**webinar catching the next wave innovations and accommodations shaping accessibility**

0:18  
Hello everyone.

0:19  
Welcome to our webinar, Catching the Next Wave, Innovations and Accommodations Shaping Accessibility.

0:25  
I'm Alexa Orban, Director of Marketing Communications here at Cephable, and I'm thrilled to be hosting this session as part of our enterprise series.

0:33  
Today, we'll be diving into a powerful discussion on the future of accessibility.

0:37  
We'll look at how innovative approaches are meeting evolving needs and technology and accommodations.

0:43  
We have two exceptional guests joining us.

0:45  
First, I'd like to introduce Kristian Burch, Director of Accessibility Programs and Compliance at Salesforce.

0:52  
Kristian has been a driving force behind Salesforce's accessibility support team and brings a wealth of experience in creating accessible digital environment that prioritize both user needs and inclusion.

1:04  
Our 2nd guest is Cephable's own Founder and CEO, Alex Dunn.

1:08  
Alex's work in accessible technology is widely recognized, with tools that enable users to interact with their digital world through voice commands, facial expressions, and much more.

1:18  
His commitment to accessibility has earned him honors as a Microsoft MVP and Forbes 30 Under 30 recipient.

1:25  
Before we dive in, Please remember that closed captions are available and a full transcript of the webinar will be provided after this session.

1:33  
Feel free to submit your questions in the chat throughout our YouTube premiere.

1:37  
To kick things off, let's get to know our speakers a little bit more.

1:41  
Kristian, here's a fun question to start.

1:43  
What's something you're passionate about outside of work or something people might not know about you?

1:48  
Alexa, I live in Portland, OR so one of our favorite activities around this area is hiking.

1:55  
And my wife and I are avid hikers and backpackers.

1:59  
So we enjoy getting out onto the trail, whether it be just for a short couple hour hike or overnight hikes up the side of Mount Hood up to glaciers.

2:09  
And a fun fact about that too, is that my wife and I, we celebrated at 24 years married this year and our high school sweetheart.

2:17  
So we've been together since we were 15/19/95 to date myself.

2:23  
And, and so we've been, that's just what we've done our entire lives.

2:27  
We started, I think our first date was a hike and then here we are now doing overnight backpack adventures together.

2:34  
That sounds absolutely amazing.

2:36  
And that area is so beautiful.

2:38  
So definitely a cool spot to be able to hike in your backyard.

2:43  
Alex, I'd love to hear your passion.

2:46  
Oh my gosh, I feel like every time I do one of these, I need to come up with a different answer.

2:50  
It's like I talked about the work my wife and I do in animal rescue.

2:54  
I've talked about playing guitar and sort of my passions for music in general.

2:59  
I've also talked about hiking and backpacking trips and stuff like that that my wife enjoy.

3:04  
I think my my newest recent one is I've, I've started to pick up a hobby that I was introducing for my brother for I'll say ironically, building custom mechanical keyboards.

3:14  
I say ironically because a lot of the work we do is replacing or augmenting keyboards, but I still, you know, personally find fun in the sort of tactile stuff of just building things from tiny pieces up to something cool.

3:25  
So I've got a whole bunch of different ones that range in all sorts of levels of clackiness, thalkiness to like truly silent like you're typing on a cloud.

3:35  
So I feel like I've got like a keyboard for every situation and vibe at this point.

3:40  
That actually is a new fun fact.

3:43  
I, I worked with someone who legitimately had one of those large enter buttons that he could just hit with his first and it was plugged in via USB and that's what he did.

3:54  
He would type and hit enter.

3:56  
That's awesome.

3:58  
There's that like level of satisfaction of doing that too.

4:01  
So I can see adding that in.

4:04  
That's awesome.

4:06  
Well, as we're talking about different keyboards, I think this kind of segues overall into the way that people work with different inputs and accommodations at work.

4:16  
And so today we're really talking about as we look ahead towards 2025, which I can't believe is coming up in just a few short months.

4:24  
So I'd love to know your thoughts.

4:26  
And Alex, you can kick this off.

4:28  
You know, how do you think businesses can stay ahead of compliance and really create environments that go beyond just meeting their requirements for accessibility?

4:36  
Yeah, I think there's there's a couple things looking over even just the next couple years is there is there seems to be constantly new compliance requirements coming out depending on what part of the globe you're on, which is exciting from the perspective of people that want to actually see accessibility being driven through businesses that sometimes compliance is required to get people to move.

4:56  
But what I think is exciting beyond the compliance updates, whether that's like the CVTA that's continuing to move through the US or even the European Accessibility Act, is people that are looking past like compliance requirements as the place to stop and instead are looking at that as a place to start and are trying to find ways to really create equitable experiences.

