

MEGAN BARCLAY:

Thanks. Hi, everyone. For those of you who are expecting the chief executive of Be. Accessible, very sorry to disappoint you, but I am not her. Hopefully, I can inspire you as equally.

First and foremost, Be. Accessible is a social change movement. Social change is essentially a shift in social order and the social order of society. It can include changes and social behaviour social norms, and also changes in social institutions. Social change is essentially a change in the opinion and beliefs in a population of any country that effectively changes the social structures for group and collective action.

Take Smoke-free New Zealand, which exists as a social change movement. Not so long ago, we were experiencing smoking in the workplace and public places and it was a socially accepted norm, until educators became educated and awareness was raised around the effects of smoking and the environments that everyone was sharing. And through that, collective engagement and public and social initiatives, social change was achieved for a better environment around the country.

Be. Accessible is an association with a focus on shifting views and attitudes for a 100% accessible environment in New Zealand. Our approach is to harness New Zealanders' social justice and innovation and support them in taking their own action for a country that is the best place in the world to be.

So, what do we do? And what is the relevance of accessibility and social change in the realm of universal design? Valerie spoke about the comparison and also, I guess, the connection of accessibility to universal design.

Our belief is, firstly, universal design is a precursor and a key enabler of a society that is accessible to everyone. Secondly, that a social change movement should provide both a catalyst for shifting people's opinions and beliefs, towards the value of what inaccessible society means to everybody.

My role and most of the role of the team is to work alongside businesses and organisations, as Zena has quite aptly pointed out, in creating an experience that is truly accessible and inclusive. We support them in administering change and support them in successes and achievements the matter how small they are.

Interestingly, the people that we engage with and that businesses and organisations we work with are completely unaware that they may be delivering experiences that can't be enjoyed by everybody. This is usually because of the design of the environment and of the product or service that essentially has somebody along a delivery path completely unaware of the relevance or significance of access design in whatever they are doing.

So what we do, the first step in a social change movement, is shifting people's opinions and beliefs. We begin our engagement by raising awareness.

We like to take the idea of shifting the notion of international symbol of access, which does have limitations to its use because it has a suggestion that access is about people using a

wheelchair only. Whereas accessibility, in our mind, is about, as Valerie quite rightly pointed out, is everybody being able to enjoy the world around them.

So our rumour to everybody is to shift the notion of international symbol of access to a world that is accessible to all and eventually where everyone is completely empowered, independent, and able to enjoy the world as they would like it to be for them.

So, we talk a lot about why that might be and, yes, we refer to statistics - around New Zealand, one in four New Zealanders identify themselves as living with an access need. That was taken from a 2013 census where New Zealanders identified themselves as living with impairment that did not allow them to enjoy their world around them as much as they would like to.

We also talk to businesses about the baby boomer population. The fact that they are the gold card owners that have the highest disposable income, they have the greatest number of assets in the world. I would love to get hold of some of the properties they own, especially in Auckland. And also, they tend to travel in groups and like to be enjoying life around them, as Valerie pointed out, with high expectations and being able to do everything they could do 20 years before.

Also, we refer to, and I have moved past because the clicker is quite difficult, 61,000 babies are born in New Zealand every year. Interesting statistic. Particularly when parents suddenly discover that they find themselves unable to access places and spaces when they have a child in tow.

I myself experienced this very thing when I was bored out of my brain with my child. And, of course, enjoying being with my child, but wanting some retail therapy desperately, I found myself almost barred from going into retail environments by young people who thought that my child was going to grab clothing with their sticky fingers, but also the fact that I just couldn't get the pram in the door, up the stairs or whatever it is. So I couldn't spend any money, heaven forbid. Nor could I satisfy my retail therapy need.

What I also find, as we walk across New Zealand, as we speak to businesses about the statistics, they then reflect upon the fact that the majority of their customers are in fact families with children. Yet what they have also discovered is that the environments have been designed for the average 20 to 40-year-old athletic male. And so there is a disparity there.

