HPAW Beatriz

**Doug Foresta:** Welcome to Human Potential at Work, the show where we explore social impact, inclusion and empowerment of everyone, including persons with disabilities. Your host is Debra Ruh, CEO of Ruh Global Impact and co-founder and chairwoman of Billion Strong. An identity and empowerment organization designed to bring billions of voices of persons with disabilities together.

To join the global community and to donate to the cause visit billion-strong.org that's billion -strong.org. And now onto the episode.

**Debra Ruh:** Hello everyone. My name is Debra Ruh and I'm the CEO of Ruh Global Impact. And Ruh Global Impact works all over the world to make sure we're including people across the board, both in our real world and in our digital world. And I am also the executive chair for Billion Strong, which is an identity organization that we've designed to try to bring all the 1.2 to 1.7 billion people with disabilities together with pride.

I'm also one of the partners at AXSchat, which my co-partners, my co-host are Neil Milliken and Antonio, Antonio Santos, both that work for Atos. And that is where I met my guest today, Beatriz. And I'm saying her name american. And so she's going to be kind, and she's going to actually say her name, all three of her names correctly.

And, but I was so impressed when we interviewed her on AXSchat. The way she's looking at giving back to the world is, it's very powerful. And I don't think we've really dug into these types of conversations here. And so I'm so impressed with her. I'm so impressed with her wisdom and the way she's looking at the world and the way she's changing the world for the better. So Beatriz, thank you so much for being on the program.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Thanks for having me Debra. And thanks for your kind words. They make me a blush a little.

**Debra Ruh:** Bit of that's. But I really do believe them. I'll start off by doing a quick visual description for anyone that can't see, or maybe listen to this by podcast.

But I am a middle-aged woman closer to an elderly woman these days with gray hair, with purple streaks through it. I have on a really, I think, cute little necklace from my great-grandmother. And I'm very interested in supporting my grandmother energy these days. And we can do it with fun, little things, fun little trinkets, but I also am wearing a black shirt with white flowers on it.

Beatriz take the, will you please tell us how to say your name correctly? And also, do you mind telling the audience a little bit about your background? Because I am just, I'm really fascinated with your background and it's such a needed part of the conversation. I don't see others having it.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Hi, my name is Beatriz Gonzalez Mellidez. I have all Spaniards and people of Portuguese descent, two family names.

The first, my first is the first of my father, Gonzalez. The second is the first of my mother's Mellidez. We don't change names when we marry and we don't do that. So in that sense, we are a bit advanced in feminism.

**Debra Ruh:** Yes, I agree.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So my colleagues call me Bea, or just B depending on which one they can pronounce better.

**Debra Ruh:** The dummy it down. But some of us just, I really struggle with pronunciations of names. I don't know why. It's my ADHD, I guess.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I have it also with German names and with other types of names that you have to hear twice or three times up to four or five times before you, you can keep it in your head.

So I feel it don't worry. I don't take it personal. The main thing is that people call me whatever they want to call me, but with love, that is what I will say it with love and I will reply also to, I hate you. It's also good. I am an inclusive experience professional based in Cologne, Germany for already 12 years, I come from Spain in Madrid and I am a certified professional in web accessibility.

That's the acronym is CPWA, which is both WAS and CPACC, and I'm also a user requirements engineer, so that the acronym is CPUXUR. Which I am horrible with acronyms. I have to say it because once you speak more than one language, they already difficult in one language and with more languages, it gets even worse.

So when we met, I was working for SinnerSchrader, which is an Accenture interactive company as a principal product designer. And in the meantime I moved to Atos. So now I am the head of accessibility and digital inclusion in Central Europe. I didn't even know I was going to be working there when we met.

So.

**Debra Ruh:** I know, isn't that funny. Yeah. But Neil Milliken, I don't know. He say he's I love the way he thinks. I love the way he's putting these teams together. I'm fascinated with it because I believe this is the future. We need leaders like you in these conversations. And often I know especially here in the states, we're just looking at accessibility in such a small way, and it's not it is nuanced, it is gigantic.

