

Working Remotely Webinar Transcript

June 2020

David Heafitz : Thomas's last electrical power is trying to get back online. That's why we can't see him.

David Heafitz : What I can do is I can try and share my screen with a text of Thomas. So you can see him it would be not great but I'll try that.

Interpreter: Sarah Schneckenburger: Okay.

Interpreter: Sarah Schneckenburger: Another couple minutes because the numbers are going up. I see the number of participants increasing as we speak.

Denise Kavin: Okay, hello everyone. I think it's a good time to get started.

Denise Kavin: It's just two minutes past 12 and I want to be mindful of your time as well. So welcome to our webinar best practices for deaf and hearing people working together during the time of

Denise Kavin: We'll go ahead and start with introductions. My name is Dr. Denise Kavin.

Denise Kavin: I am the Assistant Dean for outreach placement and special projects at NTID which is in Rochester, New York.

Denise Kavin: I'd also like to introduce our planning committee who has been working for the past several months to make this happen. We have four organizations who have collaborated together to make this event happen.

Denise Kavin: The first is my colleague John Macko who is the director of the NTID center on employment.

Denise Kavin: He has he and his office provide services to deaf students and alumni, as well as employers all over the United States.

Denise Kavin: Next I'd like to introduce Dr. Thomas Horejes.

Denise Kavin: He is the Associate Provost for student success and academic quality at Gallaudet University.

Denise Kavin: The third person I'd like to introduce is Howard Rosenblum

Denise Kavin: He is the CEO.

Denise Kavin: And Zainab

Denise Kavin: Alkebsi

Denise Kavin: Who is with the Council at the legal counsel at the National Association of the Deaf and finally

Denise Kavin: Kristy Ramos.

Denise Kavin: The director of CSD communication services of the deaf.

Denise Kavin: And their work program who provide work opportunities and services for deaf people all over the country. Now today we have 330 participants registered for this webinar. The numbers are still going up. We are so thrilled to have this type of positive response to a webinar like this.

Denise Kavin: So today we have four panelists that are representing different organizations and companies. We will allow them to introduce themselves in just a minute but first I'd like to describe how this is going to work.

Denise Kavin: We'll have about 40 minutes of questions that I will ask our panelists. We'll ask them to respond to various questions.

Denise Kavin: And you as participants, if you happen to have any questions you can open up the Q&A, a feature at the bottom of your zoom screen and feel free to type in the question.

Denise Kavin: We have a team of people who will be screening and filtering through those questions and then at the last 15 minutes of our webinar will have time to go through and answer some of those questions.

Denise Kavin: We have two interpreters with us today. Sarah and Kira. They also have technical support from NTID. Thank you for that.

Denise Kavin: So our original plan was to host an employment summit on campus at NTID in Rochester, New York, but of course because of COVID-19 everything had to change and we decided to instead post this webinar series.

Denise Kavin: So this is the first of three and we are thrilled to get started with that today we have four panelists and I would like for them to go ahead and introduce themselves. I'm asking, are all of you ready

Denise Kavin: Okay, so thank you. I see a lot of thumbs up. That's great.

Denise Kavin: I see the four panelists on the screen. We are going to start with Kelly, you are in the first square that I see, could you please introduce yourself, tell us your name, your job position what company you work for how long you've been there, you can keep it brief about two minutes.

Kelly Murphy : Thank you. My name is Kelly Murphy. I am a senior accounting leader at Dow. I've been without for 21 years I've been in my current role leading this team for about four years I manage a team of 19 employees, one of those employees is deaf.

Kelly Murphy : He's actually graduate from RIT from 2010. He's been with Dow for 10 years and he's on his fourth role at our company very been very successful.

Kelly Murphy : In addition to that, I do also have three other employees where English is not their first language. So we have a lot of diversity on our team. Happy to be here. Thanks.

Denise Kavin: Great. Thank you so much. Kelly.

Denise Kavin: Next is Claudia.

Claudia Gordon: Hello everyone. Good afternoon.

Claudia Gordon: My name is Claudia Gordon.

Claudia Gordon: And I am with, well now I'm with sprint accessibility.

Claudia Gordon: It's a business unit within the sprint Corporation. However, as of very recently sprint has merged with T Mobile

Claudia Gordon: And so now I'm officially working under T Mobile company.

Claudia Gordon: So my business unit offers a variety of accessibility communication product type services to people with varying disabilities.

Claudia Gordon: So our services or products are either to remove communication barriers or to help people communicate with friends and family independently.

Claudia Gordon: And to encourage people to be successful in the workplace.

Claudia Gordon: I work with government and compliance in accessibility issues.

Denise Kavin: All right. Thank you Claudia.

Denise Kavin: David your next

David Heafitz : Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for having me. It's an honor to be here. My name is David Heafitz I've been with Prudential for almost 19 years I currently lead the mobile and web application development teams for the enterprise.

