



**Episode #: 09**    **Title: Follow Up From the UN**

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Hello, this is Debra Ruh, and you're listening to Human Potential at Work. Thank you for tuning in today. Today, I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about my experiences at the United Nations last week.

I had the pleasure of attending and speaking at three different sessions during the 9th Conference of State Parties, and to celebrate the 10th year anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was very exciting to speak, and I was very honored to speak at part of the International Labor Organization's Unusual Employment of Persons with Disabilities: From Words to Work, and share the panel there with Global Compact, which is doing really great things to frame out disability inclusion and employment for persons with disabilities. I sat on that particular panel. We had the ambassador for Finland, from Costa Rica, from Spain and from Australia there. Very exciting. And the International Labor Organization spoke during that session as well.

I also spoke at a session where we talked about the numbers and what kind of statistical information are we seeing with countries that have signed and ratified the convention, and that was led by G3ict, which is a global initiative of I C T, and also my publisher, very proud, Axel Lebois, the CEO of G3ict is also my publisher. So it was exciting to be part of that panel.

And then of course, the panel that I was really nervous about and psyching myself out about, was the invitation that I'd gotten from the United Nations General Assembly's president, to speak on the behalf of private industry, about the progress that we saw being made with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. There was two different panels Monday afternoon. One was talking about where we have come from, and the second panel that I was on, with a couple of other pretty terrific leaders and it was led by Michael Stern from Harvard University, an amazing man. But we were talking about some best practices that we've seen, and really the hope for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

So I remember being so nervous, especially with such amazing speakers before me and during my panel. I decided to just speak from the heart and to talk about what was important to me, which as you know, is employment, full employment for people with disabilities, and promotion for people with disabilities, and certainly retention. And so, I decided to just do that. So I actually talked about how important it is for us to be talking about employment, to make sure

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that the employers are included in the conversations and to make sure that we're not making decisions about employers, without them being in the room and being able to voice what will work and will not work in their organization. And if they think something won't work, allowing us to start the dialogue to say, okay, so what could we do different to make sure you could actually be successful with that.

I talked about some of the best practices that I've seen all over the world, some of the amazing things that we've seen coming out of Spain, Australia, Egypt, some of the countries in Africa that are actually making progress with employing people with disabilities. Innovations that we're seeing coming out of the developing world, as well as, of course, innovations that we continue to see coming from developed countries.

So I gave a lot of examples. One of the examples I gave was talking about some of the employment successes that Cannon has had in the United States and in Japan and other countries. We talked a bit about the autism programs that we're seeing being successful at SAP and Freddie Mac, and the really amazing work that we see coming from Vodafone out of Spain and other parts of Europe. There was just a lot of -- I think a lot of good news to share.

Now, of course, we have a lot of work to do. Every single country has a lot of work to do, to make sure that people with disabilities are really meaningfully included in the workforce. If a person with a disability is included in the workforce today, often they're underemployed, and we really need to make sure that we are educating, providing appropriate transition and actually employing and retaining people with disabilities, all over the world. We had some wonderful conversations and I met just some amazing people.

One person that I met was the Prince of Jordan, and his team, and really sat down with him and talked a long time with him about the efforts he's making in his country, including a new law that he is putting before the leaders to vote on. He's hoping that this law will really help improve the employment outcomes in his country, and he also was explaining what they're dealing with, with the Syrian refugees and how talented a lot of these Syrians are. They're very talented, they're very educated, they're very technically astute. And actually, a lot of these refugees are taking jobs away from the people of Jordan. And so he has that balance to walk, the balance of you're welcome in our country and how do we make sure that there's enough jobs for everybody, including people with disabilities in Jordan. So it was very, very interesting talking to this man, and really seeing him care so much about his people.

It just reminded me, as I listened to him and talked to him, of how much we're alike. We're all more alike than we are different. I think a lot of countries just want to do the right thing by the citizens of their countries, and that includes people with disabilities.

I'm going to be having some of these guests that I've been meeting, I'm going to have them on the podcast and I'm going to interview them and let them talk to you about the best practices that they're having in their countries. I think it's really important to really dig into these best practices and see what lessons we can learn from them.

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So stay tuned, because I'm going to start inviting guests to the program. As a matter of fact, we are putting a schedule together right now. And if you know of a best practice that we should talk about on the program or you yourself think that you could add value to this program, please let me know. My website is [www.RuhGlobal.com](http://www.RuhGlobal.com). I'd love to have as many voices heard as possible. I think it's going to take all of us to solve these employment problems. But I actually, especially after walking that path last week at the United Nations and M-Enabling Summit, going back and forth on Amtrak from Washington D.C. to New York, back to Washington D.C., back to New York, back and forth until I finally came home to Richmond, Virginia, and we had such a bad storm on the way home, that when I got into Rockville, Virginia, I actually, as I was going home, trees were littering the road. I had to turn around four different times, to try and find a way home. Many people are still without electricity, so that was very interesting, adding a little bit of excitement to the end of my week last week. But all is well.

So thank you so much for listening to the podcast. I look forward to bringing you some really, really interesting best practices on employment and persons with disabilities, and really tapping into what human potential can bring, what kind of value it can bring to society if we really give people the chance to tap into their abilities. So look forward to bringing these stories to you really soon. So remember, the only disability is not being able to see human potential, and it takes all of us to change the world and I feel very, very blessed to be on this journey with all of you, and I look forward to sharing all the best practices. Thank you so much for joining me today, and I will talk to you next week.