So the part that you're bringing into the conversation, I think is really powerful. And it's like you said about languages, right? You speak multiple languages.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah. Sometimes you have to speak the language of the CEOs or the decision-makers in order to sell it. So it's a bit I'm not a salesperson, but in this case, because I believe in what I'm doing, I think it's easier to sell.

I don't, I'm not selling any fake things. So I'm trying to be honest and I acknowledge where we're lacking and we're working on it. We're walking the talk as you say in the states one step after the other. Sometimes there's a setback, but you only hold your position not to go back and then continue when there is a better weather around yourself.

**Debra Ruh:** And that's such a great point. It's such a great point. And we also have to keep reminding everybody. We haven't completely figured accessibility out, but as you're saying B, we have to try, we can't build better the same old way we've been doing it. We've been leaving out tons and tons of people we've been misunderstanding our cultures.

We there are just so many problems and we have to first allow ourselves to make mistakes. As you're saying, and then we've got to learn from them and then not be ashamed of our, shamed of our mistakes either. I remember a friend of mine works at Google and I was making, I made a comment about Google glasses and she was like no, Google glass is such an embarrassment.

Don't talk about it. I said You should Google shouldn't be embarrassed because we have to start. And then we learn from each other and I appreciate that they started and they right out of the box were trying to make sure it worked for people with disabilities. So I really appreciate Google's efforts and the market has grown because of their efforts.

So I totally agree with you there.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah, you can always get inspired by failures sometimes more than if you do everything right, you cannot innovate because you only follow your path. I wanted to make a little pause, because you were talking about your visual description and I have to say, I love your glasses.

You forgot to mention you have really nice green glasses that have a good, a great accent with your purple hair. So I wanted to also do a visual description shortly from me. So I'm not going to say I'm a middle age woman because it sounds, I'm going to be 40 years old this year.

**Debra Ruh:** You are not middle-aged if you're middle-aged then I'm 63.

That, that [inaudible].

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I am. So I've been through, already feel, felt like my 15th, middle cris, middle life crisis already. They come and go up and down depending on what you're doing, both on work and personally yeah. And I have so shoulder length hair. When I was living in Spain it used to be blonde. Now, I guess it's brown because I don't see the sun so much when I'm living in Germany.

And I have glasses, thick glasses reduce three or four times so that they don't weigh so much. And I'm usually wearing a smile. I try to wear a smile as much as I can and play the Spanish card that everyone relates Spain with party and fun. So I try to use that also at work, because when you work with users, sometimes you need to break some walls in order for them to tell you how they feel about interfaces, how they feel about your product and not just try to, tell you all the good stuff and not tell you also the bad.

So I try to use this cards also to, to reach people a bit better.

**Debra Ruh:** Which is one reason why you're such an amazing person, because we have to have empathy for each other. And we have to try to, we have to try to make it easier. Things are really hard right now. Yesterday I went to the dentist and I just had a cleaning, which is good.

Yay. But it's also springtime in Virginia and the dentist had laid me backwards. So it was easy for him to work on my mouth. Unfortunately, when he brought me up, I started throwing up all over the office and I thought, I cannot believe this. I can't even go to the dentist without a some kind of ridiculousness.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Breakdown.

**Debra Ruh:** Yeah. It's just right now, things are just so hard for everybody. And it was the, we have little crystals in our ear and because of the backward movement and the position.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** It had an effect.

**Debra Ruh:** Yeah, the crystals out of my ears, and then I didn't have balance and I started throwing up and it's called meniere's disease, but I don't know.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Oh yes, I know that.

**Debra Ruh:** Yeah. But whoa, so you just, it feels like these days, I just never know what I'm navigating into. I used to think I knew. Yeah, I guess that was naive, but so being kind and really caring about other people, which was one thing that I really got very quickly about you. And I thought, boy, you are the real package.