We've talked about this statistic. We do know in New Zealand by 2030, that we are going to experience a significant number of individuals with heightened access needs. But because of that, we at Be. have coined the phrase of the 'yellow dollar'.

The yellow dollar is defined as the fiscal opportunity to enable everyone in a population to experience everything. It means you can go and enjoy any service. Or their family member or friend can take someone who normally would not be able to access that service.

It means economic opportunity a New Zealander is able to be enjoyed because the environment is accessible to them and because the employer has had beliefs and views shifted to the notion of what 100% truly accessible society means in this country.

The yellow dollar also refers to the supply chain or the economic ecosystem of enabling disability across New Zealand. It implies there is a need for people to do things differently. It also implies that there is economic merit and engaging consultants and specialists and cultural competence and disability competence, to engage them in environments. Hence, economic impact.

What is also affected is a supply chain where developers and suppliers are thinking they have to do something about that. As Valerie pointed out, a lot of people do just need to know what they'd have to do. Therefore, suddenly discovering what they need to do by having opinions and beliefs shifted is to go and find out what they have to do to do this.

There is therefore a need for a group of suppliers, partners, access developers, innovators, to come to the fore, come to the table, and so here are some options for you, here are some ways to create better accessible design.

The yellow dollar is also about the return on investment for return on organisations, visitor attractions, et cetera, to enable accessibility. And we are tracking their progress as we conspire and influence them to want to make change. We also work alongside them and track the difference that they are finding for themselves, their team and requirements they have.

There is evidence of this in a hotel in Auckland. They have shown a 20% revenue increase across the food and beverage, event and conference revenue streams, purely out of the fact that they have created a more accessible environment that welcomed everybody.

The Auckland Zoo, when they started along the path of enabling a more accessible environment, we encourage them to think about communicating to Auckland and to visitors in the city, that we have a raft or mobile scooters so people can stay longer who might have difficulty with stamina or strength.

Basically, what we discovered is when they started advertising that they had these facilities, they discovered they had to buy more because the demand had increased because they had simply talked about it.

The Palms Shopping Centre has been working on getting more visitors to the region. They have been looking at various media outlets recently about how they are accessible to the whole community.

They have now discovered that they need to do a redesign, which they needed to improve, because they have found that those using mobility permits is a longer sufficient because there is such a huge demand in people wanting to come to the centre that previously thought they couldn't.

So, what happens pretty quickly in our conversations with business owners and attraction operators is the realisation that they need to do something, but they really don't know where to begin.

We have a series of programs and talks that we are continuously evolving based on feedback of the community and those we are working with that helps people know what to actually do and what steps they need to take.

We have developed a network of accessibility champions around the country. These are people who deliver programs, but who are also intrinsically engaged and connected with the disability movement in New Zealand.

They work across the country so that experiences across every centre are found consistent for every traveller and person travelling outside their own main town centre. They also allow a rich tapestry of stories and experiences to be shared from other centres, with each other, which reinforces the social movement around accessibility, and also allows people to not do things from scratch.

As we know, New Zealanders want to do things their own way. What we encourage is that people look to other centres and towns, organisations and communities, and see what they are doing, and attempt to replicated in their own environment.

What will also notice is that the deeper people's awareness and understanding of the gaps that exist in the services they deliver and environments they create, the more they eat into question the existing societal and institutional norms.

For example, isn't this stuff covered up in the Building Act? At this point, we introduce our philosophy of holistic delivery. This slide represents the entire client journey, patient journey, student journey, whatever journey you want to think of, of a person who experiences any environment.

Valerie has eluded to these points, but essentially, what we talk about is the fact that everyday experiences are not only about buildings and physical environment. The majority of us have more virtual experiences through our smartphones, particularly the younger generation.

At this point, we introduce that each key moment of truth needs to be universally designed so that the majority, if not all, of the population can access them, and that no part of our journey has a detrimental impact.