5:15  
There's a lot of new technology.

5:16  
I mean, it's the place in technology where we're focusing our research and work around applying generative AI capabilities, inferencing AI capabilities into a way to create accessible technology that ultimately is, is just creating entirely new experiences and, and unlocking experiences for folks that were previously left with an inaccessible tool, platform or app that they had to work with everyday.

5:41  
So I'm excited to see where AI can help fill some of the gaps, knowing that it's not going to be the thing that fills all of it.

5:49  
But I think there's massive potential in in what's coming around in the next couple years as it pertains to, you know, I think very quickly filling gaps that have existed for a long time.

5:59  
Yeah, I'm definitely with so much momentum that is going on in the space.

6:02  
Overall, I think AI plays a part in it, but I'm really excited to see what comes out of this year with just so many different platforms, hardware and software are just coming together for accessibility.

6:14  
So Kristian, I'd love to hear your take on this as well.

6:18  
Yeah, you know, I, I think listen, listening to colleagues with disabilities, listening to our customers with disabilities, I feel like if we do that the right way, everything falls in line, right?

6:29  
If we, if we prioritize the impact of the work that we do and the technology that we create, the, the laws in the check box exercises that often go into being conformant with accessibility guidelines and laws really just falls in, you know, I, I, I would hope that any organization that is making a, a, a genuine investment in this work is doing so first and foremost at the, at the priority of, of that impact, right?

7:00  
What is the impact of this situation for someone with a disability in their lived experience?

7:06  
You know, and then we're in a really unique position here at Salesforce because there's no law that says what we create has to be accessible.

7:12  
There's laws that say what our customers do with our products has to be accessible.

7:17  
You know, I think my job would be a lot easier if I could get my lawyer behind me to go to the product leaders or, or internal teams.

7:23  
It must be accessible.

7:25  
So everything that we do, you know, in this space, when we don't have a law that says what we're doing has to, has to be accessible.

7:31  
We get that opportunity to prioritize that work that is really impactful for people with disabilities of listening to the community and, and, and prioritizing the things that have impact.

7:43  
And then making it easy for those folks, right?

7:46  
Opening up channels of discussion, making it a, a place where people with disabilities can influence investments in this work and influence the prioritization that goes into it.

7:56  
And I think that when you do all of that, you know, I, I, I complete our AODA, which is the accessible interns and Disabilities Act, they require yearly conformance report.

8:07  
And I put that together for Salesforce as a whole at each year.

8:11  
And which, by the way, I would love it if, if every country had something similar because it really gives us an opportunity to reflect on the work we've done and, and realize that, you know, even though I'm not, I don't have AODA open every day.

8:24  
And I'm making sure we're checking all the boxes.

8:27  
The work that we're doing because of our colleagues and our customers with disabilities allows us to meet that.

8:31  
So I can, I can check those boxes, but I've done it with the priority of our colleagues and our customers first.

8:39  
You know, and, and I mentioned making it easy, having having conversations, making it easy to for colleagues and customers to get what they need to be able to tell us when they're not getting what they need and making that a really safe place.

8:54  
Yeah.

8:54  
And I know that you had mentioned before just moving beyond HR to approve accommodations and really changing the way that people are able to access the accommodations that they need, both on the product side by people giving you suggestions and things that they may need, but mainly on the accommodation side within Salesforce.

9:13  
So what would that look like at a broad scope for companies where they kind of change that model of how accommodations are adopted and allow their employees to have accommodations the way that they need?

9:27  
Well, first you have to create that environment of trust and trust is actually Salesforce's number one value, right?

9:33  
And I think that really needs to be any, any large organization that has as much data as we do for our customers.

9:39  
Trust is is paramount in every area that we do.

9:43  
And that really helps me in the accessibility space because the, you know, there's often times this security versus accessibility conversation and that applies to physical accessibility, right?

9:55  
And like places like airports, that applies to digital environments, internal environments of procuring technology or procuring assistive technology specifically.

10:05  
And so you create that environment of trust by by using trust as a, as a, as our guiding principle and respecting privacy of our colleagues, creating space for their independence and not having to ask managers for things.

10:21  
And, and then beyond that, right?

10:23  
So if you go to your manager and you say, hey, I have a disability and I, and I might need a different piece of such a technology, that's going to cost a significant amount of money.

10:33  
That's a really uncomfortable conversation for most people, right?

10:36  
A, why should you even have to let your manager know if you don't want to?

10:41  
And B, now you're feeling like a burden because you're, you're putting an undue cost or what date the manager could consider an undue cost onto their, onto their very limited T&E budget.

10:54  
You know, and so HR often gets involved in those conversations, right?

10:57  
Because the managers, they go, well, what you're asking here is an accommodation request.