But I know that people want accessibility to be easy. We just want to throw an overlay on it and we're done. And we, we're short cutting everywhere, I try to explain to people how co, how complex this is and nuanced. And if you build it in to the core of everything you're doing, you're going to have such a better chance. And as you said, B, you'll make mistakes.

But people will be more willing to give you a break because they know you're trying. And so do you mind just telling it because where you've gone with your career, I don't see other people, how you've tied it into the languages, and I'm just fascinated with the way you were looking at this.

And I think Atos and Neil Milken are very smart to have brought you on board too, because you were just really an asset to the world. I think so. So let's talk a little bit about that.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So yes, I get also important imposter syndrome kicks in every once in a while. So

**Debra Ruh:** Women do that. So no, you are brilliant and your voice is very important.

So tell that little voice in your head to go away.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah, no, this is my first official accessibility role. I've been doing things for accessibility. My, my whole career. But I never had support from the top management. So for me, it's also a new thing that I'm learning to live with. I'm also trying to support different colleagues in different areas.

So you were mentioning that there is, this times are hard for everyone. So we had, I lead the German UPA. That is a user experience and usability professionals in Germany. So I lead the accessibility working group. And we had some people talking in the leaders meeting that after three missed appointments, they were going to remove the membership of the working, working groups.

So I had to say, no, wait a second. We cannot really do that. There's a, for example, in my working group, there's people who have different disabilities that have been going through special rough times. The pandemic has been rough for everyone. A lot of people have discovered disabilities. Even though they thought they didn't have any.

And because of being under so much stress. And so they, I think there's a lot of empathy also going on in that area. But I had to bring out to the attention that maybe we cannot be there present right now because we have other things going on around us and either with ourselves or with people very close to us.

And we had to bring that to their attention. I'm not going to do that. Of course, I want people to come and work because it's a working group. So it's meant for us to work together. But if we can do it now, maybe we can do it in a couple of months or next year. So I'm giving a bit of a more flexible chance for everyone to be able and not to have to excuse themselves.

Some people, when I wrote about the things that were going on, I was like no please let me be part of it. I don't want to miss it. It's no, don't worry. Take your time come whenever you can.

**Debra Ruh:** And I love that you're thinking about it. Once again, I just went and got a cleaning at the dentist.

And I wound up being off all day from work because, I was throwing up. So I was like, what? I'm too busy, too bad.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** But then you have all the days that you are in focus mode and you can get done in 12 hours. Maybe you don't even remember to stop working and you get done there. They work for two weeks.

**Debra Ruh:** Yes. Yeah. Oh, I so agree. I so agree. And that's why, once again, I love, that you are in this leadership role. And Beatriz, B, will you also tell us a little bit about what you were doing before you came to ATOS?

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah, so I have a past half a mixed pass. Some people used to call my life my work life, a bit of a unicorn.

So I've worked as a designer, but also as a front end developer. So when I came to Germany, 12 years ago, almost 13. I couldn't find a job in UX or design. And then I had to decide between graphic design or front end development. I am not so much of a graphic designer and from front end developer paid more. So I have to be honest, there went for the money and sold my soul.

But it was for a good purpose, right? So I started working as a front end developer and I was apparently a good front end developer. So when I would try to move back to user experience and I started seeing the roles in UX comming to Germany. Okay. People didn't believe I could be a good user experience person because I was a good, so I had good records, good recommendations.

So they was like, no, you cannot do that. But I got a chance with an American company called Pegasus started the German UX team. I was a team of one in Germany and their region. And it turned out I was also a good, not just a good user experience. I became because I was not at the beginning. I was not a good consultant, but I became a good consultant.

So the same thing that I'm doing right now with ATOS and accessibility. And I did previously and seniors rather to, to promote accessibility, to sell it, to get approval, to get customers buy in, to get my colleagues also buy into that. They can sell it. I did that already with PegaSystems, so I got the chance to create there, the Dach team.

So that's A S. G so that is Austria, Switzerland, and Germany but in German, and those are the German speaking countries in the central central Europe that are usually in central Europe. They are the ones that make the most revenue and mostly Germany. So I got the chance to build an accessibility and a user experience team back then in Pega.