David Heafitz : I do have about 25 employees there. I also as a matter of interest, work with Thomas and exploring new tools and technologies that can be leveraged in Prudential for our

David Heafitz : Hard of hearing and deaf employees and our low vision and blind employees we call the accessibility tools practice, it's an informal practice is not part of our regular

David Heafitz : daily responsibilities and we look to make financial place that can be accessible to all. We focus on ability to see

David Heafitz : and on ability to hear at the moment, but we we try and look across the boards at all technologies that can help.

David Heafitz : Anyone being equal contributor potential anytime and we do a lot of advocacy work within the voice space and

David Heafitz : Thomas works for a another team of mine, but we work together on a regular basis in the tooling practice. And in general, within the same group at Prudential so it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me.

Denise Kavin: Thank you, David. Thank you.

Denise Kavin: Now we'll move on to Thomas, can you introduce yourself?

Thomas Chappell: Thomas is saying, well, I was disconnected and I'm trying to connect. Again, Denise is saying your connection is quite choppy.

Interpreter: Sarah Schneckenburger: Thomas is clarifying if he can be seen

Denise Kavin: Why don't you disconnect and try and connect again.

David Heafitz : There was a power outage in Thomas's area. So please forgive me. I think that systems are not as working at full capacity at the moment.

Denise Kavin: Tom, maybe it would be better if you typed in the chat and I can sign it for you. I've actually known Tom since he was a student in college. And now to see him as a professional it's thrilling. So could you type your response, and I will try and share that with our participants.

Denise Kavin: All right now. I'm going to go back to the panelists.

Denise Kavin: And poor Tom his connection is pretty poor at this moment.

Denise Kavin: So question.

Denise Kavin: In regards to the work that you panelists do – What was it like before Covid and what is it like now after Covid and how did you transition?

Denise Kavin: We'll start with Kelly again.

Kelly Murphy : Okay, thank you. So the work that my team does. We actually support the cost accounting organization at DOW. We have about 100 different work processes that we support different types of things like reporting.

Kelly Murphy : The month and closing schedule, things like that. So it's very deadline driven for for my team and and transitioning to 100% work from home was definitely a challenge but you know we did it very, very well.

Kelly Murphy : So, you know, we have to before this all came about, you know, we in the office, we would

Kelly Murphy : You know, if we were in the office every day, we did a lot of face to face meetings.

Kelly Murphy : There was a lot of hallway conversations and things like that when we always had to be mindful to make sure that all employees were included in those conversations

Kelly Murphy : And it could be a little tricky and create extra work. For example, when we were getting ready to possibly work from home. I had to gather my team together and how I handled that was I made sure to talk with

Kelly Murphy : Daniel my deaf employee first. We communicated virtually over instant message I let him know–

Kelly Murphy : Here's the situation there's potential for us to work from home. I'm going to gather

the team together. And this is a topic. These are the things I'm going to say

Kelly Murphy : once we gathered the team together. We were all in a state of shock I believe in weren't sure what was going to happen or when we would return.

Kelly Murphy : There was a lot of questions and answers. During that during that process because it was a impromptu meeting, we did not have a chance to have an interpreter there either. We do have some

Kelly Murphy : people on the team that are learning sign language. And they were able to interpret a little bit during the meeting, but not enough to get the full

Kelly Murphy : question and answer portion. So after that meeting, I made sure to follow up with my employee again.

Kelly Murphy : To let him know what were the additional questions that were asked, and how, how did we discuss those what were what was discussed during that time.

Kelly Murphy : And so, sure enough, after this was on a Friday when we gathered and by Sunday evening we were all told to work from home. So I'm glad that I had that meeting ahead of time.

Kelly Murphy : And now we are in a situation where we are all working virtually and have been for about two months. I think we are actually past the two months point. And so, but we're doing IT doing it very, very well.

Kelly Murphy : In my opinion, it's been seamless.

Denise Kavin: Yes, and I also know that your community of Midland Michigan

Denise Kavin: has experienced a flood because of the dam breaking. And so that's an added burden and impact on you.

Denise Kavin: And your company and you mentioned that you personally had to evacuate your home. And so we are very thankful that you're here with us today, despite all of your challenges that you've had to face. So thank you for participating.

Kelly Murphy: Thank you. I was worried that I would

Kelly Murphy : have the problem with the electricity.

Kelly Murphy : And I'm okay.

Denise Kavin: Move on to Claudia. Now you have anything to add?

Claudia Gordon: This is Claudia. So I've been working from home actually since

Claudia Gordon: Um, yeah, but I have been in my career in the office environment for 15 years prior to that, so my transition, was it was a still a transition

Claudia Gordon: First, as a deaf employee my work environment has to be just so in order for myself to be productive.

Claudia Gordon: So that was one of the first things I needed to figure out, I needed to make sure that I had an office space in my home

Claudia Gordon: that would foster my ability to get things done. I need to make sure I had appropriate lighting.

Claudia Gordon: I didn't know if I would be able to look at my laptop screen all day, if I would be able to see an interpreter on that size of a screen. So I did get a second monitor with appropriate lighting.