11:01  
And now you have to disclose to another person.

11:03  
And that person's going to probably say, we'll go talk to a doctor.

11:07  
And now you have to have the conversation with your doctor.

11:10  
And I, and I think back to a story with my daughter, who my daughter Carly's 21 and has Down syndrome.

11:17  
And when she turned 18, Social Security wanted to have her check sent in my name or my wife's name.

11:25  
We're like, no, she's 18.

11:26  
She's an adult.

11:26  
She can manage her own money.

11:28  
They made us go get a doctor's note to to say that she could do that.

11:32  
And we're like, well, her doctor doesn't know anything about her ability to control finances.

11:37  
And that's very similar for a lot of professionals with disabilities that have to go to their primary care provider and get a doctor's note.

11:44  
The doctor isn't going to know anything about probably that person's day in and day out job duties and, and, or anything about the assistive technology and especially how that assistive technology is going to benefit them.

11:55  
So now you can imagine you've had conversations with your manager, you've had conversations with HR and, and, and by the way, none of them probably even know what you need, right?

12:05  
Like wedding TS going to be beneficial.

12:07  
And so at, at Salesforce, what we've done is we've created a well, first, we've made access a standard.

12:15  
So when you, when you go to meetings, you can expect there to be captions.

12:21  
When you go to large events, you can expect there to be sign language interpreters, right?

12:25  
You shouldn't even have to ask when you know that you're going to go to a large meeting.

12:28  
These are things that we've said as a standard, right?

12:31  
We build accessibility layers and number one, that's helped a lot of colleagues just know what they can expect #2 it's driven down operational cost because we don't have to field it.

12:44  
You know, for one large event with like 2000 employees, you might have received 1015 requests for captioning.

12:50  
And each of those, you know, requires a response, ticketing and all that.

12:54  
So what we've done is we made access to standard and we've done that by centrally funding our accessibility layers and the along with accommodations.

13:06  
And thankfully because of that we were able to build a pretty comprehensive assistive tech library.

13:11  
And that assistive technology library allows any colleague with a disability medical condition or, and this is the, the verbiage we use disability, medical condition or any other accessibility need.

13:27  
Because a lot of folks might not consider themselves to be disabled or have a medical need, right?

13:33  
They might just know that I, I need this access to be able to be productive and what I do, whether it's neurodivergent or others.

13:40  
And, and so we make that available.

13:43  
If you need any piece of assistive technology, you can put in a ticket and it goes right to our software asset management team provisions the license and, and then they send us the account.

13:56  
So I don't even know who's asking for it, but I know how many licenses would have been provisioned so that I can make sure that we keep a plentiful supply of any of these AT titles.

14:08  
And so I think, you know, when we talk about moving beyond HR, we're talking about moving beyond HR.

14:11  
We're talking about moving beyond dealing with your direct manager.

14:15  
We're talking about moving beyond the costs associated with AT and making it just so everybody can come into work and, and do their job they're hired to do and be their, be their best self while doing it.

14:26  
And, and I think that goes back to that creating these environments of trust.

14:31  
And you know, because it is on our base, these do cost quite a bit of money.

14:36  
We don't mind funding that, right?

14:38  
And and if it means our colleagues at the end of the day feel empowered to give what they need to to and show up as their full authentic selves, it's all worth it.

14:52  
That's a a great point, Kristian .

14:53  
And I love that you said that there's just that library of AT that people are able to access.

14:58  
Because what I often say for myself is that accessibility toolbox, right?

15:02  
Like there's not going to be that one-size-fits-all thing that you might need for your accessible needs.

15:08  
So it's having that toolbox of, of things that work the best for you.

15:12  
Alex, I'd also love to hear your take on this as well.

15:15  
Coming from our side.

15:18  
I think, you know, from my perspective, we, you know, we work with companies that are using US as an employee accommodation that are sort of at like each stage in that maturity model of, of handling accessibility, where clearly Salesforce is sort of at the, the, the far side of that, where things are done in a, in a really good and inclusive manner.

15:35  
But you know, we'll, we do work with folks that have what I think is a very poor standard, which is they don't necessarily even have tools available.

15:43  
They don't really have a process other than someone has to go to HR and actually request, you know, an ADA backed accommodation, a reasonable accommodation.

15:53  
And then the HR team is sort of like, well, now what?

15:56  
We need to go figure out what that even looks like.

15:58  
And we don't really know how to work with assistive technology or what these things are.

16:02  
And so they go and talk to folks about it.

16:04  
You know, the individual doesn't necessarily know what accommodation they need or what tools they use, especially for folks with temporary disabilities or injuries.

16:13  
Like they, they don't necessarily know like, Hey, I broke my arms like I need, I need something that can make it easier for me to, to, you know, type or use my mouse.

