Debra Ruh: Hello everyone. This is Debra Ruh and this is Human Potential at Work. I do want to say because it’s probably noticeable that I have definitely gone silver all the way but I decided to add some fun little light like highlights too. So, my guest today is Peter Fremlin and he’s like, “Debra, I don’t have enough color on. I’m looking boring.” So, he’s going to go and get a beautiful scarf you know. But, welcome to AXSChat Peter I…

Well, gees, sorry, this is Human Potential at Work and that’s funny. I obviously had a little brain frees there. But anyway, Peter, I’ve known you for many years and I’ve always been a big big fan of your work and I have watched you grow in your work. and so, I know that when we first met, I believe you’re working in Bangladesh and now you’re working and joining us from Cairo Egypt today and I’m just really excited about this conversation because you are a mentor to me. I’ve learned a lot from you and I really have enjoyed working with you. Especially working with you at the… with the International Labor Organizations Global Business Disability Network. So, welcome to the program.

Peter Torres Fremlin: Thank you Debra. Such a pleasure to be here. I’ve always taken a lot of encouragement and support from you so thank you. Thank you for this chance to talk about things today.

Debra: Yes. Yes. So Peter, tell the audience a little bit about who you are and your journey.

Peter: Yes Debra. As you… as you were saying, my journey has some interesting places along the way and it started off in the UK. I’m a British and my mom’s Portuguese but I grew up pretty much in the UK. And after I graduated, I started living abroad. I studied my masters degree in Brazil and that’s where I started looking at disability issues. I was doing research on all of genetic research for people with physical disabilities there. And then, since then I’ve become an independent… mostly an independent consultant working in international development. And so, I’ve carried on the journey.

I really try and sort of combine my work with really getting a must in the places that I live. So, I was working in… working and living in Bangladesh for four years. I think we saw each other when I went to Geneva briefly…

Debra: Right.

Peter: And now I’m in Cairo where I’m studying Arabic. So, I work on disability issues and international development. Mostly, a lot of my work is on employment. You mentioned the International Labor Organization which is a UN agency specialized on work issues and I do a lot of work with them and their disability team and sort of other things along the way to help people working in International Corporation to see disability as an issue and to try and bring it more on board.

I’m just sort of… to add to that, so, about me personally, I love learning languages as I was saying. And I’m also a person with disability myself and we can talk about that as well.

Debra: Yes. And I look forward to talking about that. I was… I know a lot about your work and I know that you are… you’re very… you don’t brag a lot about your work and so, I’ve always always admired your work and so, I’m going to have to brag about it for you. But, I was…

I was getting prepared for the interview and sometimes, when I know someone really well like I’ve known you for years, I still really take the time to dig in because there’s probably things that I’ve missed and I found that to be definitely true with you. And you wrote an article that I thought was so interesting and you were still in Bangladesh when you wrote it but the title of the article is “Disability is a Part of Who I am and why I’m great at My Job.” And you had mentioned before we went on air that they encouraged you just to you know, say I’m great at my job and you’re like, “no no no. I want to say all of It.” and so, I just think that’s a very… and I personally think you are great at your job.

I have seen you. I’ve seen you at the ILO. I’m sorry but I’ve seen the work that you’re doing and it is… it’s some of the best in the world. So, I’m sorry if I’m embarrassing you but it’s just true. Sorry.

So, I see the efforts that you’re making and it’s interesting with the international labor organization because I’ve talked to Stefan Tromel. We’ve had him on the show and he’s brilliant and his colleague. You‘re going to… and we’ve just talked about all of the issues that the ILO was working on. For example like the future of work and youth and employment and you know, in the broadest sense of the word, they are dealing with labor for the United Nations and so for the world and certainly for the developing countries and making sure that disability is part of that agenda.

It’s a lot harder than we would realize because there are so many moving parts with an organization as big. And so, I was hoping that you might just address a little bit of how you and the GBDN and other efforts that you’ve made including the group that we’re both part of that you started. Maybe just talk about you know, how do we make sure disability continues to be meaningfully included.

Peter: Thank you. Thank you Debra. Thank you for embarrassing me. I think maybe I should just start my answer with the kind of bit of that personal take and why I wrote something that sort of linked my disability with how I work. Because it’s something like we often don’t really expect, right? And I think I grew up… I grew up having a disability and I think the… like I kind of had this idea… and my family really like traveling but I have this idea why I wouldn’t really be able to travel so much independently.