Claudia Gordon: You know, and I had to make sure that everything was set up appropriately. So if I did video conferencing, you could see all of the things appropriately. I have my desks and my table setup just so

Claudia Gordon: And so we're, we've been working about accessibility for a while, but we're still learning

Claudia Gordon: We are committed to working with interpreters and so

Claudia Gordon: Sometimes people will call into a meeting through audio through their phone, and we work with video relay interpreters (VRI) to provide interpreting and we really value that resource. That is very critical for any deaf employee working from home. There are different ways to guarantee

Claudia Gordon: You can either contract through an interpreting agency or you can direct hire a staff interpreter.

Claudia Gordon: Those are different options for you to work with an interpreter

Claudia Gordon: We have used different platforms in the past.

Claudia Gordon: We use video conferencing to make sure that everybody has access. I'm not here to endorse any specific platform. They've all been tested. They all have errors, but you just need to make sure that you can communicate with your employees on which platform works best. So

Claudia Gordon: PowerPoint slides can be shared and the interpreter can be viewed at the same time that that has been part of the issue for me.

Claudia Gordon: Part of the problem is I have to look at a computer monitor all day every day later on I will talk about some other issues that I've faced, but that was my transition in a nutshell from

Claudia Gordon: It wasn't an overnight change. It took a little while to get used to this.

Claudia Gordon: But really it's in your employees style. You have to be able to dialogue with them. You need to be able to provide them the equipment that they need to be successful in order to interact with people at the work area as well.

Denise Kavin: Well, I see Tom is back. You look much better now. And so I really want to take advantage of your clear video

Denise Kavin: While you're here. The question is,

Denise Kavin: how or what was your work experience like before Covid and what is it like now?

Thomas Chappell: Well, we've had some power issues. So I'm hoping that my video is okay.

Thomas Chappell: So I typically work from home every Friday. And so I just took advantage of that experience. Um, I've been working with video relay interpreters.

Thomas Chappell: And it has worked out okay.

Thomas Chappell: So whenever I have a meeting, I can connect with an interpreter

Thomas Chappell: There's also a platform that has captioning as part of the software that can be used one speech recognition service is called AVA, and that has worked out okay.

Denise Kavin: For some companies who may not understand what VRS is could you explain what that is.

Thomas Chappell: Well, it's video release service and it's sort of like FaceTime, if you're familiar with FaceTime you connect directly with an interpreter who has a microphone, who makes a voice call and then interprets into sign language what they hear on the voice call

Thomas Chappell: So that's video relay interpreting. It's a free federally funded program.

Denise Kavin: Can you also talk about what you do, because your video was frozen. How long have you been at that company?

Thomas Chappell: So I work at Prudential

Thomas Chappell: As a Systems Analyst

Thomas Chappell: I work with data analysis.

Thomas Chappell: And something else that I will talk about later.

Thomas Chappell: I work with a program or a group called Adapt.

Thomas Chappell: That we focus on accommodations and accessibility.

Thomas Chappell: I also work with David on the accessibility work that we have done.

Denise Kavin: Yes, David is Tom supervisor and that's why we have both of them here on the same team. So David, could you talk a little bit about how your work has changed before Covid and afterwards

Denise Kavin: and the transition that happened in just a short time for all of us and how those changes impacted your work at Prudential?

David Heafitz : Well, I'm actually not Thomas' supervisor. He works in my peers team and and that's actually

David Heafitz : One of our visions of proof is that accessibility is not a

David Heafitz : factor. Rather, it's absolutely important focus for the company. But we do it as part of our natural framework of work. So I do it within it within the the realm

David Heafitz : Of overseeing application development and Thomas the data technology and we collaborate together, but he's a...Thomas is a is an amazing contributor and

David Heafitz : Like Kelly described her staff member earlier, Thomas has been promoted is move very rapidly through Prudential. We're very excited to have him as one of our lead technologist, so we we collaborate on this, but it's not a part of formal working with

David Heafitz : Reporting relationship. Sorry. Now you know what Prudential is. We're very lucky. We don't sell tangible products, you know, tangible in terms of

David Heafitz : Products, you can touch. We manufacturer promise and that promise is underwritten by technology.

David Heafitz : You you buy it. You give us you know some some money that we take for and we invest on your behalf in return you a greater amount somewhere down the line.

David Heafitz : So if you think about it, everything Prudential does needs to be powered by that technology. So we were enabled and ready to be able to go and move to 95% capacity.

David Heafitz : Overnight and remote work. And that was really excellent. The, the, so in terms of the work we have to do that hasn't changed. It's changed in terms of the dynamic of

David Heafitz : You know you can't miss that, you know, the informal interactions, you might have from getting together on, you know, you might get together.

David Heafitz : Always or informal meetings, but I think it's been a great advantage for our

David Heafitz : community, our deaf community or low vision community because everybody's at a level playing field. Now, I think the we're going to walk away from this crisis.

