understanding, and inclusion, working to aid both people and policy. We are so excited to have her here today. Everyone, please join me in welcoming, Debra Ruh.

[ Applause ]

>> DEBRA RUH: Thank you, thank you so much for having me. Today we'll talk about Inclusion Branding. And it coincidentally happens to be the name of my new book. So I'm not going to spend time on this slide, because you just so graciously gave me that wonderful introduction, but when I wrote this book, as the intro said, I've written three books, and the first book was on social media written in 2013, a really, really long time ago for social media. And then I wrote tapping into Hidden Human Capital, which I think is the next slide, and then – the latest book is the Inclusion Branding but one thing that I found with why I wanted to write Inclusion Branding was corporations are making progress on including with disabilities in their workforce as customers as investors -- shareholders. Progress is being made and progress is being made here in the United States but there’s still a lot of work to do especially in—if you look at this room, the United States [inaudible] because we create legislation, and then we litigate to pound out our laws. There are a lot of corporate brands that are being sued over not including people with disabilities in the workforce, and when I created my second book, Tapping into Hidden Human Capital, I wanted it to be global, because I think that we should be talking about these topics from a global perspective.

And so I had reached out to multiple clients. We have clients all over the world, mainly corporate brands, but we work with the U.N. as well, but ‑‑ and there was ‑‑ I asked about 10 U.S. multi‑national corporations if they would be in the book, because I know they had -- had some really ‑‑ they have some really interesting stories, inclusion stories, accessibility stories, and I really knew that that would add value. I had no problems getting people -- corporations from Europe, Australia, India, China, all the parts of the world but right here in the United States, many of these corporations did not want to be in the book.

And the reason why they didn't want to be in the book is because they were afraid it would make them a target, that people would see they hadn't done enough and they would actually get more lawsuits against them. And so that made me sad because if we can't tell the stories of the brands that are actually including our community, how can our community get behind these brands to work for them, to invest in them, to buy their products and services if we don't know about it?

So the book took, that particular book, took two years to get out for workload, no, gotta go back and write and things like that. By the end of those two years as I was just about buttoning up the book and getting it out to -- I was almost ready, I was about 2 months away of getting it out to press, 7 corporations came back and said okay, we changed our mind. And I thought okay, that's interesting. How come you're changing your mind? And many of them said, the theme was, what we're realizing is the lawsuits aren't going to stop. The negative chatter on social media about our brands is not going to stop.

What we really need to do is we need to tell our stories because if we don't tell our story somebody else will tell it for you and you might not like what happens. And in this book Tapping into Hidden Human Capital, it was written from the employer's perspective. How do I really include people with disabilities in my workforce? How do I retain somebody that maybe has acquired a disability? So it was all about employment of people with disabilities. But Inclusion Branding ‑‑ go back to that one for a second ‑‑ Inclusion Branding is about, once again it was focused on corporations. As I was writing this book, my editor sometimes would yell at me and say: “Who are you talking to, ? Are you talking to the corporation? Or are you talking to the community of people with disabilities?”

And I said “can it be both?” And she said “nope.” You've got to pick. And you have to stay focused and so I wrote it from the perspective of a corporate brand. Why should a corporate brand tell us what they're doing to include people with disabilities? Why should you tell us about what you're doing for your workforce, how you're using new technology to include people with disabilities? Are your corporation foundations engaged in this? How are you telling your shareholders what you're doing? How are you telling your stories and so it was all written from the perspective of the corporate brand but I was hoping that ‑‑ and it is definitely true ‑‑ that a lot of the data that we have in this book, it can be picked up and it can be used by the community or by DPOs, disability persons organizations or the UN or non‑profits or NGOs, it really can be used by anybody but I was very deliberate about writing it for corporate brands because the corporate brands control many of the jobs all over the world.

And so if we can talk corporations into understanding the value of including people with disabilities in our workforce, I think that a lot of change can happen because of that. So that's why I wrote the book and certainly we wanted to do it about maximizing ROI which is a very common business term, return on investment. So when I talk about this topic, especially when I'm talking to corporations, I like to use the slide that just came up right now. It's a slide of different people that many of them are well known in the world. Some you might not recognize their face, but what do these people have in common?

Now, for those of you that can see, we have Stevie Wonder, we have Robin Williams, Marlee Matlin, Beethoven ‑‑ I totally forgot ‑‑ Sir, Virgin Air ‑‑ thank you, Sir Richard Branson, Michael Fox, and others. I also wanted this group of individuals and we changed the slides -- pictures sometimes but to be global because once again this is a global conversation.