16:21  
And that process for the individual because of like all of those barriers that you can run up against, regardless of the, the stuff like, you know, the, the having to self ID and disclose to so many people to your point, Kristian, like even past that and the challenges there, it's like there's so many layers of red tape to get through that.

16:41  
It, it'll be months essentially before that that single person who's like, I just need something so I can, you know, keep doing my job the way I want to in a comfortable way or a productive way, actually get something.

16:51  
And so like, there's, there isn't really standards around like how you provide those.

16:56  
I think the sort of second stage past that that we see is like folks that have a really well handled culture around disability inclusion, where they have people whose jobs are focused on accommodations that have experience in supporting team members that are familiar with the system technology that's out there.

17:11  
You know, the company might might have an ERG that's actually focused, an employee resource group that's focused on inclusivity of individuals with disabilities and like helping sort of Co navigate that space.

17:23  
But there's still that time barrier and all that red tape to like you still have to make a request one way or another.

17:29  
You still have to disclose to at least a couple people on the way.

17:34  
And where we see the most successful companies like Salesforce get the most out of it is when it is at the core of what is being done across the organization that most people are informed on what disability inclusion is, what assistive technology is, what accessibility sort of looks like from an implementation perspective with their team members and within the products that they're building.

17:56  
And that that makes it an easy process without having to disclose.

17:59  
And that would, and essentially just removing as much of, of that red tape as possible to make people productive.

18:06  
And, and even outside of like just the accessibility space, there's these larger movements in, in human resources and team building that is just like, I think properly focus on just whatever an individual needs to be the most successful naturally is good for the business.

18:22  
So like, why wouldn't you want to just make it super easy to, to support your team members?

18:26  
Because if you need to spend, you know, a couple hundred, a couple $1000, whatever it is for the specific AT ultimately, like that person's productivity is going to be worth more to the business than the loss of, of productivity without nevermind deeper risks of like attrition from team members leaving and finding a new job at a place that is going to be more accommodating and more inclusive in general.

18:50  
Yeah.

18:50  
I think, you know, the, the sort of different stages that we see people go through.

18:53  
There's almost this trend of like, we have no idea what we're doing.

18:57  
We're but we're at a company size where like the government says we have to do the accommodation thing.

19:02  
If someone asks all the way to, you know, the sales forces of the world that I think are are tackling in the right way.

19:08  
You said that Alex earlier, sometimes it could take months.

19:13  
I read a quote and there's been a number of cases that that prove this quote, a delayed accommodation is a denied accommodation.

19:22  
And, and, and that really like, you know, I think when you're at the forefront and you know, you and I started talking about Cephable well before I had a colleague request it, right?

19:36  
So, you know, I think when you're at the forefront, you're out out of the conferences, you're learning about what a TS on the market and then you can find out about these things and begin on boarding before you even have someone asked for it, right?

19:48  
So be being ready for those and, and, and helping, you know, we do this work first and foremost to ensure our colleagues with disabilities can come in and be them their full authentic selves.

20:00  
But you know, surely a lot of the backing we get from employment legal and other teams is because there's also risk inherent with this work, right?

20:07  
And and if you, I mean, it's very little money comparative to the overall benefits strategy for most companies to provide assistive technology using someone dedicated to onboarding that right, because it's not easy to navigate onboarding and going through the all the red tape of bringing on a whole new vendor.

20:26  
The funding model, you know, like I mentioned is central.

20:28  
So it's easy for me to eat there.

20:29  
But you know, it's all worth it at the end of the day to not only provide our colleagues what they need to be successful, but also to show sales force that we can, we can alleviate the a lot of the concern around risk and providing accommodation because we don't even consider these accommodations, right?

20:48  
These are accessibility letters.

20:49  
If you need it, you get it definitely right.

20:53  
And I, and I totally hear you on, on the, the still needing to go through processes like typical procurement and information security and like that, that there is other expenses to onboarding new tools for sure, but that, that it's worth it in the end.

21:06  
I, I couldn't agree more with and being in the assistive tech space, I mean, like it's balancing that, that security and implementation is always hard.

21:15  
I mean, we've taken a very intentional approach from the beginning.

21:18  
You know, when we say, Hey, here's an app that you know, you're going to use your camera and your microphone to control stuff and it could be connected, you know, on your device that's connected to the Internet all day, you know, raises hairs on the the backs of certain people in information security.

21:31  
But being able to implement something that's just privacy first, like also makes that process a lot easier, at least from our experience now.

21:38  
Like you get your certifications out of the way and you build trust with with the right people.

21:42  
And that that whole sort of like built from trust everywhere, I think is definitely key.

21:48  
But there's a lot of assistive technologies that are new, that are nascent that haven't really taken that approach yet either.

