

3rd Deaf Employment Summit - Hiring Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees - Now and Beyond

Thursday, December 3, 2020 @ 1 PM EST

Panelists: *Samantha Moreno (H-E-B), Regina Kiperman-Kiselgof (RIT/NTID), Anjali Desai-Margolin (Gallaudet University) & Angel Enriquez (Amazon)*

Moderator: *Kristy Ramos (CSD)*

****NOTE: This transcript reflects the transcriber's best effort to express the full meaning intended by the speakers. It is not a verbatim transcript.****

>>DAN MABASHOV: Hello, hello, everyone. So excited to have our 3rd Deaf Employment Summit. Really excited for everybody to be here. Let me take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Dan Mabashov, and I work for CSD, Communication Service for the Deaf.

Before we get started, I just want to give everybody some tips about how to utilize Zoom. Make sure you're using a laptop or a computer. It doesn't work very well on a mobile device because it'll be hard to see all of the panelists. It's better to use a laptop or a desktop. Make sure that your Zoom has recently been updated. You can look in the top left corner, where it says *zoom.us, check for updates*. Click on that. It'll let you know if you've been recently updated or if you need to update.

We'll be providing voice interpreters, as well as live captioning and sign interpreters, so turn your sound on if you need it. Also, we have a captionist on here. Go ahead and click in the bottom right-hand corner. You will see a *live transcript CC* button, and you can do that there.

If you have questions for the panelists, and you want to ask them, go ahead and type that into the Q&A. And we will devote a time at the end of the presentation to answer questions. If you have problems with the technology, go ahead and message tech support. We have 2 people on standby, here to support you. Enjoy the panel!

I'm honored to introduce Kristy Ramos. She's the Director of CSD Works. Enjoy the panel.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Hello, hello, everyone! Welcome. Welcome to the Deaf Employment Summit. This is our 3rd event. It's so exciting to have everybody here.

My name is Kristy Ramos, and I'm the Director of CSD Works. CSD is Communication Service for the Deaf. And CSD Works, basically, we do employment services for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who are looking to find jobs or to move up within the current career pattern that they're in. We have partnered with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, with different states, in order to provide services to deaf and hard-of-hearing members of that state, for employment services purposes.

So, I'd like to welcome you all. I'll be the moderator for today's panelists. And then I want to welcome each of our panelists to join us, so they'll be popping their screens on now.

Hello, hello. All right, well, hello, everyone. Hello, panelists. We can take a moment to explain just a little bit about who you are, who you work for, what your roles and responsibilities are. So, why don't we go ahead and start with Regina.

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: Hello. Thank you for inviting me to be here on the summit. My name is Regina Kiperman-Kiselgof. I work as the Assistant Director for the Career Center at RIT/NTID, Rochester Institute of Technology / National Technical Institute for the Deaf. And I'm here in Rochester, New York. I help students that are getting ready to graduate to create their resumes, develop their interview skills, and advise them about different employment trends and strategies, in order to help them. Basically, an employment coach, to help them find a job, or internship, a co-op, or whatever it is they're looking for at that time. Working in the computer field, I work with Information Technology, I work with Mobile Application Development, and I also work with Computer Technology. My role here is to provide resources to employers who are seeking to hire Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees as part of their diversity intentions. I train them, as a consultant, to work with our students, for recruitment purposes, within various industries: private companies, as well as public government sector. And so, that's basically my role at RIT/NTID.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Wonderful. Thank you. Anjali, how about you?

>>ANJALI DESAI-MARGOLIN: Yes, I'm very happy to be here with you all today. Thank you for inviting me. My name is Anjali Desai-Margolin. I'm at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. I work at the Career Center. My job is to advise students on their career plans, to develop their career readiness, to

help with their job searching skills, to coordinate and help coach them to develop those skills. And I work primarily with first and second year students, to help them to go through their program, and to help them get ready for and apply for internships. I do a lot of work with internships, as well as post-graduate employment. I also work very closely with the faculty and the employers. Gallaudet University, as I mentioned, is in Washington, D.C. It's the world's only liberal arts university for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. It's in our nation's capital. It was founded in 1864. We had the charter signed by President Abe Lincoln. We have about 1,500 students, both undergrad and grad. That's a little bit about us.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Great, thank you, Anjali.

Samantha.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. If you're eating lunch, thank you for your time. My name is Samantha Moreno, and I work with H-E-B, which is a Texan grocer. And so, we're all over the state, hopefully, in Texas. I'm a Proud Partner -- and that's really what we call ourselves here, as H-E-B employees -- for 7 years. Today, I really want to get an opportunity to discuss our program, which is the Disability Bridges. And our mission is: *To make the lives of Texans with disabilities better by providing opportunities and removing barriers for employees and candidates with disabilities.* So, thank you for your time.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Thank you so much, Samantha.