And now I'm doing that with ATOS or so, I can bring up all the experience I had. So I realized that if I didn't talk to my pre-sales colleagues and didn't position user experience right. They would keep on selling a usability and user experience is just do the colors, make it pretty. So I had to break all those walls and talk business and talk in a language that my colleagues could understand.

It also of course helped that I could say it in German and also to the customers that it could explain everything, not just in the business language or the language the salespeople speak, but also in German. And that was a great experience. We we got so the region became the one with the highest revenue.

Oh there was a huge potential that was not being used there. Of course I was also introducing accessibility in the mix. Like everything I do, I try to keep it in mind, but I wasn't, then a user experience person and even though I got to do some specific accessibility projects within Pega my focus at the time was more like the whole holistic experience.

So if you don't have usability and you cannot Use it, you also cannot access it. It's all linked. So that when I learned back in Spain in the 2008, I think it was so I learned about usability, but the course name. So I did at the university of Alcaladena one of the oldest universities in Spain, and the course was called accessibility and usability of web contents.

Okay. So I learned there. Ages ago that there is no usability without accessibility

**Debra Ruh:** Agree.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** First you need to access. And as much people that no designer wants to design for an very small niche of people, right? So you need to design for the wider audience because you want your babies to be available for everyone.

You want to share your work.

**Debra Ruh:** I want to make a comment be about something else. You said that whenever you wanted to go into UX and accessibility, they're like no. You're a great front end designer. You're great at that. I also had those kinds of fights in my career. And I remember there were times because I was in the banking industry for a lot of my career.

My son used to make fun of me and I would say, what are you going to be for Halloween? He'd say, oh, I'm going to be a mortgage banker. I was like, Hey,

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Mr. Scary.

**Debra Ruh:** I wanted to, I was in charge of training and technology at a very big bank. And this thing came along called the internet. And I really wanted to get involved.

I thought it was going to be so cool, but they looked at me and they are like no, you're a training manager and I was so I thought, oh, you have now decided that I will be that for the rest of my career. And so I left the company. So those of you that are listening to this understand you're bright people, we are not going to let you put us in boxes.

We're going to leave. And and during this time of the great resignation where the younger people are saying, I'm not going to work for you. If you're not, you're, you please don't be a bad player. Please don't do bad things to people in the world. But. At the same time, let me bring to you what I can do.

And I think Neil does a very good job with his team on that. And I appreciate him for that, but I'm glad that you said okay I'm going to do it anyway. And I imagine because I also programmed, B and I did it for six years and I was good at it, but I hated it so much. But at the time when I did go more in the User Experience I was able to talk to the technologist and at the time there was this big gap between the IT, people in the management people and I was able to bridge that gap.

I think there's less of that now, but at first it was bad and they, the technologists were deliberately trying to keep everybody in the dark, it's just interesting for me to hear you walked in a very similar situation and as women, I think that's it's part of, how we disenfranchise women, but just want to make that comment too.

So I guess this Pegasus is a good company.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah. We have a, so we have this thing, like othering like us versus the others. And we have that in all things in life. Like people are scared to about what they don't know for me, it was amazing because I could talk to the developers and I could talk to the designers.

It was also very neat on the other side, because when the developer says, no, that cannot be done, I could tell them, Hey, give me a minute. Click here you go, now you learn something new. Go ahead.

**Debra Ruh:** Yes, let me show you that it can be done. I wasn't going to ask you this question, but I'm going to now because of what you're saying, but one thing that I continue to see in large complex corporations, so these, ATOS is a billion dollar corporation and they have, they have people located all over the world, their headquarters in France.

But one thing that I think the accessibility field continues to not understand is the complexity of a gigantic corporation. I know a lot of people think there's buckets of gold everywhere. That's not true, but the reality of putting it all together with such a big organization. These big organizations that is something that.