21:56  
And I think it's something that us and the the space of building assistive technologies need to keep in mind as we're creating new experiences.

22:05  
Yeah.

22:06  
And as we talked about earlier, you know, there is such a boom of new AT that is available, new innovations, new standards.

22:14  
So what would your advice be for companies to keep up with these trends and innovations?

22:20  
Because when you're implementing these technologies, you also want to make sure they'll be a tool for the long term and the right tool for the employees that need them.

22:28  
So Kristian, I'd love to hear your thoughts here.

22:32  
You know, and I, and I think that this, this isn't necessarily such innovative, but it is definitely a, a trend that needs to be followed.

22:40  
You know, earlier, Alex, you mentioned the situation where someone broke their arm and like, how do they even know how to use a piece of assistive tech, right?

22:47  
It's one thing to have a library of assistive technology, but we need to also be able to help our colleagues learn how to use that assistive technology.

22:55  
So and find it by the way, so we, we partner with a, an organization that called inclusively, that has a, an AI routine platform so that any call, they can go into Salesforce using AI and find, type in some of the things that they're experiencing that or might be barriers to being as productive as they could be.

23:15  
And they can find a piece of the system technology that's going to support them.

23:19  
And, and now they've, now they find the Cephable

23:23  
Well, then how can they use Cephable, right?

23:24  
How do they, how do they understand the, the insurance and outs of it?

23:28  
We also work with an organization called Microlink that is staffed with people who are vocational rehab therapists, occupational therapists and, and they will actually train right.

23:40  
And if they don't know Cephable, they'll learn it and then they'll train the colleague on it.

23:44  
So I think it's, you know, stay on top of techs and trends.

23:47  
Is, is great to be able to have all these cool titles and pieces of assistive technology.

23:52  
You have to also be able to make it effective, right?

23:56  
And that, and that's especially important for that situation.

23:59  
Alex mentioned about the colleague who who broke their arm, right?

24:02  
I can't just say go use a piece of speech recognition software because they're not going to know how the heck to use it.

24:08  
So it's, it's being able to stay on top of the, the technology that's coming out, like I mentioned earlier, going to the conferences, walking around the vendor booths and, and finding organizations like like stuffable and really getting in and learning about what they can offer.

24:22  
And then learning about how easy it is that to use.

24:26  
And that, you know, the organizations that we other that we partner with that I mentioned, can go out and train that so that the colleague can actually use it and be productive.

24:36  
So again, I think it comes back to staying on top of techs and trends.

24:39  
Is, is, is comes back to the, the colleague first, right?

24:44  
The colleague with a disability, what's going to help them and, and listening to them, what, what do they need?

24:49  
And I think like in the situation we had where a colleague broke their arm and their account executive and, you know, they have Commission and they need to be able to close deals.

24:59  
And, and they came to us and said, hey, like I'm hearing from my leadership that I might just need to take a medical leave, but in my world, I can't do that.

25:07  
I can't take a medical leave.

25:08  
I need my Commission.

25:09  
I need to be able to pay my bills at the at the at the pay that I'm used to receiving.

25:15  
And so, and you can't just, hey, here's the really cool pieces of AT good luck, right?

25:20  
And so it's really listening to them.

25:22  
He, you know, he wasn't just talking about needing a piece of AT, he was also talking about needing support in being having high performance in his role.

25:32  
And, and that's what he came to us.

25:33  
He didn't come to us asking for AT, but we found the AT that was right for him.

25:38  
And then we found this or, you know, training organization and, and it holistically that provides that colleague what they need.

25:48  
And so it's again, it's about making sure the colleagues have what they need to be their full authentic selves.

25:56  
Definitely shout out inclusively and in microlinks.

26:00  
They're, they're two awesome organizations that, you know, we're seeing more folks, you know, sort of use their, their services to build that sort of well-rounded ecosystem too.

26:10  
I wanted to add just like one thing too around just like discovering the sort of trends and what's out there.

26:16  
Definitely want to echo everything that you just said, Kristian, But one of the things that we do as well as we work very closely with a lot of more sort of local organizations in the different state assisted technology programs.

26:28  
You know, the assisted technology professionals in those spaces, like they're, they're doing everything possible that you could imagine to like see what's out there from just even even simple stuff like setting up, you know, Google search alerts.

26:42  
If like something says like new cool assistive technology is out and they're they're sort of then going to investigate it.

26:49  
But what we found is that a lot of especially smaller businesses will work with their state assistive technology programs to essentially say like, Hey, I, I have a person or I have a couple people in need of assistive tech and I just need help figuring out how to wave find that that there are experts that are actually part of government funded programs that also can help bridge some of those gaps of knowledge.