I kind of need a job that… I’m kind of in an office as I have a mobility issue and we were looking in those terms and that really changed when I got connected to the disability movement internationally. It was actually first when I was in Bangladesh in one institution and it was quite a great chance in that small organization of disabled people and that really sort of motivated me and was the first time that I as a disable sort of connected to other disabled people. So, I think that was kind of the first thing it brings to my life.

It brought me a mission and a goal and something to contribute to and made me part of an international community. Right? so, rather than like often disability can separate you also they’ll push you out but in this case, it’s now something that I can connect and I think you sort of you’ve also connected all over the world in terms of disability of something that offers a huge potential. And then that sort of on the… and the future is based as one I think. I think sort of the ways… the ways they approached my work.

The ways I sort of really give emphasis to language learning isn’t something a lot of my colleagues do and my disability is definitely connected with that. It’s not the only reason but it would be very hard for me to live in Egypt and Bangladesh or wherever without speaking the language because I kind of need to explain to people just that random that I might need a little adjustment. I might need a little bit help or whatever. Like I couldn’t… these countries that sort of maybe especially Bangladesh where there are lots of really big problems around physical access with the infrastructure. But if you’ve got a bit of that, then the people are really going to get involved in helping you.

And so, that’s something that a lot of my colleagues in the sector don’t have. And so that’s another thing. And this kind of… like this is the vision that maybe we work on when we’re looking at the world of work. That disability can be a positive thing and it can be a contribution.

Normally, when we raise disability or you might hire a disabled person, we get really creative at looking for what problems they’re going to have. Right? We get really creative at sort of demanding. We really need to know they can do this. We need to know it’s going to be safe. We need to know they’re going to be productive and we need to know X Y.

We need a guarantee that this is going to be okay because we’re a bit scared of this. Guarantees that you wouldn’t ask or hiring anyone else that you just do after an interview check a reference and looks like… looks a bit like us. Like, let’s do it. But for disabled people, like those kind of problematic questions come up a lot more easily when we could be looking at those kinds of questions of contribution on how sort of say working around someone’s disability might help improve your work. It might help you connect with the client. It might help you make a different product.

And so, we sort of… and what I support? I support the ILO and the Global Business Disability Network in kind of making technical products. Thinking about how we can think through employment and issues around disability. And it’s really trying to emphasize to people those kinds of contributions. And like a part of that is the journey that you’re involved in as well which is just changing the way people talk and think about disability. And as you see and as you know, that’s kind of this journey that I went through in my life and still going through and sort of in my personal relationship with work but also what we’re trying to sort of change in the world of work for other people as well.

Debra: Yes. And the ILOGBDN’s work is very important and I want to… you know, I want to explore that more. But, when I was reading the article that you wrote at this particular one about I have a disability but I’m great at my job. You had mentioned that in this particular job you are working in Bangladesh.

You were on the ground floor and your team was actually on the third floor but they didn’t have a lift. And you know, you think, oh. It’s Bangladesh. You know, they’re still working on their infrastructure. They’re a developing country and yet, we see this happening all over the world continually, constantly. And we also see often that there are employers that are nervous about hiring somebody with mobility issues. Maybe uses a wheelchair or scooter because… especially in the US, they get nervous about it because they know that legally, that they are supposed to have an accessible workforce.

Legally, they’re supposed to do it. I mean, our Americans with Disabilities Act that was created in 1990. And so… and then of course, you’ve been very engaged just so have I in the United Nations commission in the rights of persons with disabilities; the CRPD. So, it’s interesting and what we don’t want is we don’t want employers to be afraid to include people with disabilities because maybe they’ll get in trouble. Because you know, they’ll be sued in the US or something like that but there’s very creative ways that you can include people with disabilities. Like some of the works that you’ve done and some of the personal experiences you’ve had and I was hoping you would comment a little bit on that.

Peter: You know, these are things… thanks for bringing out these issues because I think they’re something… like I mentioned that in the article because I’ve been thinking like what’s the link between disability and my career. And I was thinking like sometimes when I’m seeing a situation with disabled people in Bangladesh, I was thinking, “I’m not that disabled. Am I?”