So what do they all have in common? Well, they all have different disabilities. I don't know if people realize that Agatha Christie, one of the most well known and beloved mystery writers, she had dysgraphia, which prevented her from getting her thoughts written on to the paper so she actually had to tell her stories to a transcriber that would –- you know -- type it for her.

And a lot of people don't realize that about Agatha Christie so was Agatha Christie disabled? Well, she had something that caused her to have to use an accommodation or adaption to write her books but she had a lot of brilliance to offer to the world. You have Sudha Chandran which is amputee and an actress in India. The former Indonesian President was blind and his wife was blind. Michael J. Fox, which many of us love and still watch him, I saw him on television the other day, has Parkinson disease. Sir Richard Branson has dyslexia. [ Inaudible ] is that a disability? Whenever he jumped out of an airplane he accidentally because of his dyslexia pulled the wrong rip cord for the parachute. Luckily a trainer was with him and was able to go and pull the correct cord, but the dyslexia could have killed him. He also credits dyslexia with making him one of the best entrepreneurs in the world, and many entrepreneurs have ADH and dyslexia.

It's amazing like 60% have ADH or dyslexia. I am somebody with ADHD. I luckily have the “H” in there, so I'm super hyperfocused, which makes me great on social media, and maybe a little obnoxious on social media, and very driven, but it's hard to wind down at the end of the day, which causes anxiety and depression.

Now, I just think I'm a human being that has some abilities and some things I'm better at than others, so there are things I'm not as good at, but I'm just a human being, which is why a lot of the work we're doing really focuses on that. So I won't read all of these. It was a loss when we lost Stephen Hawking one of our brightest minds. But the point I was trying to making in these slides is “What do they have in common?” Well, society have deemed they have disabilities and yet they've gone on to do amazing things with their lives, so I spend a lot of my time and we talk about it in the book sort of discounting that because a person has a disability they can't add value to the world. We just have to make sure we accommodate people with disabilities so they can show us the brilliance they have inside themselves.

The world has changed so much, and it's still changing. The number of persons with disabilities are on the rise for a lot of reasons. A lot of Societies are aging and we'll talk more about that. Medical advancements, globalization has actually impacted our ability to -- not every country does a census like the United States and others and sort of counts the people and tries to understand what the population looks like. There's a lot of countries that don't do that.

So when the World Health Organization talks about 1 in 7 people with disabilities in the world there's guessing going on there just because there's a lot of people that haven't self‑identified, won't self‑identify, so globalization is really impacting this. Technology is impacting this so much and we'll talk more about technology during the slides and then we have legislation like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, The Digital Divide that we're always talking about, I'm going to come back to them, and then also Corporate Social Responsibility. Gen‑Z and the millennials have all over the world, have made it very clear and continue to make it clear, and I'm in a room full of these people, these amazing, brilliant leaders, that have a lot of work to do to clean up the world.

But they expect corporations to be socially responsible and have social impact, and they will not work for a corporation they deem to be bad, or having violations on human rights. They also will change jobs, and a lot of them are entrepreneurs and really interested in the gig economy, so Corporate Social Responsibility, some people have considered it's smoke and mirrors but it's becoming very important in the United States and Europe and other countries, and corporations do need to tell us what they're doing to include people with disabilities, especially if you want to get the brightest of the minds that are out there with these young people. They want to know that corporations are socially ‑‑ that they're having social impact locally, nationally, and globally. The Digital Divide - before we leave this slide - it sort of shifted The Digital Divide. It used to be, well, the United States had an advantage because we had fiber optics and cable laid all through our world, but then with the smartphones and technology and mobility, things have shifted.

For example, Kenya, they didn't have all that structure, but they are being very progressive with how they're using mobile phones. There's, like ‑‑ there are statistics that say that every person in Africa, there are three phones for every person in Africa. That doesn't mean everybody in Africa has three phones, but a lot of people have access to mobile phones all over the world, even in the poorer sections of the world now. So it's really digital identity is becoming more of a problem than digital divide, because digital divide means different things now, but not including people in education and in primary schools and in the workforce so it's digital inclusion that is almost more of a concern and then once again most countries have signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The United States has signed it but we're one of 3 countries that have not ratified it and politically, we're told it's because they have our amazing Americans with Disabilities Act. It's a great Act, it's a great law but once United States citizens leave our borders they're not protected under the ADA anymore so I really believe the United States should ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to continue to be global leaders.

So once again, writing this book I wrote it from the perspective of the corporation. Why? We mentioned in the bio that support. The United Nations International Labor Organization, the Global Business Disability Network, GBDN. Today they have 27 multi‑national corporations as part of this, and they're representing approximately 5 million jobs, so think about if we could impact those 5 million jobs, even if 10% of those jobs could be given to people with disabilities all over the world, we could really change the dynamics of true inclusion for people with disabilities.