Now we'll go to Angel.

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Good morning or afternoon, everybody. My name is Angel Enriquez. I am a Senior Manager in Amazon's Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Organization. We're the central organization that sets Amazon-wide strategy that, then, is laddered down to particular business unit strategies. My current remit includes what we call *experiences*: So, supporting our 12 Affinity Groups; our internal and external conferences, whether they're with partners or our own conferences; and a virtual learning series we call *CORE+*, which is conversations on race, ethnicity, plus all of the intersections that are involved with that; and, a Learning and Development Team that establishes

CORE learning for DEI at Amazon. I have been with Amazon for a number of years. Prior to that, I was at Caterpillar, where I had the opportunity to work with John and NTID in our Solar Turbine subsidiary. And so, I'm super excited to be here. And, even in meeting all the panelists, and connecting with you beyond this event, as well. So, thank you for inviting me.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Well, thank you for introducing yourselves. Before I ask our next questions, I want to go ahead and throw a poll up there, to see who we've got with us, and see where you are, and which category you fit. So, let me go ahead and throw this poll up there for you to see.

[Poll question on screen.]

All right, we'll wait for just a couple more people to see if we can get everybody to answer this question. Ah, and here are our results!

Our categories were: *Which do you represent? Are you a job seeker?* Which is about 23%, so, 32 people out of 139 that voted. And then, we have about 81%, or 113, employers here today. Awesome.

So, my next question that I want to ask everybody: *How do you recruit deaf and hard-of-hearing people for your jobs? And then, how has COVID changed that recruitment strategy for you? And, how do you manage safe and effective interview processes in light of COVID?*

I'd like to go ahead and start with Angel, if that's possible.

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Happy to. Thank you.

So, in terms of recruiting, we have a couple different strategies. And I think that one of the things about Amazon that I most appreciate is that we also are given the leeway to be vocally self-critical when we feel like we haven't done enough in those. And so, as I think about the strategies specific to the community, we have a lot of decentralized efforts, where there's direct outreach to either organizations or schools. So, Worldwide Operations has a program. And the U.S. has a program. And then, we are seeking to bring those all together into an aligned central program, as well, within my organization, and then the Student Programs Organization. In addition to those targeted efforts, we

also seek to ensure that our ongoing channels are inclusive. And so, that our minimal viable product, when we launch some of these efforts, include the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

And I'll give you an example. So, when we look at things like our recent external summit that we had, which was *Represent the Future*, it was a summit specifically focused on Black, Latinx, and Native American communities. However, we said, "There are deaf and hard-of-hearing Black, Latinx, and Native American community members. And so, we can't isolate identities, and we have to ensure that we're being inclusive to intersecting identities." And so, we needed to ensure that every element of that event was also accessible and open to specific accommodations that people may need.

And so that, when I say that, one element is about going directly to communities, to schools, and so forth, where we can connect with our customer in this case. And then, the other, though, is in showing that we have both representation and inclusiveness in everything that we do. So, it's both a specific target as well as included. So, that's the way we think about recruiting.

To your second part, around how COVID has impacted recruiting, we actually had a little bit of a head start, in the sense that our scale was requiring us to flip to virtual already. So, when you think about an Amazon going out and recruiting at campus, for example, we started to see that unless we thought differently about interviewing, our ability to be on campus was going to be very limited to a small number of schools. And we did not feel like that was an inclusive route. And so, we sought to scale access to those opportunities through virtual interviewing, both for campus and for experienced professionals. And so, while that pressure-tested when *[Laughs]* COVID hit, it also allowed us to ensure that we had mechanisms in place that that process could be inclusive.

And so, in partnership with our Affinity groups, with focus groups, and with experts -- because we believe that the experts are also critical in this -- we developed a suite of a toolkit, that is an accommodation toolkit, with specific standards that would allow us to, then, switch to virtual, and make sure that every recruiter and recruiting coordinator knew how, in both in-person and in virtual events, to be inclusive, so people could have an equitable experience. And so, our interviews all flipped to virtual. That's really how we moved forward with continuing to recruit, while maintaining safety. Amazon has had a bumper year of recruiting. *[Laughs]* I think that that is something that most people are probably aware of. And so, it was particularly important for us to do that.

Did I answer all of the questions?

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yes, yes, yes. Thank you.

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Okay. *[Laughs.]*

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yes, you did. Thank you so much.

So, now I'm gonna allow Samantha to answer the same question.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: So I'll answer this question, kind of, pre-COVID. Very similar, like Amazon, we were already taking initiatives to move a lot of our platforms to a digital format. So we started, early on, in using a digital interview process, which we call HireVue. And many of you may be familiar with different platforms that are out there, but this is a digital interview process, where we really wanted to connect with the candidate and mostly get to know the candidate at a deeper scale. Specifically, in the digital interview format, we've learned a lot of different ways to accommodate, specifically, all disabilities. And we did encounter more Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities seeking out for different accommodations. So, we added captions in our digital interview, and we also allowed all candidates to actually do their digital interview using Sign Language. And we paired up with a third-party vendor, which could interpret all their interviews. So, this is an amazing opportunity because it doesn't limit anyone with any disability. So, that was already pre-COVID. So, thanks to COVID, we've *really* launched it out of the park now, for sure.