Like because people with sort of often maybe their mobility problem was a bit less but their disability in terms of their social barriers was a lot more. Right? There are people that sort of friends of mine that had to have to leave school because they’re getting bullied on their disability. Some people couldn’t go to school. Some people that had been kind of hidden by their families. Some people having real difficulties finding work and a way to use their skills.

And then… so, in that context, I’m thinking, well, sort of maybe it’s not so much after all because I didn’t have barriers to education. I didn’t have barriers to finding my first… my first work. I know that comes from this previous generation that really sort of fought for those things. And then I realized after few days of thinking like, “wait a minute, like I am not sitting on the same floor as my team.”

and so, that was really interesting to me that I kind of… like it was much easier for me to see my own life as not experiencing discrimination even though like I’m a disabled person working disability issues, you’d think that would be quite sort of clear on my mind. That it was easier to not look at that. And the other side of this I want to bring out is that I’ve been quite… like it’s not to say but I have to say that I’ve been lucky. And I’m going to say that I’m lucky because I see lots of people with disabilities that don’t have the same luck. Right? And I’ll talk about where the luck comes from but I’ve…

Like the first job I’ve had, our program manager said, any adaptation you need, we’ll give it to you. Right? This next job that I had with the ILO where the office was like not very accessible to me, rather than them saying, “You can’t work.” They were saying, “We’ll find a place for you in the ground floor.” I didn’t have a telephone so that was a bit awkward but then they put in a telephone for me. I had to sort of complain about that and etc. and so, there are the other positions that I’ve had.

I’ve had sort of had what we call kind of reasonable accommodations. These adjustments that you make for individual needs. But let’s… let’s look at that luck. Right? I got…

Debra: Right.

Peter: That luck because like in that situation in Bangladesh, I was a foreigner and quite sort of high status and I’ve got a bit of fancy education and whatnot and all these kind of fanciness that I brought meant that I got access to those things whereas sort of maybe Bangladeshi colleagues wouldn’t have gotten access to those things. Like sort of… and it’s not to name and shame organizations but I think we just need to be realistic that one of the reasons that you can get adaptations is when sort of you’re doing a certain type of job, it’s much easier, it’s much more sort of status that’s it’s going to be given to you and unfortunately, that isn’t a… that isn’t a general rule for everyone.

One example that I find really telling working in different parts of the United Nations and for agencies within the United Nations around the world, a lot of the office are inaccessible. And if even I or even colleagues, a staff with disabilities that are getting all the status and the official positions, if even we feel it’s inaccessible and even if we feel it’s difficult, imagine like for the people there that aren’t part of that system, they are kind of outside of the UN and whatnot. So then, that’s… it’s changing I hope but that was the kind of… that’s the reflection I’d like to bring. These adaptations can really help work happen for some people they given to a point natural basis but like what we’re trying to do is the same adaptations is so obvious. In some cases they’re not like obviousness is spread out and applied more widely.

Debra: I think that some of the things… I think there are so many interesting things that you just said and I find the word “luck” interesting because I can see it. So, you’re in Bangladesh, you’re well-educated, you’re very smart, you have a lot to offer, you also have this lovely British accent. And so, there are all of these factors. Right? And so, you’re…

It’s fascinating so… and also peter, I think some of it is the way you speak and the way you interact with people. You have always been very gracious when you interacted with me and others and you’re very humble and you have a very very very nice energy about you. And I think that some of it but, I shouldn’t have to have a cool accent and be well-educated… you know, I should be able to be included because we should be including people which you’re making those points. But at the same time, I think that it is a very interesting you know, dynamic that you bring up and I know in the articles that I was reading, you were talking about continuing to remind people. And this is… this is something I more and more want to talk about especially from the US-lens and that you continue to remind people that all disabilities are not visible.

So yes, you use a scooter and so you know, wheelchair scooter and so people know when they meet you that you have a disability because there is some cue assuming they can see. They wouldn’t know you have a disability if they couldn’t see. So… but the… you know, we have to remember, many people have disabilities that are not visible and I know you talk a lot about that. But, one thing that I’m starting to ponder and really think about in my head and I’m going to write about this but, we’re talking about a lot on my team in Ruh Global Impact but, I have a couple of employees that were… I have a team obviously but there’s two employees that work for me that would be considered severely disabled.