David Heafitz : With great advantage and trends in terms of technology is going to empower everyone on an equal level and and it's it's raised the stakes. So I think there'll be a very

David Heafitz : graded but you know as Thomas was mentioned, we have the tools to enable him to participate in any meeting and it's been very positive. So I'm looking forward to seeing that grow and becoming a national fabric of our work environment, even when we're in the office physically

Denise Kavin: Perfect. The next two questions will address that specifically

Denise Kavin: So now I would like Claudia and Kelly to begin responding to this question and the other participants can certainly add if needed.

Denise Kavin: What specifically do you use or what did you use or do to adapt to this very new work environment?

Denise Kavin: I know that Claudia has worked from home for several years now. But still, with the advent of Covid many things changed software different platforms. Other people using different technology to communicate. So I'll start with Claudia, and then we'll go to Kelly. What are your thoughts?

Claudia Gordon: Yes, like I mentioned earlier, getting my setup correct was very important.

Claudia Gordon: Having a bigger monitor was essential.

Claudia Gordon: My company was able to provide me a work laptop, but that was not enough.

Claudia Gordon: I certainly needed two screens and now I feel I could even benefit from three

Claudia Gordon: For example, if I'm using Skype.

Claudia Gordon: Or back in the day, we used a different platform for seeing one another.

Claudia Gordon: There's a large number of employees who are on my team. And there's also several folks who are deaf and some who are hearing that utilize an interpreter.

Claudia Gordon: And so for communication needs. I certainly needed to see all of the different participants as well as whatever information they might be sharing, whether that be a PowerPoint and agenda.

Claudia Gordon: And so I certainly needed enough screen space to be able to see an interpreter or to see the other participants in the meeting, alongside the content that was being shared. So I needed to request extra equipment to be able to do that.

Claudia Gordon: I think it's something that could fall under ADA under reasonable accommodations

Claudia Gordon: Just to put that out there because hearing colleagues of mine. Don't need that they can access phone technology and be able to be on the phone while attending to other things visually. And so, to really provide equivalence and accessibility. I needed this extra equipment.

Claudia Gordon: Also, keeping up with the new software, you know, I hadn't worked with Skype before switching to working from home.

Claudia Gordon: We also used a different platform called Omnijoin and so learning that new technology myself to become comfortable with it

Claudia Gordon: was important because I'm working in an office just myself if I worked in an office environment in the workplace. I could ask an IT person to come help me out. But I realized I don't have that capacity and working from home. And so I am needing to learn that myself.

Claudia Gordon: And I really wasn't adept with anything technology related. And so that was quite a learning curve for me and learning how to do that myself and I'm quite proud of the progress that I've achieved and onboarding to those various platforms.

Claudia Gordon: I've also adapted different methods to accommodate various requests.

Claudia Gordon: My company has an online tool that employees used to request interpreters video remote interpreting

Claudia Gordon: To schedule our meetings and it was our responsibility to go and use that tool to input a request.

Claudia Gordon: And the details of that request the time of the appointment and what have you. And so it was a software tool that I was responsible for making sure worked appropriately that I could have my meetings with everyone and they would go seamlessly.

Denise Kavin: Oh, did you have a response to Claudia.

Denise Kavin: David, did you have something you wanted to add

David Heafitz : Yeah, Claudia you brought up a very good point that I think is excellent for us to walk away from today's webinar with you mentioned that

David Heafitz : You know, you need more screens, because you always have to be visually engaged and you have it's normally what would be, you know, a lead more of a disadvantage compared to hearing employees who are multitasking.

David Heafitz : Well with Covid and everything being video I mentioned to my boss recently. This has been very tough because you can no longer multitask. You're on demand, and you must be engaged.

David Heafitz : Usually, so I think this is a good thing. I know we have a lot of participants today who are not part of the deaf community understand that's part of the experience. Knowing now that

David Heafitz : You know, you remember, reminding people that when you were in when you're working remotely and you always have to be engaged and you always have to be on video, and that constant video that's part of the experience that some of your

David Heafitz : Your employees might have on a regular basis. Like, and I think that's a, it's a great thing that's leveled the playing field and has brought us all to the same experience.

David Heafitz : Inadvertently as an inadvertent result of a pandemic, but it's a very good thing. I think will help us going forward to call back on that when when we get back into a physical environment.

Denise Kavin: Yes, thank you.

Denise Kavin: I'll turn it back over to Claudia, did you have anything else you want to add before I turn it over to Kelly? Claudia saying yes briefly. If I could add I do work with colleagues who are deaf, deaf blind and blind.

Claudia Gordon: And so I'm a senior member of my team. And when I set up meetings, it's my responsibility to make sure that everyone, whether they're deaf or hard of hearing. If they sign or if they don't sign

Claudia Gordon: That they have access using an interpreter or other methods. And so as the leader

or organizer of the meeting. It's on me to request a remote captioning, perhaps, and to make sure that that remote captioning can easily access our platform.

Claudia Gordon: Especially like right now we have live remote captioning.

Claudia Gordon: And sometimes folks want to take the cheapest route of automatic speech, speech recognition and while those technologies are impressive.