And we have different partnerships with different vendors across the state. We also do partner with non-profit organizations. We do have over 40. Of course, your federal, government, and also schools as well.

We make space for the candidate to disclose if they have a disability, if they're deaf during the application process. And it gives us an opportunity to accommodate accordingly, and also to ensure that we have, on-site or via Zoom, interpreters for their interviews. Very much like Amazon, we also accommodate to do virtual interviews as well.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Great. Thank you. It's amazing how many things can be done, and how many positive things have happened, for your deaf and hard-of-hearing employees. And, as long as we have companies like you that are willing to work with deaf and hard-of-hearing, it's great.

So, next question: *How did your companies promote disability-friendly interviewing process? And, what were the challenges you encountered? And how did your company overcome some of those challenges?*

I want to start with one of our university representatives. So, who would like to answer that question first? Anjali? Regina?

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: I'm sorry, I missed the question.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: *How do you promote a disability-friendly or deaf-friendly interviewing process in a workplace? How do you promote that? What are some of the challenges that you've recognized? And how does your university overcome those challenges?*

Yes, OK, go ahead, Regina.

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: So, pre-COVID, we always coordinate with the recruiter and the students, those students who are graduating, in order to set up the interview process. So, it's in person. Obviously, if they try to do it on the phone, they'll use an interpreter through a video phone. If they do it just through video phone, mostly what's happening: the interpreters are always available through VRS, through the Relay Service. We did coordinate some Skype interviews, where the interviewer and the deaf interviewee can see each other. And if that's what they want, we can arrange that. Some people choose to speak for themselves during the interview. Others want to use the interpreter, and allow the interpreter to just sign what the hearing person is asking, the questions during the interview process.

Now, post-COVID times, everything has been in a virtual environment. It's all been virtual interviews. We've set up and worked with our recruiters to start educating everybody, the students as well as the

recruiters, about how to utilize the video opportunities; how to have an employer turn on or utilize captioning; how to get the interpreter there; how to contact an interpreter to give them the information to join the call. We've been taking a lot more opportunities to educate recruiters about how to connect with our deaf graduates and job seekers through video. So, it has been a little bit different. We've included captioning more. So, you'll have the captioning, as well as the interpreter, joining this interview. We've advocated for that because there are different types of communication preferences.

Again, you need to ask the job seeker: What is their communication preference? And what it is that they would like in order to work with this hearing employer? And, whether or not they want just a captionist, just the interpreter, or both.

So, we work all of that out. There have been some challenges, but it's actually gone on very well, both for our students, our graduates, as well as our recruiters. Everybody has seemed to embrace the new technology and using the video much easier -- not just for the interview, but also for informational sessions, like webinars, where many job seekers are there. People aren't used to that. That's kind of a new technology. But it was something that had started pre-COVID. But now, of course, it's utilized much more, and we're all getting used to it.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Great, thank you.

Samantha, would you like to respond?

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: Of course. So, I'm actually gonna go on examples. So, COVID hit us overnight, mostly. And so, we really figured some of our employees were having trouble in communicating with their colleagues. And so, immediately, we had to quickly respond in how to best accommodate that. We started getting requests from our employees that they would like management to wear clear masks, in order for them to be able to communicate and have smoother communication. We quickly searched the nation. Obviously, there *[Laughs]* – because of the mandate and because of everything that was happening across the nation – there was a shortage. So, we had to prioritize on producing them in-house. So, we quickly went into a different mode. And we had to produce over 400 masks for our employees. And we did that doing -- I mean, people just came out of the woodwork and said,

"Hey, I have experience sewing, and I can definitely assist." You know? So, that was just an amazing experience, that we came together, as a company, to really establish something that our employees needed. So, that's one of the greatest examples I can give that happened during the pandemic. Right? And it's currently happening, still, today. Today, thankfully, we're able to move forward, and now we have a procurement vendor that has established that with us.

We also found a different way and a different format of communication. Many of our employees also really wanted to get recognized because, since they were wearing masks, they really wanted to ensure that they communicated effectively with the customers. I know I mentioned that we're a Texas grocer. So, basically, the majority of our employees are in front of a lot of customers. And so, it is important for that customer service. And they really wanted to continue that. And so what we did: Here at H-E-B, as you can tell, we wear badges. So, I'm not sure if it's visible to you all. Pretty much what we did, at a request of our employee, we actually started doing the initiative on request, if they wanted to identify as being Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Now, we have 3 different formats: *deaf*, *hard-of-hearing*, or *hearing impairment*. It's pretty much their own decision, and that was something that we established.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: That's awesome. Thank you.