I have this terrific woman that has been on the show. Her name is, well, both of these people have been on the show but, Rosemary Musachio, who is our chief accessibility officer. And rosemary, when she was being born, the doctor dropped her and she sustained very bad injuries and she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. And Rosemary, when she lies down flat, she… all she has the ability to control is blinking her eyes and she told me that one time. But, she uses technology as her voice and she uses technology to be on the computer and she has so much to offer the world and I’m just so blessed that I’ve gotten to work with this woman.

And then there’s another gentleman, LaMondré Pough, who worked with me, both Rosemary and LaMondré actually worked with me in my former company Tech Access and then they both joined me at Ruh Global Communications but, LaMondré is also this amazing man that has so many talents but he is a man that’s on a wheelchair, he has limited use of his arms and his legs and he… and so, the thing that’s very sad to me is when LaMondré left my former company Tech Access and went out in his own and everything, he really struggled. And so, one same thing that I’m starting to see is that we are hiring people with disabilities all over the world but just looking at it for a moment for the US lens, we’re hiring people with disabilities but, it’s still feels like we’re taking the easy hires. Right?

So, “oh. No no no. we’re hiring people with disabilities. I mean Debra, you have depression and ADHD so you’re a great hire. Boom. Done. Checkmark. Yay!” and then we have many talented talented people like LaMondré and Rosemary that because of the severity of their disabilities, employers are just terrified of them and they will not even give them a chance. And I wonder sometimes and I understand why the United Nations did this and why the national laws did this but as we were putting all the disability groups together; mental health, cognitive, physical, blind, deaf, the people with very severe disabilities like LaMondré or Rosemary, they’re not being included except… I mean, they are because I’m an employer and yay! I win because I have these two… just these two amazing examples of staff but, I worry about this.

This is what I worry about Peter. So, how are we going to… how are we going to solve this? How’s this causing…

Peter: Wow.

Debra: Problem all over the world? I know. It’s interesting and I know you’re…

Peter: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you Debra. I really love these kinds of experiences that you shared because I think sort of those issues part of the answer that we can’t sort of warn out the participation of people with severe disabilities too soon. Let’s kind of go back, go back a few steps.

I think, like you started off by saying about the visible or invisible disabilities. I don’t… I don’t really like that kind of… like it’s an easy shorthanded and I think it ends up being such a helpful way to think about ways. Like because it’s always sort of quite hard to tell what is visible and what isn’t. but like the first… the first thing to say is then there are a lot more people with disabilities than we might expect and they’re in situations that we wouldn’t… we wouldn’t anticipated.

So, this article you’re mentioning was a… it was a response to someone saying there aren’t disabled people working and it’s not that relevant and I say, “Hang on. There are. I’m one.” And another interesting thing about that is like I know other people that are people with disabilities but they’re not going to talk about it…

Debra: Right.

Peter: Because like they’re worried about what their employer is going to say. They don’t mind telling me or you but they’re not going to raise that because it doesn’t… it doesn’t feel… say it doesn’t feel safe. So, I think that’s one of the things that we need to kind of adjust in our mindset that people with disabilities always been everywhere. They’ve always been in every group. There are lots of really famous people that have disabilities but then like… then we kind of… we kind of maybe promote them in some of the same way that maybe I was promoted in Bangladesh.

We don’t think of someone like FDR is a person with disability. Right? That he’s totally a person with disability. But that you might study history about him and not mention that. Or kind of someone like Freda Kahlo, you might… that… also you see from her work but that isn’t one of the things mentioned about her and it’s something…

It’s interesting a lot of the times when I’m introduced, people don’t mention that I have a disability. Right? But if we talk about someone that’s less well off, we definitely mention it. Right? In our work. And that’s a bit of a kind of a symmetry that somehow like often, privilege erases, erases things. Maybe that’s where it’s hard to see that I was getting some discrimination even though I was in a privilege position. But that’s the kind of first thing; there’s more disability than you expect.

And the second thing I really like that you bring up. When we talk about disability, we’re talking about so many types and situations. Often people sort of say to me, “well, you should like work on more than just physical disability.” And I’m like, “what do you think I’m doing?” but then I realized that’s kind of my fault that we’re using a label that I think you and I see as a really big term that covers sort of 15 or 20 percent of population and it’s really inclusive and it’s a point of pride and something that can bring us together and something that describes like a natural part of the human condition. That sort of sooner or later we’re all going to be sort of something rather in it. But most people, when they hear disability is that isn’t what they think and a lot of groups might push back against it.