That's why we at Ruh Global are choosing to speak to corporations but if you're going to speak to corporations you've got to use their language. So what is this about? This is about ROI, return on investment, and shareholder value which is what they have to be concerned about. It's about corporation engagement. It's about Corporate Social Responsibility. It's about social impact, versus only charity.

Generally when we talk about inclusion of people with disabilities, we talk about it as a charity model: “Please help these people! Oh, it's the right thing to do!” Well, it's better to use the language of corporation if you're speaking to them.

Improvements pursued by corporation can streamline their processes. Many corporations talk about once they include people with disabilities in their workforce, they get all these productivity gains, all these innovations happen, and we talk about a lot of those in the book, but we see corporations now very proudly saying: “I'm very proud to be employing people with disabilities,” and we know that if you don't have a diverse workforce, it's going to impact your innovation.

So I talk about this on my show Human Potential at Work, which is a multimedia show live on Facebook and also podcast and radio, but I interviewed a woman, a woman that was with IBM and then she went to Amazon. Her name is Sandy Carter. Brilliant woman. And she told me a story about Mattel, who's the maker of Barbies. A lot of us had Barbies or liked Barbies, but they decided, Mattel decided they wanted to give Barbie artificial intelligence. It's still unfolding. We'll see where that goes. I had another show I did with the author Byron Reese. He wrote Fourth Age, which is talking about artificial intelligence and where are we going with the different kinds. I just think it's so interesting and there can be a lot of benefits to people with disabilities as well so back to this story, so we're going to give one of the Barbies artificial intelligence was going to talk about Barbie was little girls’ career option. Little boys like Barbies, too, but this was specifically for little girls employment opportunities and so you would talk to Barbie: “I don't know what I want to do when I grow up,” and maybe the little girl would say -- hopefully the little girl would say: “I think I want to be a computer scientist or a computer programmer,” something in the STEM, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Well, Barbie would say: Well, have you thought about a career in fashion? By the way, there's nothing wrong with a career in fashion but believe it or not, women can do more than just work in the fashion industry. So when the women heard about this, they went a little crazy on social media saying: “Are you kidding me? We actually can add a lot of value, we can be CEOs, we can be Presidents.” We can ‑‑ come on, really? Are we still here? Can we get past here?

So it turned out that the group that created the artificial intelligence for this Barbie was a small male‑only pretty much Caucasian group of individuals. So what could they have done if they say put a woman with a disability in this group? They certainly would have said: “Come on, we can do more than just the fashion industry,” so these are the kind of mistakes we see corporations making, and so I think it's ‑‑ the corporations are learning: “Maybe we should include the community and the different communities in these conversations,” and another valuable think about including the community of people with disabilities is we go across to other disability communities.

We are part of the LGBT community. We are women. We are from different countries. Some of us have different religious backgrounds or we're atheist. It runs through the diversity and inclusion groups which makes us that much more valuable to the corporations but the corporations a lot of them are still learning about this. So I wrote a lot about it, about how it can improve the productivity of their employees, better solutions for their customers, with and without disabilities. Equating to positive return on investors for their shareholders, and, you know, their employees.

Because, and I write this in the book, but it's about two things, which I'm going to use this language in two ways. It's about the four Ps: Profit. If you're not profitable, you don't stay in business and everybody loses their job. That's a failure for everyone, and we've seen that happen. And I'm almost 60. When I was little you had these big blue chip companies that seemed like they'd be around forever and of course we've seen in my lifetime, in your lifetimes, that, yeah, big companies can go under real quick. Anybody remember Circuit City? I remember it in Virginia. Remember ‑‑ you don't remember Circuit City? It was a huge company that Best Buy was much better at doing so they were like a best buy so Best Buy took over. Blockbuster's, Red Box, things are moving so fast, and so much disruption going on.

But the ‑‑ so making sure that we care about a brand. We want to work for a brand. You want to be an employer of choice, these things are very important to corporations now. For a while, the youth in Europe and the Middle East, we were hearing them speak more freely about what they thought a corporation should be and what they expected of a corporation.

And it wasn't until a few years later during the financial crisis and some of our political fighting that the young people in America have really found their voices now. And it's a very proud, diverse group of voices, and it gives me a lot of hope for the future.

So I travel a lot internationally, and I'm often asked: How has what you're doing in the United States -- first of all, I'm asked what are y'all doing in the United States for this? That's a whole 'nother thing. What are y'all doing over there?  
Oh, I don't know. We're just figuring it out.”