Claudia Gordon: The promises that they've given to our community have increased over time. We need to be careful in just relying on them outright. We need to make sure that they are functionally equivalent for our employees and colleagues who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Claudia Gordon: And that they work well for those who need that type of access.

Claudia Gordon: And so having remote captioning who are live coming into our meetings are very important. And then for our deaf, blind, folks.

Claudia Gordon: Remote conference interpreting can be accommodated with jaws software or specific braille technology.

Claudia Gordon: So we need to make sure that everyone's included and it's amazing to see just what we can do remotely with the advent of COVID. We've all had to be creative.

Claudia Gordon: And certainly with technology we're able to do so much, you know, nothing is impossible. We just need to be willing to be creative.

Claudia Gordon: And to work collaboratively to break down those barriers and through the trial and error process, we can get there. It's not just a simple linear journey from problem to solution, it's lots of feedback loops and so that's an essential to remember

Denise Kavin: Yes, one of the things that you mentioned that I just want to say again.

Denise Kavin: Automatic speech recognition has made huge progress and yet we are not there yet, in terms of it just being an automatic solution for all communication needs. So I'm very grateful that you brought that up.

Denise Kavin: Kelly. Do you have any comments about how things have changed in working remotely in this time of Covid?

Kelly Murphy : Yes, I agree with the other panelists, that, you know, things have definitely changed but I agree with David that I feel like it from my point of view as well. It kind of levels the playing field.

Kelly Murphy : For our deaf employees, I think it was harder change possibly for me as a hearing employee and supervisor, where I had to make changes. I of course we had to communicate more and you know quite frequently meet more often, but we all were doing it virtually and using electronic

Kelly Murphy : Electronic abilities here. So I had to send a lot more email communications instead of those face to face conversation we use instant message quite a bit when we want to have one on one conversations with employees.

Kelly Murphy : My, my employee Daniel, who is deaf yesterday we had an excellent conversation for a good hour over instant message yesterday afternoon.

Kelly Murphy : It works very, very well. In addition to that, when we want to meet as a team. We use a lot of the

Kelly Murphy : Virtual video software that you that everyone has been mentioning and Daniel does make sure he said setup himself. It was probably

Kelly Murphy : He probably did not do that very often in a dial meeting before all of this, but now I think he's probably an expert, because we use it quite regularly.

Kelly Murphy : And for the rest of my team who is hearing. We find it very seamless. We can see him on a on the call. And we also have his interpreter that is

Kelly Murphy : Over the phone that can see him, but we cannot see the interpreter and so we can tell when he is ready to say something wants to add to the conversation. So we can see him signing

Kelly Murphy : And then we know to pause and let the interpreter have a chance to speak, the one great thing about being on a video call like that. Is it really forces the rest of my team to speak one at a time.

Kelly Murphy : In the past, I would have a little bit of trouble with that when we were all in a crowded conference room which we are not going to be in crowded conference room and term it possible years now until we have something changed with this COVID certain but yes so we

Kelly Murphy : We are, you know, you know, we are no longer in a conference room where we there can be side conversations with

Kelly Murphy : With others, we have to speak one at a time. And I think that that has been a great thing because in the past I've had to remind people to speak one at a time.

Kelly Murphy : When we were in the office. We did have access to interpreters, that would come into the office. In fact, we had a staff interpreter for quite a while and

Kelly Murphy : Before all of this, we were in between staff interpreters and we were in the process of hiring two new one.

Kelly Murphy : We have not even had a chance to meet those individuals yet because of the pandemic going on. But once we get back in the office. We were hoping to

Kelly Murphy : get them engaged. Again, we're going to be in a situation for a while where when we do go back to the office that might not be all of this is going back. We're going to have to do it in phases and there might be

Kelly Murphy : 30% of the company, coming back to work and the and the rest are going to remain at home. We could be still sitting at our desk and using our technology, once again, instead of going and having those conversations that somebody's desk or in a meeting in a conference room so I

Kelly Murphy : I think that we have the tools that we can get that done. And I think it's going to be very seamless. I've been very proud of my team and of course proud of Daniel. My deaf employee of how he's handled this.

Kelly Murphy : It's worked quite well and we have met all of our deadlines. We continue to add new work to the team. We continue to have people movements. We do training we find a way to make it work. And it's been a very positive experience.

Denise Kavin: And you're absolutely right, our new work setting has truly forced us all to pace ourselves and to slow down our communication to speak one at a time and just slow down. Thank you for that. Tom, do you have anything to add to this question before we move on.

Thomas Chappell: Yes, sure. I wanted to mention an echo something Claudia mentioned ASR automatic speech recognition is great, but it certainly does not equal having an interpreter or a captioning.

Thomas Chappell: In conferences, we always have captioning. But when we're in meetings, physically, we would have an interpreter and that's really important.

Thomas Chappell: For most deaf people they prefer American Sign Language as their primary language. And so that's my first choice if I don't have a live interpreter, then I will ask for a live captioning.