They’re like sort of what I’m experiencing is say old age; it’s not disability. What I’m experiencing is a mental health condition; it’s not a disability. I mean like, “Hang on.” Like we’re using disability in a good way. Right? Like we’ve been using disability in this big umbrella to bring people together and that was… like that’s the foundation of these legislations and frameworks on disability. But then, I really love your question because it kind of… it kind of cause us to account.

Like the… is our work on disability then like you say just going for the easy options? Or is it kind of reaching people that sort of we most need to kind of adapt society to make services that reach them and really like it is actually inclusion? And unfortunately, my first response to that is totally like a thing that is happening that you’re seeing. Like the… lots of people are going for the easy options. Lots of people are seeing that there’s kind of shortcuts to inclusion and that they are like…

This kind of story about me in the office you could read both ways. You could read, “Oh. That’s a great first step for them. This is kind of growing in inclusion.” Or you could say, “Well, they hired Peter because it’s much easier than hiring someone with a different type of disability. Wasn’t it? And they haven’t made the accessibility adjustments that they need to.” So, you can read that both ways and I think it’s… I think it’s a journey.

I think just to kind of share quite an interesting story about this. To show us different in different places. In December I was back in Bangladesh and I was talking with groups of disabled people there and we’re discussing employment and they also said the same, “companies just hiring easy option.” And then like I was like, “what do you mean by easy options?” and they meant sort of really kind of what we would see as quite minimal physical impairment. And for them…

One of… one of our colleagues then she, [Ashra Fuden Mishty] [Phonetic] she recently won a prize actually. Her abilities prize. She said, she went to Japan. She’s a woman. She’s in a wheelchair and she said the Japanese audience have a severe disability and they laughed at her because she’s just a person using a wheelchair but she could use, have full use of her arms and whatnot. And so for what was her kind of a severe disability in the Bangladesh context was for to Japanese audience like quite an ordinary one of the no one. Right? And that was such an interesting moment for me.

I think that that kind of stuff really shows the social issues are so important to look at and disabilities and terms so we know about that. That made me quite sad for Bangladesh situation. Reminding me that well, actually, if that is seen as a kind of severe case, that means that we are leaving the other people out. And yes, it gives the idea that maybe that can be changed.

I think sort of like… and maybe I’m sort of skirting around your questions. I think another way I would scratch around it is by sort of taking one of the conclusions of this which is like, well, what is severe is really different in different cases and there’s lots of…

Debra: Right.

Peter: People with quite severe impairments that are then have a lot of inclusion, a lot of support for the inclusion and a lot of people with sort of more basic impairment than have more exclusion and vice versa. So, like sometimes when people raise this issue, or they say like, “we can include people with minor disabilities but we can’t include people with severe ones.” I really kind of question what they think about as severe and minor because they probably… later they might say what if someone is totally blind then that’s a severe disability for example.

Debra: Right.

Peter: And you’re like well, maybe if you want to label it like that but also, that’s something that the right assistive technology you can just sort of get around… get around quite easily. So, it’s about changing those expectations. And then like also some people are going to really need universal design to be put into place and not just partially accessible things.

They’re going to really need these assistive services that we talk about and these adaptations. They’re going to really need support from government and employers and their communities and like I think, we really believe that with that support, then they… the contribution that comes out in those few work or other ways or just sort of can be able to live their lives more independently and according to their choices will be a really great contribution. I think that’s why we do what we do.

I don’t think I answered your question but I think it’s… I think I kind of really agree that it’s an important one. It helps us keep us to account in our work and we need to be keep looking to make sure we are tackling hard situations. They’re hard for whatever reason. Maybe the severity of disability. Maybe other reasons. Maybe into sectionality and association with others. Sort of social criteria. Other thing I feel like it might work is that interaction between poverty and disability in various countries. We need to be looking at that. I don’t… I don’t think I gave a quick solution…

Debra: No. you did. No. you know, the reality is, these are hard questions and to say somebody has severe disabilities is in the eyes of the beholder you know. Because as you said, you know, you’re dealing with somebody that’s blind but technology can help level the playing field. And so, it’s… I don’t… I just think that it’s important to talk about it because I see… and I am so proud to be an American. I’m so proud to be an American but I see a lot of celebration going on in the United States about woohoo! We’ve done so much when I think that we have so much to do.