Throw a little overlay tool on and you're done. And so I was just wondering if you would address that a little bit. Now I will tell you the big corporations, they understand this, but they do not feel that the vendors understand this complexity. And it makes them feel very nervous, which is one reason why you have a company like ATOS, a few others just creating their own teams so they can make sure internally they're focused on this in the right way.

So I was just wondering if you could comment on that.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I've been working like you say, for multinational companies. The last three jobs that I had, one of them was in Pega system, which is a Boston-based product company that works. Worldwide. I was working for seniors refugee center, a design studio for Accenture interactive.

So I was also part of the whole Accenture network worldwide. During the pandemic I created there, the accessibility initiative because I felt we were all very isolated. So I tried to do a teams. I created a teams on the Microsoft tool to invite everyone. So I had, I was reaching out in LinkedIn finding people that had accessibility or inclusion or something like that on their

profiles internally and externally and inviting them all like person by person knocking on doors, come here, let's talk. And let's exchange opinion. And that is also a gigantic company. And now, I am in ATOS and it's also another gigantic company. The thing is that you have nuances because you have a global company which tries to have a global culture, but you also have many cultures depending on the regions.

And you have to be conscious about that. So I'm a, still, I've been three months on the job and I'm still learning how the German culture works within ATOS. So it's like I've been in Germany for 13 years. So I already know something about German culture. I have a German husband and two half Kartoffeln.

So two kids that are half German have Spanish. And ATOS is a corporation or SinnerSchrader as a corporation, as a design studio had their own culture SinnerSchrader within Accenture interactive was another culture accents redacted within Accenture global was a different culture. You need to be, open-minded open your ears, open your eyes, listen, look observe and see how you can move yourself better.

So before right now I am in the discovery phase of my role. So I'm trying to discover what is the situation we have. What actions I can take to get the most results. So to take effective steps towards the solution that can help my colleagues, my company, and my customers as a whole, which is not an easy task.

And so I'm used more to move within an accessibility user experience like discipline. Leadership. And I'm still trying to learn how to work as head of specialty. So I have to do it with a lot more politics, which is not my strongest point I have to admit, but I'm usually too honest and too transparent for internal politics.

I have to admit.

**Debra Ruh:** And yet, I think we have to do that now. I think, after we were still living through this pandemic and everybody got sent home right away and it's oh yeah, I know, welcome to our worlds. But I think politically and I agree and it's all the egos and stuff we have to deal with, but I think it's to the, it's the point now where we need to be very transparent and we need to be honest, even if we heard other.

I don't know why it would hurt your feelings. You check your egos at the door, but there, I don't think there's ever been a more important in time than you need to check your egos at the door. But I also, I've worked for major multinational corporations for 25 years of my career before I became an entrepreneur.

So I hear what you're saying, Debra, but the reality, if that is my bosses, boss, acting like that, you know, I had to protect myself. And sometimes cultures don't allow us to be as transparent as we would like to be. I'll tell you another thing that always bothered me about the, some of the big companies I worked for was that some of the, there were employees that didn't really always have the best heart of what was right for the organization

too. And and it's they're paying me, they're a big, bad corporation, but no corporations are made up of people. So what are we doing to protect our customers? What are we doing to protect your coworkers? And that's one thing I think you were very gifted at. Maybe you're not gifted at being a fake politician, but you're very gifted at empathy and pulling people together and listening and learning because we're all listening, should all be listening to.

Yeah, nobody knows it all. Nobody does. If anybody tells you they're an access accessibility expert, I would back away because it's changing so fast. I have a lot of experience in accessibility, but I need to learn from you and understand, and now we're building the Met- verses an inter internet three and it's.