Thomas Chappell: If not, then I will go ahead with ASR. But again, that's the priority for me. Denise Kavin: Thank you. I just wanted to check the time it looks like we do have time for our next question.

Denise Kavin: You already did address this in some ways, but I would like you to expand upon this a little bit more

Denise Kavin: What tools and strategies did you employ for inclusivity?

Denise Kavin: And for effective communication and different situations, whether it's for working individually working with another person in a small group or on a large group?

Denise Kavin: Or even providing trainings or giving presentations? What strategies and tools did you use to offer that experience in a more accessible way? I'll start with Tom and then David and then open it up to the rest of the group. So between Tom and David who would like to go first?

Interpreter: Kira Avery: Thomas signs I can start.

Thomas Chappell: So for me, I just want to say everyone has their own preference. And so it's important to check in with the deaf employee, I think, in certain situations.

Thomas Chappell: AVA, for example, can connect via speakers and you can have three different people speaking at the same time, you can have a mic that connects to someone shirt and then you can have the ability to read captioning.

Thomas Chappell: There's also an option for four to six people and you can place that technology in the middle of a conference room perhaps on a table.

Thomas Chappell: And that way you can have more speech recognition and captioning in that setting.

Thomas Chappell: There's another setting for more people. And so you can choose which technology, you want to use based on the number of people in the space.

Thomas Chappell: Instant Messenger is also another way to communicate and I tend to use that speaking with specific members on the team quickly is a great way to use that. David, do you want to add to that?

David Heafitz : Sorry about that. Yeah. Yes. I mean, I think the one of the most important things to do again leveraging this situation right now and applying it when we get back is to remove the stigma of engagement.

David Heafitz : As a hearing employee and working with Thomas, I found when I would introduce him or set up meetings for him.

David Heafitz : With colleagues or senior executives. There was a lot of fear. What do I need to have done? Do I need to rearrange my office? Do I need to bring somebody in.

David Heafitz : And as Tom is stated, yes. The top preferences to have a an interpreter. The second preference is to have captioning. And the third is to use

David Heafitz : the automatic automated text speech to text, however.

David Heafitz : So much of the tool sets we have in place at large enterprises and even people have used to their homes.

David Heafitz : Has this advanced machine learning now available at no cost that we need to make sure that everybody does not feel a barrier to having discussions with the deaf community. So I would just add some examples.

David Heafitz : Thomas mentioned, I am in texting, it works the same. It's very easy FaceTime is a great way to see someone's face while you text on your computer on your company's on your

David Heafitz : On your company's um you know I am solution. Reverse, reverse. So Thomas and I will often use the tools we have at our disposal and then supplement them.

David Heafitz : As much as possible with those additional tools that we've we've consumed specifically for accessibility. So he mentioned AVA excellent captioning tool but

David Heafitz : Microsoft Teams has caption available out of the box. So for any enterprise and any individual that has an old 365 license, they can get captioning.

David Heafitz : Free and it's not perfect, but it's a great way to make sure that, as opposed to excluding someone and worrying about not having it right perfectly right to include them because you can get it pretty well and then add everything else on adding additional tools like AVA.

David Heafitz : On top of that, so I think I mentioned Microsoft Teams, but I think that's the case for most things zoom has a plugin for AVA. I'm sure that

David Heafitz : Slack has something similar and Google, etc. So it's very important to look at the tools you use and you just may never have hit the button to say turn on captioning.

David Heafitz : So I'd like to encourage the participants in today's meeting to realize that everybody has

David Heafitz : access to accessibility tools, not ideally the best ones. Maybe not the full suite that's most most you know as at will never be as

David Heafitz : effective as an interpreter, but I'd like to remove that stigma that barrier.

David Heafitz : For the interaction and encourage everyone to use the tools at our disposal, and again, everything we're using in this environment of being remote, they all come with that packet that additional value of having some captioning.

Denise Kavin: Thank you so much. I'm getting flooded with

Denise Kavin: emails and texts now. So I think we'll jump into the QA

Denise Kavin: Some questions are for specific panelists and some are just for general response.

Denise Kavin: Okay, let me try and summarize this fairly long question.

Denise Kavin: Okay. Can the deaf panelists Thomas and Claudia talk about the benefits of working with designated

Denise Kavin: smaller groups of relay interpreters or a smaller pool of relay interpreters? Can either if you address that question?

Denise Kavin: And then the hearing panelists. Can you tell the difference

Denise Kavin: if a colleague is using or working with an interpreter who is familiar with your work environment?

Denise Kavin: So let's start with Claudia and Thomas

Claudia Gordon. That's a great question. I'm really thrilled that you asked that.

Claudia Gordon: I can't stress enough how important it is to me and I'm sure other deaf individuals to have a dedicated pool of interpreters, it builds trust.

Claudia Gordon: They'll know your industry jargon. The, the common words that are used, you know, they'll just know your business terminology

Claudia Gordon: If you bring in an interpreter who hasn't been in that work environment in your company. It can be difficult, and it can impact the process in an important meeting or presentation.