Now, I believe obviously in celebrating every step of the way. Let’s celebrate our successes but, I just want to keep reminding employers that we have only began. And I think we can learn so much by what’s already been done.

You know we’re doing a better job of including people with autism. Starting to do a better job of including people with autism in the workforce and we can learn so much from those efforts. And so now, we need to you know, keep expanding and growing but, I want to be careful that we don’t accidentally just always go for the easy easy easy and make sure… and there are so many moving parts with this which why I think that the work you do is so important. And I want you just to talk a little bit about…

I want to explore just a little bit about the GBDN and the work you’re doing in these amazing multinational corporations that have stepped up, signed the ILOGBDN charter and said, “No. we’re going to make disability inclusion a priority.” The ILOGBDN is supporting the Valuable 500 work that dr. Caroline Casey is involved in. and also, Peter I want you to talk about the group of disability consultants that you and your colleague… you know, this group that you created because it’s a pretty powerful group and I always am learning from it. There are so much to know so…

Peter: Thank you. Thank you Debra. Just to maybe before getting to the work stuff, just to say you being proud. I’m really proud to be connected to Bangladesh and the connection that I’ve made. I think it’s often easy to look Bangladesh which is quite a poor country. It’s not as it poor as it was but it’s often too easy to look at the challenges there. but I’ve also seen a lot of stories of inclusion and it’s not as… it’s not as systematic, it’s not… it doesn’t have that framework that the US has whatever and whatever but, I see sort of employers there that hire people with disability. Groups of people with disabilities that have come out. Sort of advocating for their rights and it all… it really encourages me because a lot of other context were saying, “well, when we become like a really develop really rich country, that we’re all sort of in this dimension of technology then, we’re going to have these accessibility things.” And I’m like, “wait a minute? What?” Like…

Debra: Yes.

Peter: You don’t need… like it helps that there’s a lot of inclusion that can happen before you have… before you have that money and before you fix everything else. And sometimes, countries can get a bit distracted by waiting for this kind of perfect future where we’re going to be inclusive and respectful of all groups and all individuals but just not right now. So, I think that’s a kind of other… that’s the inspiration I took from Bangladesh.

On the ILO work, I’m sort of external consultant for them. So, I’m sort of sharing from my side but I think you’ve spoken to Stefan and the other people…

Debra: Yes.

Peter: That can give the official view and so I’ll give sort of my taste on this. I really like working with supporting them on this work they’re doing with the Global Business Disability Network for few reasons. They’re working with multinational enterprises and other organizations to make an international platform. Part of this, like a key part of it and a key part of it for me is looking at the business case of disability.

Yes. What reasons are going to attract businesses to engage people with disabilities or work on disability? And that’s… this is something… is something quite interesting because some of your viewers might be the same on like, “well, hang on a minute. I thought we were talking about rights.” And we are talking about rights and this is… this is kind of a bit like… and this is my personal take on it but this is a bit of a tight rope we have to work. To achieve rights for people with disabilities, we have to engage such a wide range of stakeholders.

Debra: Right.

Peter: Each stakeholder has point of different motivation. And so, what the business case refers to? For me, it’s like what are the motivations of businesses and how do we appeal to them so that people with disabilities can get employed and have services and products and whatnot that response to their needs? And that’s… it’s a delicate line and I think a lot of people rightly criticize sort of when this is taken too far. That some countries are going on about disability employment but the employers of disability people, they don’t want to… sort of like this is just a big headache to them and we just much rather… they just like we got rid of them and we don’t sort of providing service or access or whatever.

Like get a job. You’re so lazy already. And we definitely don’t want that. And that’s where it’s taken too far. And I think disability groups sort of already rightfully sort of point out the flaws in that and that we’re not just sort of product of capitalism.

So like I said, that’s the kind of delicate line of the business case. I think one thing that I’ve liked about my work with them which has been more about engaging some of the none company members in the network. It’s been more about sort of these organizations working on disability on employment. Some of the big sort of charities and NGOs and other specials in disability field.

I’m kind of been working with them to see like why this is relevant to them? And I think it’s something from the disability sector, it’s something that’s hard for us. Right? Because we use activism. We use the sort of banging on doors, having a good shout about it and sort of claiming some rights and we have like claimed that a lot of some of those rights and so like I said, sort of currently we’re doing that and previous generation is doing that and have changed the world and the experience of being disabled person around now is totally different from what it was 50 years ago. Even maybe 20 or 30.