Anjali, would you like to add something?

>>ANJALI DESAI-MARGOLIN: Yes. I wanted to add to the issues with the interpreters. You know, the pre- and post-COVID issues. With things being virtual, as opposed to in person, for new employers who aren't sure how to get an interpreter, what they're supposed to do about that, whether it's virtual or in-person, I think it's important to throw that there are 2 valuable resources where they can get information regarding interpreters for job interviews when a Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing candidate requests that.

So, RID, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, is a non-profit organization that upholds the standards of interpreters, professional ethics, for ASL interpreters. So, RID is a nationwide, throughout the United States, resource that gives the accreditation and certification of interpreters in different areas: education, medical, legal, etc. But, if you need to *find* an interpreter, you can do that through RID. They do have a list of interpreters on their website that you can contact throughout the United

States, in order to get one.

Secondly, a valuable resource is NAD.

Let me back up for a minute. This is important to say. When you request for an interpreter, you need to make sure -- interpreters' schedules get full early, weeks and weeks in advance -- so you have to make sure that you're giving plenty of lead time, in order to request the interpreter.

So, the other valuable resource is NAD, National Association for the Deaf. They're a legal and advocacy agency for people that are deaf and hard-of-hearing. And they empower deaf and hard-of-hearing people within employment. They're more about legal information, but they can tell you things regarding legal issues for providing an interpreter. They can give you some guidance, as well, as to where to find and locate interpreters.

Those are two things I wanted to give out. I do recommend that you contact one of them. As well as Gallaudet. Gallaudet has Gallaudet Interpreting Services, GIS. And we have a list of interpreters as well.

Those 3 that I've just given you would be the best places to figure out where's the best place to get an interpreter for your company when seeking a job.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Thank you for bringing this critical information to us.

Regina, did you want to add something?

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: Yes, I did. When you're talking about the different video platforms, some companies only utilize 1 video platform. But there are so many platforms out there: there's Go to Meeting, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams. So, they're not all the same. Some of them are much easier to access, and to put in requests for captionists or interpreters when needing to register for your meeting and for the video. Some of the video platforms already have functions put in for deaf people, so that they can chat, and do chat communication, which might be a preference. Some of the video platforms don't have that ability. They don't have a space for texting back and forth with one

another. And a deaf candidate might prefer to type some answers if they so choose. So, just make sure you consult and figure out which is the best platform that is most friendly, for communication purposes, for your applicant.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Angel, do you want to add anything?

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Yes, thank you.

If I think, overall, about the way that we try and engage a workplace, it goes back to our approach, generally, which is to be customer-obsessed. That's why feedback is also very important. So, as people tell us where we missed the mark, it's important for us to know it. But it's also important for us to co-create with community. So, one of the ways that we do that is by ensuring that people feel empowered to share what they need and also feel like they have a seat at the table with senior leadership, and not just one point of connection. As an example, our 12 Affinity Groups, the leaders of those Affinity Groups have Executive Sponsors. And so, the Executive Sponsor for our People With Disabilities Affinity Group is Dave Lim [*phonetic*], who's the X-Team [*phonetic*] member, which is one of the Executive Staff Members, and manages devices.

And so, when we think about access, information, the ability to hear directly from employees, to get messages from them, it's super important that we consider that. That was foundational to us developing the accommodations toolkit that I shared prior. So, if we look at it, that's where our ASL interpreter program came from. Our staff, which is actually in-house ASL staff, as well, that is available.

It informed our recruiting processes, to where, for example, if you have selected an accommodation that includes ASL interpretation, you have the opportunity to meet with the interpreter in advance of the interview, to get to know them. You have the opportunity to share with them the specific needs that you have for that interview.

And so, we *really* try to encourage people to advocate for themselves, to speak up. I know that, sometimes, that feels very risky. We have a lot of conversations about authenticity and how authenticity is actually a privilege. Many people feel like being authentic and bringing their authentic selves to work can actually be a risk, depending on stereotypes or other things.

And so, we see that that's also generated other examples, where we have an employee who created a brief to educate her team that we, then, leveraged in a broader audience around how to *really* have inclusive meetings, and how things like rescheduling the meeting at the last-minute is actually untenable because then you have to reschedule the interpreter, or you have to think through some of those things differently. So, it really is about that focus on customer-obsession and extending that focus to our employees. And, for this one in particular, to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community too.

The President of our Affinity Group, he, himself, is also deaf. So, he's also been able to ensure that as we talk through these different things, or as we process through different ways of being inclusive, that the community is also well-represented.