It's very complicated, but I think a lot of the complication does live in the gigantic organizations and it's so hard, all the moving parts and, that's why you have to create what you're creating a, really a plan, a community, a culture.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** But you know what, the thing that I'm using, I think that's the most helpful in my career is that I learned how to understand the user, how to respect the user. There's no stupid users. There's only bad designs. So if I am not getting the feedback I need to get from my colleagues, I'm doing something wrong and I need to rework my strategy to try to gain their trust. I need to understand their needs. And then we can work together on getting both of our needs fulfilled because if only one part is getting all the energy and the other, one's getting all the credit or, like these type of games that sometimes happen in big corporation also within families, we also have in the family, sometimes somebody that has said that, whatever they do the best and some other people that they have a bad signal and then whatever they do, everyone is going to interpret it in a wrong way.

So it happens also in mini groups. So imagine if you have millions of people or, not millions, worldwide we're millions of people involved, but in corporations is thousands and thousands of people.

**Debra Ruh:** Yeah. Yeah. I agree. It's I just think these days we all have to be a little kinder, little nicer, but I also think we need to be more deliberate.

So I know there was this one group that said that they really wanted to support people with disabilities and the SDGs, and they build a portal. And I ask on the public forum when they asked for questions, if it was accessible and it's oh no, we'll do that later, too expensive. Don't know how to... and I just don't think that's acceptable anymore.

And so what I said to everyone was once again, the community people with disabilities are an afterthought and we're not being included. We're not even being included in these efforts for the sustainable development goals. What? This is ridiculous. But but at the same time, I do want to really be honest to say that accessibility can be very confusing, especially when you're talking about all the moving parts. They're just so many moving parts and all of the projects, but it has to be built in right there. But I like the organization. I remember IBM years ago said that they were going to focus on a three-prong. They were going to focus on privacy, security and accessibility. And I really liked when they came out saying that because you really do need to care about your customers.

Yeah, and you really do. And even if they don't ask you to make sure it's accessible, I'm hoping that, and I know Atos does that. We say by the way, you should also make sure this is accessible because that way it's not going to come back and bite you later, because if you do it right away, as it's a lot less expensive.

If you have to go back and fix it. So are you finding people are listening to you with this? Go ahead.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So that reminded me like some weeks ago my colleague, Alexandra, Neil brought up to the table, the golden nugget. So there's the four Ps. So we have purpose, planet, people and they added profit. Which I think is amazing, because it is a business.

**Debra Ruh:** And I've heard that before too. I've heard the profit, but if a company doesn't make a profit, it can't employ people. And I'm a small business and cash flow, oh, it's nerve-wracking. Because a lot of people still expect us to work for free because we're doing something good for society. Stop it.

Society needs to pay the do gooders that are making a difference too. And that's okay. I'm working on that. But. It really is a huge issue. It's like this let's rethink the way we're doing these things. How can we blend accessibility to everything we, we're doing? How can we make sure that you're not using our data incorrectly, and you're not... And I know, you're, you're dealing with businesses, but I think that's also such an important point because you, as Atos can say to your customers, and to your vendors, providing y'all services and products, we need this to be accessible for all of our customers. And I'm seeing leadership at Atos.

I was seeing leadership with that at IBM when Francis West was their CAO. Not seeing it as much. Maybe it's there. I'm just not seeing it. Another important thing is though, you got to tell us what you're doing. Now, I happen to know a little bit about what Atos is doing, because I do AXSchat with Neil, but I'm fascinated.

And I've actually asked him to come on the show to talk about how he's finding these brilliant people like you, Beatriz. I mean.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I can tell you about that.

**Debra Ruh:** Yes!

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I met him while I presented at accessibility club Berlin I think it was. So we were both presented remote from home during the pandemic, but that's how we met and we connected on LinkedIn and I I thought he story was brilliant.

I wanted to know more about it and follow him a little bit. I didn't know him before. Which is a bit weird because he's been everywhere, I would say, but I didn't got the chance until that moment or it didn't stick until that moment. And yeah, that was more than two years ago. And he was trying to get me ever since, you know, one reason or another.

**Debra Ruh:** I was hearing about this famous B, so it was like, oh, and then we interviewed you and I was like, wow. Okay. Okay. So it was just, I was very impressed, the way you were looking at it. So how do you think you are going to get your hands around those two major markets?