Claudia Gordon: It's it's a risk for me because I'm trying to represent my best self and my best work. And if I'm not able to connect with the interpreter or if it's not someone from the designated pool. It's just an added

Claudia Gordon: responsibility to me. I'm making sure that I'm accurate.

Claudia Gordon: And also as a deaf person I do often feel some anxiety and concern if my story is getting through.

Claudia Gordon: Or if what I'm saying, has to be repeated multiple times.

Claudia Gordon: If I'm working with a designated interpreter. It really frees up a lot of my my brain space to focus on what I'm here for.

Claudia Gordon: I'm really profit is the bottom line.

Claudia Gordon: You know, we work with policy and compliance and accommodation issues every day and working with a dedicated pool of interpreters is critical.

Denise Kavin: Tom, you have something to add. You have any experience with that.

Thomas Chappell: A designated interpreter would be great.

Thomas Chappell: I do have a memory.

Thomas Chappell: Now let me just tell you that interpreters have different signing styles.

Thomas Chappell: A lot of the time, I will meet with my interpreter. A few minutes early to go over what will be discussed.

Thomas Chappell: And also it depends on the type of meeting. It is. If it's a highly technical meeting, I might request captioning. But then there's other times when working with any VRS interpreter is fine.

Denise Kavin: Now David and Kelly. Can you talk about whether or not you can tell the difference between a seasoned interpreter or someone who has experienced with your company and someone who may not have that experience?

David Heafitz : A hundred percent, it's always obvious, I worked in Japan for a long time and if an ASL interpreter is the same as an interpreter for not knowing the same but equivalent to a language interpreter of Japanese you the context is critical and as Thomas said

David Heafitz : It's very important.

David Heafitz : Even though I don't sign

David Heafitz : Thomas, I have a strong really strong enough relationship. I can tell when his words are not coming through the way he's trying to present them.

David Heafitz : From in a meeting and we often have to clarify via text. So yes, it's, it's, there is a known as well. It's not a criticism.

David Heafitz : It's very, you know, any its language in languages is built on culture and it's built on enduring human interaction. So that relationship and that depth and understanding the lingo of

the of the organization which which are working, maybe, maybe the that the

David Heafitz : Or could be in technology, understand the technology. You know what the terms are in technology. It's very critical. So yeah, nothing can ever be substituted for that direct relationship with the interpreter. But, you know, we try our best to do what we have

Kelly Murphy : Thank you.

Denise Kavin: Kelly real quick. We have a lot of questions coming in.

Kelly Murphy : So I agree with the other panelists. It is nice to have an

Kelly Murphy : interpreter, who is familiar with your work. However, one side note that I would like to mention is where we've had an interpreter on staff.

Kelly Murphy : You know my employees sometimes need to need to work independently, he's working on his computer. He's an Excel. He needs to focus so

Kelly Murphy : I think there needs to be communication about how the day is going to go with that staff interpreter. So they may be sitting there.

Kelly Murphy : As well we're being independent. So they we they're not always going to be occupied and in meetings all day long. So I think that's a good communication to have

Denise Kavin: Thank you. Thank you for that.

Denise Kavin: Okay, next question is for Kelly and David

Denise Kavin: What type of orientation or training, did you receive if any when a deaf colleague joins your workplace and your team. And what do you wish you knew about communication or working with a deaf employee before that person worked with you.

Denise Kavin: Kelly, David.

Kelly Murphy : I can start and we do have a deaf workshop that we can provide to the team that will be interacting with the deaf employee.

Kelly Murphy : As well as I mean not just even the immediate team, but we can open up to the larger organization as well. And just to give those tips.

Kelly Murphy : On how to interact effectively. I think there is some nervousness, sometimes when you're new to it. I know, myself included, Daniel and I did interact quite a bit during his time at our company before joining my team.

Kelly Murphy : So it's familiar, but I think having those tips is very helpful.

Kelly Murphy : It helped a lot of the people on my team just kind of eases attention a little bit if there is any were there shouldn't be.

Kelly Murphy : But I think the team got used to it very quickly and now it's it's not a concern at all. We actually also have been starting sign language classes and

Kelly Murphy : For our team so right Daniel my employee, he runs those classes and everyone looks very forward to that. And we have continued those virtually as well while we're working in this new environment and we look forward to those every week.

Denise Kavin: That's wonderful.

Denise Kavin: I'm really happy to know that David, anything to add.

David Heafitz : Yeah, we're very similar. We have the Thomas has organized sign language classes, but what I really like about it is Thomas was asked if you'd like to help out the employees themselves when an organized and figure out a structure for that. So I'm very happy that that's you know that organic

David Heafitz : Request comes from, from the employee base. It's not in response to, you know, Thomas asking people to get training.