But we actually can be proud of the Americans with Disabilities Act for a lot of reasons, but it was the first Act of its kind. It's 28 years old now, and so the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a lot of the content, you know, they learned from the Americans with Disabilities Act. I think there's a lot that we can be proud about the ADA. I still think we need to ratify the Convention, but there's a lot of changes that have taken place all over the world.

And also, so we have social media. We have law. And we have once again the branding. Also in my lifetime, if you talked bad about a brand, a corporate brand, you wrote an article about them ‑‑ this is before social media ‑‑ you said something mean, they'd attack you and they would sue you. They'd get their lawyers out and sue you. One brand did this. Very typical behavior, I love this brand but Nestle was being attacked by bloggers and a little bit on social media. That was before social media had gotten really powerful so blogging was a lot more powerful at the time of people finding their voices and so some bloggers were talking about how Nestle when they were getting the chocolate, they weren't doing the right thing by the different orangutans and their environment and they were being very irresponsible for the way they were doing it just so we could all have our chocolate, so Nestle had their attorneys send a cease and desist letter, which is not good to get one of those, from their big corporate attorney.

Well, it really made the bloggers mad but then it made the rest of the young people mad so it was like putting this big rock in the river. What happens? The water just goes right around it so everybody took to social media and blogging and they not only were attacking them about the orangutans and say: “Remember when they went into Africa and told the women to stop nursing and use their formulas and started dredging up other mistakes that had been made,” and so a lot of brands have learned: “You don't do it that way anymore.” You don't attack the bloggers. You don't attack the tweeters, the posters, because people don't like when you do that, especially the young people don't like it.

So our laws, the litigation, the branding, all of this has changed everything. Also, the litigation. Most corporations in the United States have been sued over disability inclusion and accessibility. Almost all of these cases to almost all of these cases are settled out of court and they don't get out, for obvious reasons.

And some of them are just nuisance lawsuits. You know, we created ADA in 1990, and you really should make sure your technology and services are accessible to all of us, including people with disabilities. But because so many U.S.‑based corporations were fearful of the litigation, and they wanted to be compliant to the legislation, they want to do the right thing, but they realized that they had to do it, or they were going to be publicly embarrassed or they were going to be sued or the brand was going to be talked about.

So a lot of efforts that have been made here in the United States to make sure we're physically accessible and ICT, Internet Communications and Technology, that they're also accessible to all of us. In the first place, it improves the product and the service for everybody. And when you create something so that a person that's deaf or hard of hearing can use it, which means captioning and transcription, everybody uses that. We all benefit from it.

There are a lot of things that have been created ‑‑ speech to text, text to speech, Dragon ‑‑ specifically for people with disabilities. Even curb cuts. All of society benefits from it now, and so because of the way we do things in the United States, we're actually changing the landscape all around the world. So I think we should be proud of that, even though we've got so much more work to do, but we have had some impact, which is exciting.

[ Inaudible ] so there are global disability stats. These are the numbers that we have. And I will tell you, these numbers are not all accurate. Why do you have them up here if they're not accurate? Well, because once again, not every country does Census Bureau. Not every country calculates the numbers and also there are a lot of people who won't self‑identify as having a disability so we know the numbers are low.

I'll give you a personal example, my father never had a disability until he reached a certain age. He was a smoker. He got lung cancer. Towards the end of his life he was a wheelchair user and oxygen user. He was absolutely a member of a disability community but he would not say that on the Census Bureau. And I would say dad, you need to tell people you're disabled. This is not a bad thing. We need the real numbers. But still we have stigmas associated with identifying as a person with a disability. We don't want people to think less of us.

We don't want people to discriminate against us or to think that we can't add value. And that's the work of RespectAbility to change some of those stigmas I think is very important and I'm blessed to be in a room filled with the leaders of the future and these leaders are brilliant, and I listen to all their different backgrounds and their dreams for the future, and I'm very, very excited.

So I'm excited about where we're going to go. But so this is the best data that the United Nations has. So in the United States, we estimate ‑‑ this is pretty solid ‑‑ 60 million Americans have a disability, because we do our census. One in 3 households are impacted. According to the National Organization on Disability in Latin America and Caribbean, which is thought of as a younger population, we still believe there's about 50 million people. In the U.K., 8.6. In Africa, 80 million people with disabilities.

Now, Africa is usually considered younger population, but we're seeing these numbers all over the world. Japan has 5 million for a little country, but they have 127, almost 128, million people that are over the age of, you know, that they're senior citizens now. As we age, we acquire disabilities. The AARP says that after the age of 65, 46% of us have a disability, so the numbers are on the rise.