So, those are just a few of the things that we use in that partnership, where we focus on the employee as the customer.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yes, thank you so much. It's just amazing what can be offered for deaf and hard-of-hearing employees. It's just amazing.

And I'm really glad that you brought up about requesting an interpreter, meeting the interpreter before the interview. That's a really important part because the interpreter and deaf person have different signing styles. And so, when they meet prior to an interview, it can allow them to have a common understanding about the interview and how things are going to work out for the interview, instead of just walking in, to interview: "Hi, this is my interpreter." So I'm really glad you brought that up because that is vital.

Yes, Regina.

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: Yeah, so, for the interview process, it really depends on the deaf person and their preference of having an interpreter or not. Again, you want to ask that person what their preferences are.

Now, if you've already hired a deaf person in the workplace, I suggest you provide some cultural

competency training for all of the company employees, from the top support person, all the way down to the people that they're working with on the line, to show that employee is valued, and they understand about cultural competencies, and understanding of the deaf community.

When the decision has been made to hire a deaf person onto the team, everybody that they're working with should be given an opportunity to learn about the communication needs of this new hire: how they can make this job more productive and more successful for the deaf employee by working with their hearing employees. Because it's not feasible to have an interpreter, 24/7, when the employee is working. There are different types of accommodations that can be made for the actual working relationship.

Third, having that positive interaction is really critical for a successful employment place. So, you find a job, but sometimes you get there and you face some challenges once you find this job. Hearing co-workers will expect the deaf person to pick up all that they're required to for the job as quickly as a hearing person might. However, a deaf person's gonna be left out because they're not gonna hear all of the incidental communication that's happening. And things are going to move much quicker in spoken language than they can figure out in written, or whatever other forms of communication they're needing.

You know, if people were to take some courses, whether it's finger-spelling, or actual ASL -- there are so many courses available out there on the internet, so you can take them. And I know that deaf people really appreciate when hearing people show and make the effort of trying to communicate, even if it's just finger-spelling. It kind of puts us at ease, just a little bit.

So, when your boss is trying to interact with you, that interaction can happen very well by making sure accommodations are met, the job responsibilities are clear, providing opportunities for promotion for the deaf employee. Instead of saying how great another hearing employee is, instead say, "Wow, I'm really impressed by how well you're doing and how good you are as an employee," and recognize the deaf employee for their contributions to the workplace.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Next question: *What are some dos and don'ts for an interview?*

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Can I add to that, really quickly?

>>KRISTY RAMOS: What can you do to . . .

Who's asking to add something?

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: That was Angel. Apologies, Kristy, for interrupting.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: No, that's okay. Go ahead.

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: I think that what Regina touched on is really also about myth-busting. I mean, I think we find that it's so important to back up into the process for the recruiters, for the pre-hire, to say, "Let's get out all of these myths about deaf and hard-of-hearing employees." And, one of them is that they all need the same thing. Or, just like in all diversity elements, that one person represents their entire community. And that is not customer-obsession. So, it's really counter to what the culture is to say that that's the case.

And I remember, not at Amazon, but at my prior company in the manufacturing space, where the concern was about safety. Like, we're gonna bring somebody in to a manufacturing space, and is it going to be less safe? And that was *such* a myth because, really, it provided a perspective that allowed us to get better in safety because of the curb-cut effect of: When you bring in the accommodations, or ways to include our deaf and hard-of-hearing employees, you actually made the place better for everyone. And the perspective and ideas that those employees brought to solutions, outside of accommodations, to all solutions, really added that value.

So, I think as we talk about preparing managers, recruiters, and employees to enter the workforce, it really is around saying, "We truly believe there's value in these perspectives. We have to be customer-obsessed about them. And we have to bust the myths that people have when they are not a part of the community, so that they can be allies as well."

So, I just wanted to add that because I thought, Regina, that was such a great point you talked about with manager engagement. And I think, in my experience, it's super important across-the-board.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yeah, thank you so much for sharing that, Angel.

And that's the reason it's really critical to have deaf-friendly or disabled-friendly trainings, to ensure that your workplace is inclusive and a positive location for deaf and hard-of-hearing employees, or for other employees with disabilities.

All right, let's go on to the next question: *What are some dos and don'ts during the interview process? Any tips you can share from the employer, or for the job seeker?*

Who wants to jump in first?

Shall I just pick at random?

Oh, OK, Samantha, great. I'll let you go first.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: I think this is more for the job seeker. So, just really be confident. Don't be shy. And be clear and timely in what you're requesting, whether that's an accommodation for an interpreter, or any other accommodation.