27:10  
So even if you're, whether you're listening to us or or otherwise, like, you know, sort of learning about all the ways that you can really shape the the way that you're supporting your, your colleagues or your customers with disabilities.

27:23  
There are resources out there that are free and are part of the, you know, services from the state level at in all 50 states here in the US anyway that can teach you how to how to do these things too, to some extent.

27:37  
And then, yeah, there's there's a lot of different events.

27:38  
And I mean to shout out a couple, I mean, I'm enabling, which, you know, has a lot of great showcases of technology and you get to go meet a lot of the great people in the space from both the enterprise and the sort of assisted tech space.

27:49  
More on the enterprise side, like Disability In is also a great place to sort of understand what trends are going on.

27:55  
Atia is a great place to just see all of the, the tech that's sort of coming around cuz even if something's not showcased there, the other people in that space kind of know what's, what's trending and, and sort of how to find the right path too.

28:07  
So there's a lot of resources, but definitely recommend checking out your local state programs too, cuz if you're here in the US, they have a lot to offer and the CSUN AT conference as well.

28:22  
I think a great point that you both were bringing up is this ecosystem and this is something that, you know, when we're so tapped in to accessibility and we're so tapped into the tools that are available.

28:34  
But when you back up, there are so many people that aren't aware of what accommodations are available on the business side and individually.

28:42  
And I can say personally for myself, a few years ago before I was really involved in this space, it wasn't something that I was as tapped into.

28:51  
So what would some of your advice be for companies that are coming from, you know, building from the ground up, especially coming into this year?

29:00  
What should they be preparing for and what advice would you give as they start to build this ecosystem and AT library mentioned earlier this balance of security and accessibility.

29:13  
And I think especially with the AI right now, any piece of technology that we procure in Salesforce that touches AI at all, whether it's AT or or non AT software, that's going through a lot of extra scrutiny as it should.

29:31  
And, and we have an AI council, right, that also receives our internal AI efforts at Salesforce.

29:36  
And I think with AI especially, we've got this security and accessibility need to come together.

29:43  
And, and so in 2025, I'd love to have a lot more work in this space and a lot more meetings, a lot more conferences to talk about this, You know, as a professional that is in charge of onboarding all of our system tech, I have a very good relationship with our third party security team and our AI counsel that the questions are becoming harder, They're becoming more numerous.

30:08  
And I, and, and really it's, it's becoming, even though I've been doing this work for five years, it's, it's getting more strict and stringent each year.

30:19  
And this year, especially with AI, it's, it's almost doubled.

30:23  
And so finding, I think in 2025, finding a way to make that make it easier.

30:29  
And I and that's done honestly through champions.

30:32  
So, you know, find, find an executive in, in security, in your security teams that really gets it with assistive technology, you know, talk, talk to the talk to the leadership team, ask for meetings, talk to them, find out like, Hey, do you know, do you know anybody with a disability?

30:48  
Do you know what AT does and how it supports our colleagues and, and find your champion and then ask that champion to to help you make things easier to procure and to bring on board.

31:01  
And I think we've done that pretty well at Salesforce and especially even onboarding Cephable.

31:09  
It's been a really great experience working with Alex and Jason and, and being able to have, you know, immediate responses at times to, to these security folks, cuz they're, they're curious like this AT is gonna have access to mission critical data And what does that mean for Salesforce and, or this piece of AI is gonna like what's the data model?

31:32  
What's the large language model and, and, and where's that data being stored and, and the residency and all that?

31:38  
And there's a lot of things that come in that need quick answers so that people can feel comfortable.

31:42  
And so as a vendor of ATIA would ask any, you know, any of y'all that are watching this, that, that, that create AT be prepared for a lot more due diligence from security teams.

31:54  
And, and at the same time, you know, it go to this when you're working with an organization, you know, if you're working with an accommodations team, ask them, do you have an accessibility professional, you know, bring in folks that really have a, have a thorough understanding of, of the holistic nature and accessibility, not just the accommodation standpoint and find your champions, whether they be an accessibility or security.

32:21  
And I think if we could do that as an industry as a whole and bring those two areas together for me, that's probably my top part for 2025.

32:29  
And, and, and the, this balance of security and accessibility's got to find its way and so that they don't keep putting into each other.

32:43  
Really good point, Kristian.

32:45  
Alex, anything to add for 2025?

32:48  
I definitely want to sort of add to the from the other perspective for folks that are are looking at building accessibility tools, building assistive technologies, especially looking at AI to some extent this is echoing actually Kristian, where you said at the very beginning, but something that we very much stand behind and try to push on just about everyone we talked to is like actually include people with disabilities at like every single step of the way when you're building assistive tech.

33:12  
It feels obvious to say, but we see it's so often, especially folks using large language models or building new Gen.