We have what ‑‑ we did have 78 million Baby Boomers, people my age, but we're down to 72 million, because some of us didn't eat right and some of us have passed over, so we're still 72 million strong. We still control 60% of the money, so we're still valuable. Sorry, we're not ready to all retire yet. We still want to contribute. But the numbers are pretty significant here, and once again, people that are aging are joining us, and there's a lot of problems associated with that, as well.

The 16 million Americans are estimated as getting Alzheimer's. We only have 341 million Americans. The numbers are really staggering and the impact it's going to have on all of us and the young population, the sandwich generation, taking care of aging parents, trying to get your career going, at some point starting to have children, life is interesting, which is once again why our community needs to speak to these corporate brands.

So market opportunities. There are some really wonderful brands that are out there, and I meant to add Tommy Hilfiger to this list, just to this one slide, I forgot to do it. So I'll just use Tommy as an example. Really proud to be working with Tommy Hilfiger. They are creating adaptive clothing and they're finding that this clothing, when they first decided to create the adaptive clothing line, they weren't really sure that the community of people with disabilities would know it was there and would buy it.

Well, the first campaign that they did, not only did the lines sell out faster than any other line in their history ‑‑ yay! ‑‑ but a bunch of the other SKUs, a bunch of the other lines also sold out, because if I'm going to go out there and buy clothes for my daughter with Down syndrome, I'm also going to buy clothes for myself and my husband and my son. My husband has acquired a disability as he's aged, pretty ‑‑ my husband has early onset dementia which is a scary thing but we also are learning that if we eat well, omega 3s make a difference so we're doing a lot of trial and errors right now on those of us that are acquiring disabilities.

But some of the examples I have here is there is a Coca‑Cola can that had braille on it, and Coca‑Cola has done amazing things all over the world to include people with disabilities. They're really a brand that ‑‑ of course, maybe we don't need to be drinking Coca‑Cola, but they have some healthy products that you can drink that are, you know ‑‑ but sometimes, boy, Coca‑Cola's refreshing. Anyway, I won't distract myself.

[ Laughter ]

But Microsoft is up here, and they have done some wonderful, wonderful things. They have just committed to $25 million towards research for artificial intelligence to support people with disabilities. The CEO of Microsoft has a son with a disability. They are employing people with autism. They're doing amazing things at Microsoft.

You have a picture up here of a woman that is touching flowers. This is a Dove commercial, and the actress is blind, and what she's saying is a wonderful commercial where she's saying: “You know, I might be blind but I like fragrance that smells good on my skin and that feels good on my skin. And these things are very important to me as a consumer, so why not include us?”

AT&T has done brilliant things to make sure that they are including people with disabilities, and a lot of these brands, I think sometimes the community of people with disabilities don't even know that these brands are doing things for us so how can we support these brands that are supporting us? And we should be telling these brands: “I'm proudly wearing Tommy Hilfiger because the other brands aren't doing clothes that, you know, they aren't doing adaptive clothing.” Maybe I don't need to buy adaptive clothing myself but I'll make sure the CEO of Tommy Hilfiger knows I appreciate what they're doing for our community. I think that's an opportunity we have which is why I wrote the book.

There's an a example of Honey Maid. There's an example of where a woman is teaching a little girl. I first assumed a mother is teaching her daughter how to make a healthy snack using Honey Maid graham crackers, which are yummy, so they do a quick commercial where she's showing a healthy snack, and then the camera comes back and she's in a wheelchair. And I thought: “I must go buy some Honey Maid crackers.”

So there's an image up here from Comcast. A little girl that was born with no sight, 7 years old. Loves the Wizard of Oz. She's heard the movie but hasn't seen it because she's blind so they helped her create what she thought the Wizard of Oz would look like. I've got all these examples in the book but it's so cool. Her version of the Wizard of Oz might be more cool than the regular version but it's really interesting. I have to do a shout out for Toyota who used Amy Purdy a Paralympic athlete and also runner‑up of Dancing with the Stars, and she wears prosthetics on both of her legs so there are so many beautiful commercials that are done well, tastefully. It's not inspirational porn.

Once again when these brands are including us in their commercials, if you're not including the people with disabilities and you're just going to put a model for example, a beautiful model, in a wheelchair, we know, we know, Stop it. So you've got to make sure that you're speaking to us in a way that it isn't inspirational porn and that it's not insulting to the community. You don't want to cause a backlash once again because of brand.

I've already talked a lot about disruption, but disruption is happening in ways that it's just staggering, with mainstream technology and globalization. As I listened to the young leaders in the room before we started talk about what they're going to do, the entrepreneurs in the room, the people that want to be in global leadership, there's just so many things happening that are going to allow them to find their voices.