And so, I'm just gonna be, kind of, sharing a success story that we've had 2 months ago. So, we hired Sally, and she was very clear in her accommodations. She had no hesitation as to what she needed. So we have this employee who is deaf, and has also identified to have a physical impairment. She is in a wheelchair. And so, right off the bat, when we had the conversation with her, in having that interactive conversation, she said, "All I need is an interpreter. I can do the job function." And she was hired for our bagger position. And, of course, the concern, as many of you have mentioned, and I know Angel had mentioned, kind of is safety concerns. Right? What would that look like in a bagger perspective? And so, just to say, that's not . . . something that she said: "I dress myself every day in the morning, I can get everything out of my closet, and I can dress myself every day. So, there shouldn't be a concern as to how far I can reach. And so, I can definitely do this job. And I can bag. And, the only accommodation that I'm asking for today is my onboarding interpreter," which we provided. And I said, "OK, no problem." And so, just to say, that she's a stellar employee. And she is one of our fastest

baggers that we have here at HEB. And she has been recognized by so many individuals who walk into the store, so many customer compliments that she's received.

So, it's just an amazing field, sometimes, that we're blinded to what are capabilities. But I think one of the things that I give her a lot of credit was her confidence and what she asked for. So, don't be afraid to ask for what you need.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Very true.

Yes, Anjali.

>>ANJALI DESAI-MARGOLIN: I want to add to what Samantha mentioned about not being afraid to ask for what your needs are. That goes with that whole concept of reasonable accommodations. So, you know, you need to ask for what you need in relation to your job and your essential functions of your job. Like -- I think it was Regina -- you had mentioned you can't expect to have an interpreter there, 24/7. That's obviously not a reasonable accommodation, and it's very expensive. You can't have an interpreter there every day, but you can use interpreters for staff meetings, for important meetings, like an evaluation, one-on-one meetings, things like that.

But there are other examples of reasonable accommodations. And there's lots of them, depending on the need of the individual. Maybe they need to have a phone light, a flashing phone light, to let them know that the phone is ringing. You need to have visual alerts, in case of a fire or smoke. You have strobe lights, and you'll have lights for that, so it's visual and not just auditory. People that are hard-of-hearing or losing their hearing may need assistive listening devices. Those are the things that could be very beneficial to someone in their workplace. An amplified phone, if somebody is hard-of-hearing and utilizes their phone. Instant messenger. E-mail. Being able to just write back and forth with your employee. Using the video phone as needed, as we've mentioned. Use VRS for remote working, or for deaf people who are working in an office and needing to make calls to other hearing employees. Don't say that a deaf person can't make calls to other hearing people because they can. They can do that through VRS.

So, there are reasonable accommodations. And you just have to know what it is you want to ask for. And, deaf people know best what to ask for and what they need to do their job.

As far as interviewing tips, giving past history, employees that ask deaf and hard-of-hearing questions during an interview, they share their concerns that, you know, they're always asking about their Deaf and Hard of Hearingness during an interview, and they're concerned that there's going to be discrimination about that because it's not relevant to the position what their hearing status is, and their DHHS application. So, the interviewer will ask, "Do you drive?" "How long have you been married to a deaf person?" or "a deaf woman," or "a deaf man"? Those are the kinds of questions that people will ask that really aren't relevant. But, employers are continuing to ask those types of questions.

So, that's a tip for employers: to *not* ask those type of questions. deaf and hard-of-hearing people are always willing to answer those questions after the interview, but not during the interview.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: I want to talk about accommodations with an employer. What are some of the accommodations that are out there?

If you're curious, you can look at Ask JAN. It's a job accommodation website. You can Google that. It's J-A-N. And that's something that you can look onto, to see which fits best. And you can do "AskJAN."

I'll go to our final question, just because we're getting to the end of our panelist time, and I know the audience has questions as well: *What tips or advice would you like to share with deaf and hard-of-hearing job seekers and employers?*

Let's start with one of our companies. H-E-B or Amazon, who would like to start?

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: I'll go ahead. For job seekers, I'd say just: assume that every opening that's out there is out there for you. And so, similar to what others have said, as you go through that process, be comfortable, both, asking for the accommodations you need to be successful and giving us feedback if something is not working. I got a prompt, for example, to speak more slowly. And I appreciate that. We want to be corrected, so we can be better at connecting with our candidates. We want you to be successful. And so, when you go out there, to the job sites at Amazon, don't assume that there's only

certain jobs that are there for you. Really, think broadly.

The other example I'll give is the advice I would give every job seeker, of all backgrounds, and that is: Make sure you understand the job. Study our leadership principles. There is a lot of information that you can Google about Amazon's hiring practices. And so, that preparation is the same.

And then, really be comfortable coming to the interview as yourself. You know, you don't need to apologize for any of the accommodations. You know, if you need a break, or you need something that wasn't covered in advance, please feel free to raise your hand, or to communicate that you need that.

So, for job seekers, I would say: assume all jobs are also for you, and then allow us to be customer-obsessed, in both providing us feedback and in indicating what you're interested in. So those are the two. From an Amazon perspective, that's the advice that I would give.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: I think from an H-E-B . . .