33:19  
AI capabilities, is that the low level data is not inclusive and what we've seen in studies carries a ton of bias that's not favorable towards individuals with disabilities.

33:31  
So obviously build for what?

33:32  
If you're an individual with a disability, obviously for yourself and for as many people as possible.

33:38  
But if you're not an individual with a disability, surround yourself with the people you're building for.

33:42  
I mean, it feels obvious when you're talking about product development in general, but it's lost so often when it comes to folks building this sort of new age of AI powered assistive technology and accessibility tools.

33:53  
It's build with your users from, from step 0 essentially, but especially when it comes to data inclusion, you know, we talk about things like speech recognition.

34:02  
Well, how do you make speech recognition work better for an individual that has impaired speech or limited speech or just a, a different pattern in their speech than what a traditional speech recognition model is trained on?

34:15  
You know, if you use something that's out-of-the-box, like one of the cloud models or, or even some of the smaller, you know, on device speech recognition models, it's probably not gonna work as well for folks that don't have a quote UN quote typical or in the training model data set speech pattern.

34:31  
But those are things that like, you know, you're building assistive technology and like, you know, in our case, doing things like voice controls that are adaptive.

34:37  
If we built it with models that we couldn't constantly be enhancing for new types of speech, like the whole thing falls apart and hits a hits a wall really quickly.

34:46  
So be inclusive from the first step.

34:49  
And definitely if you're doing stuff with AI, be inclusive at every step in the data as well.

34:56  
Because you're either going to run into issues on the procurement side where people are wondering what your data is and where it's going and what's being used, or you're going to literally hit a functional limit of what you can do.

35:05  
So definitely my, my two cents when it comes to things to look at in in this trend of AI and assistive tech.

35:13  
Yeah, I appreciate your comment about speech recognition sometimes not understanding people with disabilities, right.

35:19  
Like it's my daughter who I mentioned earlier, who has Down syndrome.

35:24  
She has very wide vocabulary.

35:25  
But because of, you know, having a smaller mouth and a larger tongue, like a lot of people with Down syndrome have it, sometimes technology has a difficult time understanding her.

35:35  
Actually, often it does not sometimes.

35:37  
And so she used to yell at our at our devices through the house, just start yelling at him and like, why are you so much?

35:44  
It just doesn't understand me.

35:46  
And that's very frustrating, right?

35:47  
And she doesn't use any speech recognition now at all because of that.

35:51  
And if you think about that, right, that's leaving out one of the largest populations of people that would benefit by speech recognition.

35:58  
And, you know, because she has physical disabilities that you know as well.

36:02  
And so typing and, and, you know, her hands become very fatigued at times.

36:07  
And and so it's just really there's a lot there that needs to happen.

36:11  
And Alex, I can't appreciate you enough for mentioning that bringing people with disabilities from day one, because surely if they had right, someone who has a non typical speech is like that, maybe they maybe these devices would understand her better and she would be able to use them.

36:27  
And and you know, there's this, there's a large, I think it's like I've wrote a billion dollars or more in spending power people with disabilities.

36:37  
And so why wouldn't you include them, You know, when you're making technology to $1.3 trillion is the global spending power of people with disabilities.

36:46  
Yeah, sorry.

36:48  
I've got, I've got a lot of these like fun facts and stats just constantly sitting in the back of my head.

36:54  
Yeah, that's a lot.

36:55  
So like exactly why wouldn't you right.

36:57  
Want to tap into that and, and, and when you make it accessible for people with disabilities, you're probably also going to make it, it it's probably going to account for people whose English is the second language, right.

37:09  
And like a like the curb cut thing.

37:12  
Yeah, definitely it's moving.

37:14  
Just, you know, accessibility really is usability for for everyone.

37:18  
A big example that I always use is closed captions because I don't need closed captions, But do I watch 99% of TV with them on anyway?

37:25  
Yes.

37:26  
And it really just creates that adoption.

37:28  
I I just don't think people realize how often things that initially are built in for accessibility really just benefit everyone.

37:36  
So I think that that's something in a overall theme.

37:39  
I would just love to start to see from that ground up.

37:42  
And I know we touched upon accommodations a lot, but Kristian, to your last point, you know, just about everybody, this marketplace of individuals that have this huge spending power and also want to interact with certain platforms and want to be able to shop and bank and do all these things.

38:00  
Let's wrap up today with, you know, what are some steps that businesses can take to ensure that their platforms are inclusive?

38:09  
I think Alex hit the nail on the head.

38:10  
First off, hire people with disabilities and, and, and not necessarily into the role that a lot of typical roles of, you know, hiring accessibility professionals that have disabilities.

38:21  
Hire your lawyers with disabilities, hire your developers, your the designers, your executives, right in every role.