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah, but like I say, I'm going to start with a three wave approach.

First of all, I need my customer and my, not my customers even, my colleagues to know that I'm there. Because if they don't know that I'm there, they cannot, I cannot support them. I want to work with them and support them in their jobs so that they get more revenue and they can sell it better to our customers.

I'm started with pre-sales and I'm talking also both ways from the bottom up and from the top to the bottom so that I can find people that are not missed in between. Then my, after the awareness that to say, I'm here, we can talk. Then is going to come the training phase and the know how. Because in Germany, there's not enough experts there.

There's not enough people who know about accessibility. There's several, yeah, anecdotes. For example, there was a public offering, a Tender in 2019 that it was 105 billion euros.

**Debra Ruh:** Wow.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So you can translate that into dollars more or less. You don't even need to. We're talking billions here. And because there was not enough people to cover those services, 60 million people, 60 million euros got unused.

**Debra Ruh:** Ooh.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So only 45 million found somebody who could deliver. So that is the cost of inaction. So I have this in a big slide and last year was another tender for 45 million for accessible documents. So this is going to keep on coming because all public sectors in Europe have the, yeah, the obligation to deliver accessible things.

And we also have the accessibility, European access European accessibility act EAA that is It has to be implemented in local law by all European countries until June this year and the deadline to start with the fines and the issues is going to be in two and a half years from now. So all the people working in finance, telco publishing banking, transport, if they want to sell products or services in Europe, They're going to have to comply with those laws.

So the first one for the public sector is like your 508 and the one with the ADA rights for people with disabilities, they have the right to use services and use products. So that is coming. There's no way. There's no way of keeping that. People have and the European union has got so strict because they have been warning for years and people have been ignoring it.

So after you ignore it, there comes a time when there's enough is enough and you have to do it now. Two and a half years.

**Debra Ruh:** Right.

And there will be examples made of the companies that don't do it. They're going, I remember going over in 2002, 2003 to the EU and talking about what we had done in the states and what we were doing in the states where we were going to just trust companies to do the right thing.

But they were trying to, they were, in our defense, they were trying to, and I went over there and they're like, yeah, no, we're not gonna do that. They're going to do it, or they're going to be consequences. Now, of course, we have our legal consequences and our lawsuits in the states. And there are so many lawsuits over this.

There are so many, most brands have been hit with lawsuits over this. Most of them, some big brands, SAP. Speaking of Germany, SAP was hit with lawsuits in the United States over accessibility. And they actually really took that and they built a really powerful accessibility program.

I know I was like so impressed because normally you get sued and they just do whatever and then keep doing the same thing.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Germans do respect their laws.

**Debra Ruh:** Those are Germans, the Germans. Yeah. And I went over and I toured it and I've met a bunch of their people over there, but. It started with two lawsuits in the United States because of inaccessible HR systems.

So it's coming, there's, it's coming. Everybody's got to get ready for it, but how, do you? Yeah, go ahead. Go ahead, B.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I remember

my mind was blown, so I was going through, Lainey Feingold. She's got an amazing website talking about all the legal situation for accessibility worldwide. And I was starting to learn about, for example, Canada, the Ontarians with disabilities Act.

And when I read through it, and it was like 50,000 Canadian dollars, if I'm not mistaken, the fines per day or portion of a day, I talked to our lawyers and I was like, when I was working in SinnersSchrada, it's okay, this means what I think it means. It means that you can be fined 50,000 Canadian dollars per hour.

**Debra Ruh:** I love it.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Because that is a fraction. It doesn't say what fraction, so it could be a minute. It could be an hour. But It's going to be expensive anyhow. And what I'm doing when I'm presenting instead of, so I talk first about innovation. I talk first about inclusive design. I talk about the business case for accessibility, and then I say, we want to do it for the business.

We want to do it for the innovation part. If everyone decides for the average, there is no innovation. And disability, people with disabilities are on the extremes of the bell curve. Also like power users. Things for disability also help power users. And I say, okay, once we've covered that, now I'm going to talk about the laws.