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Great, thank you, Angel.

Yes, Samantha.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: I apologize. Sorry. *[Laughs.]* So, I think . . .

>>KRISTY RAMOS: No, no, that's fine. Please.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: I think from an H-E-B . . .

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Just give you a few seconds because I do want to go ahead and move on to our Q&A from our audience. But, please.

>>SAMANTHA MORENO: Sure, no problem. So, I'm gonna touch on this briefly, and I know I kind of touched on it in my previous answer. It's just advocating for what you need.

I think this is more for the employers. So, make space to talk about it. Make space to talk about accommodations because I think sometimes, as employers, we can shy away from, you know, not being familiar of what that accommodation may look like. But I think always asking the question will give you a better response to what the candidate is seeking.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Thank you. Yes.

So, I want to go ahead and look into the Q&A. We have lists and lists of Q&A questions. *[Laughs]* There's so many of them. Unfortunately, we won't get to all of them, but we are going to select a few questions to answer.

One question is specifically for Amazon: *Is the Amazon accommodation toolkit available publicly?*

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: I did see that, and I've been trying to chime with somebody to see if they can confirm that. I actually don't believe it is because it is an internal toolkit for recruiters that speaks to, kind of, internal language on where to go for what things. So, it's to help them, both, understand and have organizational agility. So, I don't actually think it is available. I'm not sure how we communicate back to the attendees, but I'll follow-up and see if there's a version of it that is currently available externally, as well. And I'll follow-up with Kristy. And I don't know if there's a way to follow that back with the attendees?

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yes, definitely. If you share it with me, I can then share it within our newsletter and get all of that information out to everyone that's here on our webinar.

I just wanted to add a comment: For CSD Works, we have some e-guidelines on how to find accommodations, request accommodations, the process. We have that available on our website for CSD Works. So, just type in *csdworks.com*, and you can look over some of those eGuide tip sheets for accommodations and pick which fits your needs.

All right, the next question we'll look at, a person said: *Which entity would be best to contact, in order to evaluate our company and make suggestions on how we can be fully ready to support our deaf and hard-of-hearing employees?*

Who could tackle that?

I can actually add just a little bit to this.

With CSD Works, we have something called a *Disability-Friendly Training* that we offer for employers who are trying to be more inclusive and are ready to hire Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. We also offer consultation services for any questions or concerns that you might have with a new employee. And we can do that as well. And we have deaf experts that can provide that to you. And we also do workplace assessments, which means that we have a deaf expert that will go to your facility and give you some information about things that you've got there that are working, things that might be considered barriers. We have, kind of, a checklist assessment that we can work with you, on-site.

And if you have any questions regarding any of that, you can contact CSD Works.

Does anybody else want to add something?

Yes, Regina?

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: So, NTID, our Center of Employment, we have wonderful resources available, also, through our website. For a job seeker, you're welcome to visit our website. You can look at that list, and see those specific categories. For example: *How to interview a deaf person*, for an employer. *How to interview a deaf person as a group interview, as opposed to an individual interview*. Other questions: *How to integrate a deaf person into your workplace*. There are lots of different areas that are available, and information that's available, on our website.

And if you don't find what you're looking for, *please* email me or contact me. I'll be happy to share that information with you or provide any consultative services that you might need.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Okay. Another question. Somebody asked: *Why should an employer hire a deaf candidate? What is the benefit of hiring a deaf candidate?*

Regina, OK. Who wants to go first? Anybody else want to answer it? Regina, go ahead.

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: Well, I think the best part about hiring a Deaf or Hard of Hearing employee is the adaptability of that person. They can meet your skills. Somebody who has been hard of hearing or deaf all their life, they have figured out how to adapt to the world, the hearing world, mainstream culture, mainstream environment. They're very adaptable. They've developed their own strategies for communication with hearing people, for working one-on-one, working with a group, utilizing a phone, using the video phone. And a deaf employee is able to, then, use that to apply to their work. They can show their patience and their flexibility when they encounter different obstacles.

Secondly, it's perspective. Deaf people bring a unique perspective to the team because of their background, life experiences. Everything has been different than that of somebody from hearing culture. Suggesting different services, different features, different marketing ideas. You know, maybe it's something that your company has never thought of before, but a deaf person brings in this new perspective, and can then provide even better customer service than you might've had in the past.

Also, the last one, if I can continue? One more? OK. Yeah, I know. There are so many good reasons to hire deaf people!

>>KRISTY RAMOS: You're so right.

>>REGINA KIPERMAN-KISELGOF: I think that the culture of your company, the culture of your organization, adding diversity to it, by adding a deaf or hard-of-hearing person, gives an opportunity for all employees to work on having better, more effective communication, and their skills, while looking at and understanding from somebody else's perspective. Cultural competency training that can be provided teaches compassion, open-mindedness, showing better ways of communication. Everybody has different communication preferences and learning styles -- not just deaf people, hearing people as well. They have their own style. So, for example: taking notes, visual aids, meeting minutes, agenda, all of those types of things. Doing all of that isn't going to benefit just the deaf employee. It's going to benefit everybody. And it'll make everybody better communicators.