38:31  
And naturally you're just going to have a much more inclusive product and processes and policies.

38:38  
And so, you know, and we mentioned inclusively earlier, they also have a they have a job board service where people with professionals with disabilities have posted their resumes and you can go source candidates with disabilities, hire people with disabilities throughout your organization.

38:54  
Build that in work with your recruiting teams and just naturally, right.

38:59  
So I, I have a colleague, Federic, who works with our on our recruiting efforts.

39:04  
And naturally, when we hire people with disabilities into all these different roles, my job becomes easier because when I go, right, A, I'm able to go find my champions that we talked about earlier.

39:14  
And B, the the you have those people in those very early planning meetings that are raising their hand and saying, hey, what about accessibility?

39:22  
And and that's part of what Alex is talking about, you know, having people with disabilities involved in much earlier.

39:29  
And that doesn't necessarily have to be 1 role.

39:31  
It could be everybody in the room, right?

39:32  
Any, any role in any team.

39:37  
Yeah, such a great point, Alex.

39:40  
Any additional thoughts on that as well?

39:44  
Yeah.

39:44  
I think the one of the things that we're starting to see is especially in the digital space like folks that are looking past like the compliance standards of like WCAG and you know the the basics of like Canon individual that's a screen reader user like navigator site or is someone who is deaf and hard of hearing.

40:05  
Being able to actually receive the right content in a way that works best for them into a level of like what I think is truly equitable access.

40:13  
It's sort of the way I like to frame it, where you're bringing your abilities to whatever the platform is, the app, the game, the tool, the physical device, and being able to experience it in a way that works best for you at the same rate or pace or comfort as anyone else does too.

40:33  
And you know, it's an area, especially where where we're focusing on our development team for being able to enable that sort of level of equitable access to basically say to an app developer or a video game developer, you know, if you want to bring in more folks with disabilities as your users, as your customers, as your players, well, we can help you build in the ability for them to bring their personalized controls to that space.

40:55  
And I think that makes a big difference when it comes down to even things like speech recognition, again, like if I have a speech recognition model that works best for me and I've got that all sorted out and I've learned how to use it and I can't bring it to those those places and I have to use a different form of voice controls or speech recognition.

41:11  
Well, you hit that limit again, right?

41:13  
You're there.

41:14  
There's still a barrier.

41:15  
So I think that personalized accessibility versus like meeting the, the compliance requirements or the standards requirements is, is where we're starting to see trends go from the same types of companies that are the early adopters that are inclusive, you know, entirely throughout their, their development process.

41:34  
It's, it's that next step of, of inclusivity.

41:38  
I think I have two examples of things we're doing in that space.

41:42  
One is at our Dreamforce conference and impact even our world tours.

41:48  
We have a lot of theater environments, which is your the session, the breakout sessions is happening in an open air theater with another theater right next door and then maybe a whole bunch of booze and it's very loud and over stimulating often.

42:02  
And so we do silent disco in a lot of those.

42:05  
And sure, you could go up and grab the headphones that you know are provided, but we now this year we went live with the ability to use your own device.

42:13  
So you can go to a website or click the QR code and use your own device.

42:18  
So that means obviously folks who are blind or low vision especially can access the headphones themselves aren't accessible because they have buttons and you don't know what those buttons do.

42:28  
So you can use your own device.

42:29  
Similar registration into our offices.

42:32  
Previously you had to go to an iPad that and enter all your details.

42:37  
Now you can actually access an environment where you can scan a code or go access a website through an abbreviated URL and use your own device to register to enter one of our offices.

42:49  
And so I love that Alex personalizing it and making it so people can use what what they've built to be comfortable and confident in their whether they're attending conferences or traveling to offices or using technology.

43:03  
Those are two awesome use cases.

43:04  
I was not aware.

43:05  
Those are cool.

43:07  
Yeah.

43:08  
I love the idea of a silent disco too, because I think people always have their ideas of what an ideal playlist is.

43:13  
But if you plug in your own, you can have an even greater time.

43:17  
So there you go.

43:19  
But I think you guys brought up just so many great points today and I'm just really looking forward to seeing where all these trends are headed.

43:28  
I think our conversation today just really sets up so many people, whether it's on the accommodation side, the product side, or that interweaving of both, which we're definitely seeing from your examples at Salesforce Kristian.

43:40  
So it's really awesome to see and I'm looking forward to following along with your journey with everything Salesforce is doing and just seeing the difference that it truly can make because when you know the entire ecosystem of your product and your company's inclusive, it just truly goes a long way.

43:57  
So thank you both for joining us today and looking forward to keeping this conversation going together.

44:03  
Thank you, Alexa.

44:05  
Thank you, Alex.

44:08  
Awesome.