David Heafitz : We went through a lot of great learning experience. And that is the importance of understanding what in each individual how they like to be represented. You know, when I am

David Heafitz : When I first met Thomas. I didn't know you know if I can say this is Thomas. He's deaf. Thomas had to educate me and

David Heafitz : You know, it's a no, it's fine. It's deaf. It's some people dance around that other hard of hearing employees do not want to be described as deaf and it's hard for me. Understanding that cultural difference and knowing

David Heafitz : How they you know what the personal preferences words are very important. So I think it's important to have a balance of overall training and

David Heafitz : We haven't accommodations team that does that have potential that that accommodation seem again for all employees and regardless of background or need with whatever that need is. But in addition, it's important

Denise Kavin: Oh, okay.

Denise Kavin: I think David may have been disconnected and that's okay. We're about to wrap up.

Denise Kavin: Okay. Um, we have time for one more question and then we will wrap up the webinar.

Denise Kavin: Yes. Okay, so a person asked, and we'll start with Tom, what specific technology, are you using for the various settings.

Denise Kavin: For example, if it's just something between two people, or if it's a larger group. If you could just very briefly, shout out some of the names of technologies you use?

Thomas Chappell: Okay, we use interpreters VRS to connect to an interpreter or we use VR is very similar to VRS but

Thomas Chappell: With a VR i which is a specific interpreter, I can use my own device. And that

works well in settings where you can't hear quite as well.

Thomas Chappell: If it's a smaller group.

Thomas Chappell: Sometimes we'll use a thought for the automatic voice recognition.

Thomas Chappell: When it's a larger group, it's really hard for that technology to detect who speaking and what they're saying. So for a smaller group that works well.

Thomas Chappell: Also Microsoft Teams, because it has that built in captioning.

Thomas Chappell: It also tells you who is speaking, which I really like.

Thomas Chappell: That is also helps paste the conversation.

Thomas Chappell: If it's if it's just a one way captioning situation where I'm just constantly reading. It's difficult sometimes I do like to have the option of watching the interpreter using ASL or reading the captioning.

Denise Kavin: Now, Claudia. Could you briefly discuss the technologies you use?

Claudia Gordon: Well, I think Thomas covered all of them actually I use zoom

Claudia Gordon: For almost all of my meetings.

Claudia Gordon: And I find that as a deaf person relying on an interpreter. I like to have the control of the ability to pin the interpreter. So they're bigger on my screen.

Claudia Gordon: So I do have that option of pinning the interpreters video. It's more visible.

Claudia Gordon: A WebEx works.

Claudia Gordon: If there is a small meeting with just myself and one co worker, then

Claudia Gordon: I wouldn't need an interpreter, we would use them as our technology. But before we use zoom and we were using Omnicast. I don't know if that's still around. Actually, but that worked out to

Denise Kavin: I know people still use bluejeans which is very similar to zoom Kelly and David did you have any final comments in terms of technology used for communication access

Kelly Murphy : I think you mentioned all of them that we use as well. We have not used the captioning on Microsoft teams. So I'm very excited to hear about that. Thank you for sharing that we use Microsoft Teams, but I don't think we're using the full ability. So I appreciate that.

David Heafitz : Yeah, just so you know. You have to do it in a team meeting, it's not available. If you're doing a direct chat. So you just stop it, but

David Heafitz : But you can set up a team to join Team.

David Heafitz : Open a chat and click join meeting and then it will show up. So it's, um, and they

are pushing that out to the rest of it's in PowerPoint as well for Microsoft, they are going to push it out eventually to the entire platform. So it's on. It's on the way.

David Heafitz : I was just gonna add again a comment I made earlier, which is

David Heafitz : for anyone who's doing whatever technology you're using just look into it. So, call your tech support team or look at the platform and see if you can, enabling enable captions. It might not be there out of the box. It might be a function that's available but

David Heafitz : You who's so that's why I said it. Check the team to see if you can get that added and also to see if you can do it yourself. So a lot of these platforms. I do expect have some version of captioning and it worst case, you can use, you know, free captioning. You can always open a line.

David Heafitz : Second line for captioning. So, so someone, you know, Thomas and I can use our cell phones and use

David Heafitz : You know, a Google Translate that will capture the voice on the side and get some captioning while we're in a meeting if necessary. So always

David Heafitz : I always use the term bastardized technology do whatever it takes to be able to get to that end point. None of the solutions might be ideal, but if you know if it's necessary. You can get it. Will you will avoid having anyone being excluded.

Denise Kavin: That is a great way to wrap up this webinar. Use whatever you have available to make sure that communication is accessible and I unfortunately our time has run out. This is, this has been wonderful.

Denise Kavin: Our participants will get an email with an evaluation of this webinar. So when you do get that if you wouldn't mind please just take a couple minutes to fill out some feedback for us.

Denise Kavin: We will have the video recording available for you to share with your colleagues and I want to thank our team NTID, Gallaudet, CSD and NAD and also thank you to our four panelists for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us.

Denise Kavin: I hope you all watching bring all of the tips that have been shared today back to your workplace, when we are able to go back to our workplaces, so stay safe and thank you again for your time.

Denise Kavin: Also

Denise Kavin: Remember our interpreters. Thank you, captionists for their support.

Denise Kavin: Thank you.