**Debra Ruh:** And the penalties and, actually we don't want to sue people.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yeah, it's too much work.

**Debra Ruh:** The Americans with Disabilities Act is, is 1990. We created it. So I'm just really tired as a consumer of hearing that it can't be done because yes it can. But at the same time, I don't want to trivialize what it takes to get it done.

It has to be built into the processes of the organization. It has to be, and you have to have it set up in a way that it can be caught. Mistakes can be caught by your queue QA teams and your, your testers. But you have to have it set up. And another thing that I often will tell corporations in the United States that are afraid of lawsuits is: the courts will also be empathetic with you.

If you can prove that you've been trying and you've done it. It's a different problem. If you have policies and procedures and everything built in your organization to make sure accessibility's included and an employee doesn't follow your guidelines, that's a different problem. That's a management problem.

But if you have nothing, then it's on you and you're going to pay and pay. And what, if we have to just sue the heck out of all of them, or, have penalties for you to include all humans, all we're asking is for humans to be included. And as I said before, I was a designer, B, for years a programmer, I never would design something that not everybody could use. But I didn't also at the time know about this. So I probably was designing a lot of things that weren't accessible, but it was a long time ago.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** So there's two things that, what you're saying. On the one side is the intersectionality. So it's such a wider spectrum of everything. So for example, I don't identify as a disabled person all the time.

But I have, I know I have temporary and situational disabilities and I can acknowledge that. I could say I'm disabled because of the glasses, but that's another thing. But the thing is. Like, people who are permanently, have permanent disabilities, We cannot also expect them to have the load of having to explain everything and having to do the emotional work on top of what they already have.

So that's why, I, if somebody complains like you haven't, you forgot the Alt text and they make a huge deal about it there is a whole

discussions, and sometimes it's like this blaming game. I wouldn't blame the disabled person who raised this up. They have the right to complain because they are, they have the right on their side. Somebody forgot them while designing things. On the other side,

**Debra Ruh:** What do you mean you've forgotten. It's like cold and you cannot, you have no empathy.

It's ridiculous. Be a good designer. A good designer does not design for the bell curve. We should not grade children on the bell curve because I don't want to be on the top of the bell curve. I always want to be over here, kooky on, so I just think it's time to really rethink things and Beatriz, I know I've already kept you longer than I said I would, because I could talk to you all day long, but Tell the audience, how they can get in touch with Beatriz, not your email or anything.

Somebody the other day gave their email and their phone number. Don't do that. The audience is too big, but tell us where they can find you where people, can come and learn more about what you're doing.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** I reachable in Twitter. So that is B\_ A T I S H, b\_ atisch. So that's because my Portuguese cousine couldn't pronounce Beatriz and he said, it's so cute that I have to use it as a handle for Twitter.

I got went on book it B\_ atish, and I'm also available in most of community events in the German speaking community. And I'm trying to start also speaking in other international events as well. So uh, I guess if you're. Paying attention to the community. We'll meet eventually.

**Debra Ruh:** Yes. And you're on LinkedIn too, aren't you?

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Yes. I'm still working. I have a delay on my German course for accessibility essentials testing, but yes, I'm in LinkedIn and I am supposed to become a Trainer. Once I finished recording the first course.

**Debra Ruh:** Well, I just love your work and I wanted to support it. And also want to say that if you're looking for good speakers, I highly recommend you.

She does a wonderful job, very creative in her presentation skills. And she's talking about a subject that some people might find boring, but she makes it very interesting. So I'm a big fan. So I just wanted to say that too. So thank you everyone for joining the program today and keep an eye on Beatriz.

Because she is really changed the world and we appreciate you bye everyone.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Thank you.

**Doug Foresta:** You've been listening to Human Potential at work to learn more about Ruh Global Impact visit ruhglobal.com and to learn more about Billion Strong an identity and empowerment organization designed to bring the billions of voices of persons with disabilities together, you can join the global community and donate at billion-strong.org.

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