And ICT which stands for Internet Communications and Technology, because we want to capture the broadest sense of technology, is absolutely changing the world for people with disabilities. There is a man who's had a face transplant, because, you know, he had an accident, and he successfully had a face transplant. There's wireless cars, there's smart cities, there's the Internet of things, there's 3‑D printing, the robotics, artificial intelligence. In the middle of the slide, I have a woman ‑‑ I shouldn't laugh ‑‑ there's a woman reading a book driving a car, and you hope, please, that she's in a driverless car but the driverless car would be invaluable to my daughter Sara with Down syndrome. She can't drive and she doesn't always want to have to rely on her parents so it would be wonderful for her.

But at the same time, there are so many people that need driverless cars. I was in Virginia driving down the expressway, and there was a car in front of me weaving. We were all going about 70, 75 miles per hour, most of us were speeding, and she was weaving and I thought I don't know what you're doing but you're not concentrating on your driving so I'm going to get around you. As I went around her, multiple lanes around her because I was afraid of her, she was changing her clothes. Driving down the expressway, she was a woman about my age ‑‑ really? Really? Really? This morning when Richard and I were driving up to Maryland, I said I don't know what this car is doing in the fast lane but I know they're not driving so we're going around them.

So we went around them and the woman was texting and driving so we're distracted drivers. We're distracted drivers often, and these driverless cars not only are powerful for all of us, but really powerful for people that maybe are blind or have intellectual disabilities or they're getting older and they're having their license taken away. It makes a lot of sense.

Our public transportation can't handle what's coming, the aging of America, so the driverless cars even though we've had some accidents with driverless cars still, we have accidents every second of the day with human beings driving cars, so there's a lot to look forward to, but still a lot is unfolding.

So the book also talks about the workforce and accessibility, because sometimes the brands don't understand what we're talking about. This is better, but people used to say, I would say, well, are you accessible? They'd say: “Oh, yes, you can get on our site 24/7.”

Okay, okay, that's good. What I'm asking you: “Are you accessible to people with disabilities that use assistive technology.”

What?

So luckily, I don't get those kind of things anymore. I used to have people say: “Can people that are blind use technology?” Okay, I hope ‑‑ hopefully we've come far enough in society that yes, and they probably could use it better than you since you're asking me that stupid question ‑‑ oh, sorry, no stupid questions so what do you have to think about with an inclusive workforce?

Policies and procedures, once again everything has to be accessible. Universal design. Design things that we all benefit from it. The young people, now for example Apple has voice‑over, that was created for people with disabilities, but the young people use it like crazy now. They're so good on it so if you do it right, your design improves your product, your services for all of us.

So inclusion in the biggest sense of the word, and all of those diversity categories. Accommodations which is also called adaptions in the U.K. and other countries, which means accommodating your employees. And I was interviewed once on television about accommodations, and the reporter asked me, at the time I had a lot of people with disabilities that worked for me at TecAccess and they were telling us: Tell us about how you accommodate your employees. They wanted me to talk about accommodating my employees with disabilities, since 80% of my staff were people with disabilities. But I wanted to talk about people.

So I said well, one of my employees broke his shoulder and at the time this was about 8 years ago, he needed a one‑handed keyboard, a smaller keyboard. These days, what, aren't all keyboards small? So there were some things I did to accommodate him. Another gentleman had broken his leg and was a really bad break and so he needed access to a closer parking space just during this time.

And then I had employees that were blind and needed screen readers and I had employees that were deaf, and they needed sign language interpreters, sometimes transcriptions, captioning on the videos. The point I was trying to make to the reporter is if you want to be an employer of choice, you accommodate your employees because sometimes we need accommodations. Sometimes we hurt our backs, trimming the trees during the weekend. Sometimes we get in car accidents.

But you need to accommodate your employees so we can be productive, which is what, of course, they want us to be. Training, everything has to be accessible so that we all can participate, and this is part of the future of work.

So there's still, despite everything that we're all doing, there's still many myths about people with disabilities, and the employment of them. People with disabilities don't have the right skills, are not graduating from college. They leave jobs more frequently than others. They have a higher turn‑over, they're not as productive. Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. All of these things are wrong.

You can go to askjAN.org and they have wonderful studies, RespectAbility has some amazing studies that they've done. There's a lot of information out there that proves these myths about employing people with disabilities are absolutely not true. Instead, what we're finding is that Cisco employed people with disabilities in Bangladesh in their call center that were blind, and they were really shocked by something.