Debra: Right.

Peter: But, like to get the message further out, we need to work in different ways. We need that different… that different set of skills and how to reach… how to reach companies and how to engage them. And just to sort of like add one thing. One sort of specific thing that I’ve been working on with them, it’s looking at the idea of national business in disability networks. And I know you had some previous people on the show. I think you had Susan Scott-Parker recently who…

Debra: Yes.

Peter: I think she may… I think it’s probably the first national business in disability network. They probably wasn’t… it’s now business disability forum in the UK. She brought companies together to look at this in the context of a country.

And so, one of the pieces that I’m supporting the ILO with is looking at how we can promote those in further countries and how companies coming together can really like solve our shared problem and they can learn from each other and that can be a kind of mechanism for collaboration which sort of… thanks for mentioning also this group of consultants that we have together with Nick Coley. I sort of co-facilitate a group of consultants working internationally in development humanitarian issues.

Like it’s a mailing list and we have cause. But I think a colleague put it really well. He said well, on disability like we have issues about knowledge sharing and issues about advocacy. And this group is just one of the small ways I think kind of… these kind of cause you do and the ways you share information and you get issues and sometimes speakers out there.

Another one that this kind of journey on disability issues that we’re talking about needs kind of… we need a bit more knowledge. We need to kind of see others. As an example, someone like me doing that. “Wait a minute? Bring it on. I can do that as well.” right? There’s like this thing that you can use to solve this problem and these are like really really… like it’s something I like doing. I like… I sort of see… what I want to be doing is connecting and communicating and this is a wonderful thing that work on disability like other social subjects really need.

Debra: Right.

Peter: I don’t know if you seen on Facebook. There’s a group called Accessible Travel Club.

Debra: I haven’t seen that. I’ll have to…

Peter: It’s really worth looking up. I think it’s a community of several thousand people now. So it’s initially started by Accomable which is… I don’t remember surname. He’s now joined Airbnb and he’s supporting them with accessibility…

Debra: Oh yes. Yes. Yes. I’ve heard about him. Yes.

Peter: He kind of started the Facebook group and now there’s like thousands of disabled people that love traveling and we’re all in the same group and like you see the best questions. They’re like, “if I go to Heathrow am I going to have a problem with that?” so people will say, “well, yes and no. look out for this thing.” “I want to travel for the first time, how should I do it?” “I’m backpacking in my wheelchair.” “You’re what? This is what it looks like.”

Debra: Yay.

Peter: And then like I saw the best comment someone was backpacking in their wheelchair and they had to take sort of catheters for hygiene issues. Someone said, “Oh. When you’ve used your catheters towards the end of the trip, you can have more room for souvenirs and wine aren’t you?” and I love… and this is kind of… this is part of the way disability is changing and we’re changing things on disability to connect and share experiences with each other.

Debra: And help each other. I mean, that’s… I’m definitely going to join that group. And I find that people are so willing to share and join and collaborate. I think… I know that something important is happening but… and I also know we went long but, you have such an amazing career and all the work that you do and the leadership that you’re showing. Sorry, I’m embarrassing you again. But Peter, tell the audience how they can find out more about your work.

Peter: Thank you. Thank you Debra. Thanks for having… thanks for having me on. I’m not so online. I’m on Twitter; desibility that’s D-E-S-I-bility. If you search for Peter Fremlin or Peter Torres you’ll find… you’ll find a little site that says about me. And please, I really welcome people to get in contact. I’m always happy to talk further about these issues. Thanks again Debra for having me on.

Debra: Yes. And thank you to you and Nick for putting that consulting group together because we all… there’s not enough people right now in this field; the disability inclusion field to handle everything that needs to be done. So, we need more people joining us. People with disabilities and people without disabilities.

It’s important that people without disabilities are allies to people with disabilities. That’s the way we change the world. But I just appreciate your leadership and the work you’re doing and I just wanted the audience to know about you Peter. So, thank you so much for being on the show today and I look forward to continue to saving the world with you in the future.

Peter: Thanks so much Debra for your encouragement and colleagueship and friendship. I really appreciate it.

Debra: Yes. I agree. Okay. Bye everyone.