There is another compelling catalyst of social change and for shifting behaviour, and changing opinions and beliefs, and that is a healthy competitive streak. In New Zealand, we tend to be competitive, often with each other, but without the centres, organisations and businesses...

We have developed an accreditation system or program that would enable people to develop the accessibility of a spectrum. It would enable them to improve and develop what they were doing, and to have something to aspire to.

What we didn't realise would happen is that people like businesses and same sectors of industry would start competing with each other. "A silver, I want to get to gold. What can we do to improve accessibility so that we can leapfrog them to gold?" It encourages people to change their behaviour and to do things differently.

Interestingly, what we have also discovered is that... This is also paramount to any social change movement, is that only the movement starts to take off without you. We often feel like we use this phrase a lot. "Are we going to help this organisation or individual be what they want to do?"

The people in those organisations become the change-makers themselves. They started to drive us. They drive us to continue to evolve what we are doing and what they are doing. Without those programs, particularly the accreditation program, those individuals are now seeing for themselves, the limitations of existing societal constructs.

For example, the compliance approach to creating great access. The current legislated guidelines - they are wanting more from these, to see change in society. The arrival of a universal design manual could not come at a better time, in this period of change in New Zealand. We are incredibly excited about this prospect. I will not talk about it because that is coming later.

In the meantime, to fill the gap, we at Be. have been supporting our clients in terms of physical design, so they can design environment for everyone in the initial ideation

stage. What this does and what those designers, architects and business owners have discovered is that this approach enables them to have some creativity and innovation, innovative thought, particularly when you need to juggle diverse stakeholders, they must budget, and diverse limitations.

We are discovering that there is also, and they are discovering, that there is a new set of obstacles for these challenges. They are experiencing limitations in the supply process. Every one of these organisations, in the last six months, have engaged an accessible design approach with our organisation and they are stepping outside of the current frameworks that will enable them, in the near future, that will allow the design environments to go above and beyond accessibility.

I will finish the last 2 minutes with a short video that we created a few years ago, which took the idea of nature's force, the fact that nature is continuously adapting, evolving and combating obstacles, and also the fact that children are members of society who have no concept of limitation was set expectations in their lives, until adults around suggest otherwise.

What I am going to do is play this short video. (Video plays)

SPEAKER:

They say that in a tree is brought into creation by two forces, at the same time. There is the acorn, for which all begins. The sea, which holds all the promise and possibility, which grows into a tree. Everybody can see that.

But only a few can see that there is another force operating here as well. The future tree itself, which was so badly to exist that it calls the acorn into being. Drawing a sibling forth, guiding the evolution from nothingness to maturity.

In this way, it is the tree that creates the very acorn from which was born, showing the world that anything is possible.

(Music plays)

SPEAKER:

In a world of possibility, everyone would have a rocket. On my rocket, I have an elevator for people who have wheelchairs.

SPEAKER:

In world of possibilities, there will be lots of magic carpets.

SPEAKER:

In the world of possibility, there will be heaps of jobs to help people.

SPEAKER:

There will be a rainbow, a flower.

SPEAKER:

In a world of possibility, everyone would have magical glasses.

SPEAKER:

I would like a world with lots of ramps.

SPEAKER:

In a world of possibility, everyone wants a transformer.

SPEAKER:

There will be computers for people who can't spell or type quickly. There will be a computer that you can speak into and it will type it down for you.

SPEAKER:

I can imagine a world where everyone is kind to each other and treat each other like equals. At the end of the day, we're all people. Whether you have a disability, you should be treated the same way.

SPEAKER:

The streams of accessibility are the beginning of a whole new world for all us. So, maybe his tiny acorns grow into mighty oaks of possibility. And like the mighty oak, may we call each new possibility into being. Bigger change. Be. Accessible. Be our future.

MEGAN BARCLAY:

OK, thank you. (Applause)