They found that ‑‑ and I'm not saying this is across the Board with every single person with a disability ‑‑ but what they found with these employees were actually more productive than their employees that weren't blind, and the customer service, the customers were calling and saying: This person was amazing. They found that these employees that were blind were more empathetic than the employees that didn't have disabilities, because if you're blind in Bangladesh, things aren't super easy for you. It's just the reality. Things are still unfolding so they found that not only were they more productive, creative and innovative, they were more empathetic with the customers. The customers loved them so they wanted to employ even more people with disabilities because they had ‑‑ they were finding such talented employees.

So I have lots of those stories in the book, but it is about seamless integration. It's about making sure that we all can be included, we can be included in your workforce, in your marketing and branding. Once again, please don't have people pose as people with disabilities. We know, we know. We can tell. These efforts are good for your bottom line and your brand image. That societies function better when we all can be included and so we also now have a direct path to the community.

We can get on social media and talk too the community. We can hashtags, we can go to organizations like RespectAbility that are doing Leadership Forums. You can meet the brightest talent out there. It's bi‑directional path to the consumers with disabilities, because if you're not engaging with us, we're going to go to brands that will engage with us so if you're one of those brands that have a million followers and you're following 4 people, the young people don't like that. I don't like it either, by the way and I won't follow you.

And so you need to engage with us. You must engage with us, and you can have a bi‑directional conversation. And you might not engage with the community of people with disabilities but what's going to happen is, they will engage in a conversation. You can decide whether or not you're going to be part of it.

It's a model that is business to consumer and consumer direct to business, so it's not just about business to business. And it doesn't matter that you're a brand that only sells to other businesses. Your image does matter. And a lot of it once again, a lot of these advancements are happening as younger people and people with disabilities are finding their voice on social media, and learning about how important it is to engage in the Global Marketing platforms.

Here are just a few employers that hire people with disabilities. I have Sogeti, which is a very large engineering firm in France who work with colleges, and they specifically support engineers with disabilities, and they use them as interns, and then about 70 to 100% of them are hired at Sogeti.

You have Walgreens, you have Disney, Microsoft, AtoS, Tommy Hilfiger, Barclays. Y'all know Woolworths? Probably nobody ‑‑ okay, I do have some nods. I remember Woolworths. Some of us people, I'm much older than her nodding, but remember Woolworths but Woolworths is still live and available in Australia and they employ people with intellectual disabilities in Australia so I talk about that in human ‑‑ tapping into human potential.

SAP, Ernst & Young, Accenture, Vodafone, so once again, global brands. I want to make sure that we have time for questions since we're at 10 minutes to the hour but please join me on human potential at work. It really is important to subscribe to these shows and to help us re‑Tweet it and if you have suggestions on somebody I should be interviewing on there, but we have 84 countries watching this, and I try to always do a global ‑‑ I have global guests because once again, this is about human beings as opposed to nationalities. We're all global citizens. So we talk about how to find out more about human potential. AXSChat but it's one of the largest Tweets in the world and we're talking about disability and inclusion and accessibility, every single Tuesday on 3:00 at Twitter using #AXSChat, we talk about disability inclusion, and it's a large community from all over the world. We have people joining us at 3:00 in the morning from Australia or in India, but it's a really powerful medium. And we've been doing it since November 2015, every single Tuesday. Got to have consistency with this content.

So the business case is really clear, even though I can't say that. Technology is redefining the workforce. Corporations are leading the change, sometimes more than the government, because sometimes our governments get really squirrely and what? What is happening?

And then of course we all need to be agents of change. I want to make sure that we have time for questions. So I'll turn it back over to you.

>> CHRISTINA REVILLA: Yeah, if you do have questions type them into the chat and we'll respond, if there are questions in the room and if the operator has any questions phoning in.

>> OPERATOR: Participant who have dialed in indicate they would like to ask a question by pressing 7‑pound on their telephone keypad. If you've dialed in, to indicate you'd like to ask a question, press 7‑pound. All participants can submit questions by typing their question in the bottom of the Q&A box, and pressing the enter ‑‑ excuse me, clicking the "Ask" button with their mouse to send it.

>> DEBRA RUH: I will also say as we're giving people time to do questions, I really would appreciate if you do buy a copy of Inclusion Branding, would you please do a review on Amazon? It is so hard to get reviews these days because all of the APIs have changed so you have to blatantly say will you please give me a review? Hopefully positive if you like it on Amazon because until you reach 50 reviews on Amazon, you don't really get got ranking, so as all of these, everything is changing on Twitter and all these social media mediums. It's interesting how something gets noticed, and on Amazon, it's the reviews, verified purchases of course. So I would like to say, we love reviews. I would love your reviews.