And being able to unite in that, and understand, and seeing that part, those are 3 great ideas why

adding deaf people to your workforce is great. And there's lots more I could add, but I'll stop now!

>>KRISTY RAMOS: OK, next question. *What type of response do you encourage from deaf and hard-of-hearing job seekers for questions that might be inappropriate to be asked during an interview? What should a deaf person do? Maybe that question doesn't have anything to do with the job they're applying for. What is your suggestion of how a deaf person should respond to that?*

>>ANJALI DESAI-MARGOLIN: Can you repeat the question again, please?

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Sure. *What type of response do you encourage from a Deaf or Hard of Hearing job seeker when they're asked a question that is inappropriate to be asked by an employer during an interview because it doesn't relate to the particular job at hand?*

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: I think . . .

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Maybe somebody asking about your medical history . . .

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: Yeah, so, I have, myself, had questions asked . . .

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Yes, go ahead, Angel.

>>ANGEL ENRIQUEZ: And I have . . . yeah. And I have had managers ask, like, in prep, talk about things that they're curious about. And my recommendation is just to redirect back to the interview topic. And I think that the way that I have done it in the past is, to say, "You know, I'd really like to stay focused, to make sure that we have time to address the job-related elements of the interview."

And then, I'd share that with the recruiter afterwards, frankly, that it made you uncomfortable, or that you didn't feel it was appropriate, and that they should be aware -- now, if it's the recruiter, there's got to be another mechanism -- but, that it made you uncomfortable, or that you didn't feel it was appropriate to ask that question. And, that you didn't answer, so that they're also aware, and can either coach, or be mindful to also look out for it, in case the person has a negative reaction to you not answering it.

We, at Amazon, have de-briefs after interviews, for example. And, we have bar-raisers. And the bar-raisers are people who are not from that team. They're a specially-trained group of interviewers that ensure that the conversation stays focused on what is relevant to the job, and they call out potential conflicts with that. So, for example, if somebody says, "I just didn't get a sense this person was committed," a bar-raiser would push and say, "You know, I really need to understand what you mean by that. What are the examples?"

And so, in our scenario, if I receive that feedback, as a manager, that an inappropriate question was asked, I'd not only coach the manager, but also look out for that in the debrief -- ensure that this didn't come across, or that they didn't share feedback in a way that was, "This person was evasive," or "didn't have clear examples." You know, that kind of thing.

So, redirecting back, and then providing feedback to the person who scheduled the interview with you that that had happened, I think, are 2 things.

>>KRISTY RAMOS: Great. Thank you.

Before we wrap up, I would like to go ahead and put up the second poll question.

There we go. So, the question for the second poll is: *Which follow-up topics should we focus on for our next webinar? Ensuring effective accommodations and compliance for deaf and hard-of-hearing employees; various types of accommodations, including interpreters, assistive technologies, for deaf and hard-of-hearing; or, diversity and equity among the deaf and hard-of-hearing employees at the workplace, and the value of deaf and hard-of-hearing employees in the workplace?*

So, please choose one of those, as what you think our next webinar should focus on. You've got about 30 seconds.

All right, so we have 132 people out of 169. Come on, let's go. Let's get it all!

OK, now I see the results here. It seems almost a tie for questions 2 and 3, for the follow-up: *the various types of accommodations, including interpreters and assistive technologies for deaf and hard-*

of-hearing, as well as the diversity and equity among deaf and hard-of-hearing employees in the workplace. Great, thank you so much.

So, I want to thank all of our panelists once again for answering all of these questions, and for sharing your insight, experience, and tips, with employers and job seekers. So, I thank each of you.

And I want to thank our audience for joining and for learning. Please feel free to share with your colleagues who couldn't be here today, with your family and friends, how critical this information is.

And, also, thank you to our interpreters, our voice interpreter and our sign interpreter.

And I want to thank our planning committee for supporting this event. So, thank you all so much: the National Association for the Deaf (NAD); RIT/NTID (Rochester Institute of Technology/ National Technical Institute for the Deaf); as well as Gallaudet University.

I also want to have a special thanks for our tech support. Dan Mabashov, thank you so much for working all of this out for us.

And, also, thank you to our CART provider.

Thank you for this wonderful event. And, I look forward to us meeting again, and seeing you at our next webinar. Thank you. Bye bye.

[WEBINAR ENDS @ 2:01 PM EST]

****NOTE: This transcript reflected the transcriber's best effort to express the full meaning intended by the speakers. It was not a verbatim transcript.****