Yes, Jodi Newmark, thank you for -- she's asking if copies of the presentation will be made available and yes, we will. We will make them available. And I have provided my information here and if you have any questions, if you have any comments, if you want to suggest guests on our shows, please let us know.

I will tell you, I've talked often about RespectAbility's studies that they've done. I had a show on the criminal court system, and we talked about some of the data that came from RespectAbility, so they've got a lot of really good studies out there.

We'll just give everybody a couple more minutes in case you want to ask a question. Okay, we have a question in the room.

>> So as a young person, how do you you approached corporations and make sure they take it seriously?

>> DEBRA RUH: And I'm going to repeat so everybody can hear it. As a young person how do you approach a corporation and make sure they take you seriously?

I have been blessed to work with corporate America my whole career, and once again, I'm going to be 60 in December, so a milestone for me. But what I find the best way to approach a corporation is to have a really balanced conversation with them.

They're terrified when you attack them, and when you use a hashtag, I can think of a couple I'm not going to say here that they're just always so negative. They're so negative, and the corporations are terrified of them.

So I'm finding that if you have ‑‑ if you have a balanced, engaging conversation with them, especially on social media, they'll answer you. Now, I have a lot of followers on social media, so partially I'm not delusional. Partially I understand, one reason why they respond to me is because I have such a large following but I also see some of these brands reaching out and engaging with other people.

And I think that's one way to do it, and then of course, if you're going to reach out and have a balanced conversation with them, make sure you're using your hashtags to -- you know, because that's how we all see what's going on, and I also take the time, I take a lot of time, thanking the brand on social media when I catch them doing something right and so they know ‑‑ of course, they can get a report to tell them the negative sentiments, the neutral, the positive, so the brands know what's happening even though they're not effectively most of them engaging on social media, because they're terrified of us on social media. They're afraid it will go wrong, they'll say something wrong. So a lot of the Tweets they'll do it has to go all the way through legal. Twitter doesn't wait for you to get to legal. It's already ‑‑ we've already passed and on to 15 other conversations while you get through Legal but I think that's one of the best ways to engage with them.

Engage with them on social media. Talk to the brand. Reward them for what they're doing. Go out on to Tommy Hilfiger and hashtag them and say: Thank you for including people with disabilities. I'm a young person, I'm going to be a leader in this. I'm already a leader. I want my voice heard. How can I help you? How can we support you? So that's how I've had the most success.

Sort of like what you do in real life, being nice to each other. But I don't find a lot of the negative comments. It just seems to divide us. Good question.

>> I have a follow‑up question to it. Do you still think

>> Do you still think email and an actual hand-written letter are [inaudible]

>> DEBRA RUH: I think that's a great question. Are email and handwritten letters still valuable? And I say yes. It's interesting with email, because I find that I get contacted in different ways. Sometimes I'm contacted on email. I never am contacted on the phone anymore which is interesting.

But sometimes it will be through a direct message on social media or LinkedIn, but I do think that emails still are a really valid way to get to them and I think handwritten letters, because it's so rare these days, really stand out. So if you write a letter to the CEO of a corporation, it is going to ‑‑ maybe the CEO's not going to read it, but the people that support that CEO are going to read it and if they think it's valuable, it will get to the CEO. So I think the good old‑fashioned handwriting letters there's still a place in our world for it even though you're not seeing it as much the name.

What do you think? Because you're a technologist and an entrepreneur, so what do you think? You answer that question. And answer it loud so people can hear.

>> Although I like experience-- when I communicate with big corporations, but I think one of the concerns I do have with email is because for a big corporations there are a lot of [ Inaudible ], there are a lot of unrelated emails they get from people and because of that you might just filter it out in the process.

>> DEBRA RUH: Especially with attachments. If you have attachments and they don't know you, I agree. I email right now is still something business is using but I find that I'm having more engaging conversations than on the social media platform. Will you say your name so everybody knows who you are.

>> My name is Tom Noh. I'm one of the Fellow -- or intern RespectAbility.

>> DEBRA RUH: Just so that they know. But I know that we're out of time but if anybody has any questions, my information is up here. You can get to me on social media. I'm very consistent with my brand. I suggest you also be consistent with your brand. So I'm Debra Ruh on everything: Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Skype, WhatsApp. Yeah, yeah.

But thank you, everybody, for joining, and thank you, RespectAbility, for hosting the webinar today, too.

[ Applause ]

>> CHRISTINA REVILLA: Well, thank you so much, Debra, for speaking. And now the webinar has ended. Thank you for joining us.

[ End of webinar ]

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