

## Hiring on Autopilot: How to Prepare Yourself and People with Disabilities for AI Employment Practices

Recorded Tuesday, March 16, 2021. [Listen to it here.](#)

ANNOUNCER: 00:00:04

Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire present **Hiring on Autopilot: How to prepare Yourself and People with Disabilities for AI Employment Practices**

ELAINE KATZ: 13:03

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to Hiring on Autopilot: How to prepare Yourself and People with Disabilities for AI Employment Practices. I'm Elaine Katz senior Vice President of grants and communications at Kessler Foundation. I would like to thank the University of New Hampshire, our partners in the production of national trends and disability employment monthly jobs report for providing our technical assistance for today's webinar.

There are instructions on the screen to activate closed captioning and any sound changes. To select sound, you are going to select the speaker you want by clicking on the up arrow next to the audio settings and select one of the options. For closed captioning, click on the closed caption and select show subtitle or subtitle to view or you can select view transcript to get a running transcript of the captions. Next slide, please.

We spotlighted the ASL interpreter today for accessibility best practices and there are two Interpreters, and they will be switching off during the webinar. For individuals using a computer and you want to see multiple speakers alongside the presentation, you will go to the view side by side mode, hit view. It is in the top right corner. The webinar is being recorded and will be posted later.

As an attendee of this webinar to ask Q&A questions, you will use the Q&A box on the webinar screen we will be reviewing the questions and the last segment of the webinar is being held for Q&A. If there are further questions after the webinar contact us at [KFgrantprogram@kesslerfoundation.org](mailto:KFgrantprogram@kesslerfoundation.org). Next slide, please.

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Welcome to our virtual symposium. I'm Elaine Katz senior Vice President of grants and communications at Kessler Foundation. I'm a white female, short brown hair. I'm wearing blue eyeglasses, red jacket, blue shirt and a colorful beaded necklace.

Our symposium began as a lot of initiatives during COVID, because bringing people together for live events we couldn't do, so it is unique opportunity to offer this symposium. The work at the Kessler Foundation changes the lives of people with disabilities with funding initiatives for employment. Our research is to improve cognition for individuals with stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury and multiple sclerosis. We test new interventions and gathering data that can be used in treatment.

Our grant making has invested close to \$49 million in the past 13 years in New Jersey and nationally. Our targeted grant making has created job creation, job development in various sectors and businesses, but most importantly, we are the leading funder of innovator approaches that can create systemic change by creating economic opportunities for people with disabilities.

Today's webinar is a continuation of the fall program on the future of the work and influence of artificial intelligence of employment for people with disabilities. The robots are coming as an article in New York times proclaimed. Recent advances in AI and machine learning has been accelerated during COVID as businesses look to cut expenses. What is the biggest chunk of all expenses? You might have guessed it, paying people and labor costs, so is there is a concern to been alarmed as society embraces AI for recruiting, hiring and training practices.

Although you may not be seeing or think you're not seeing the effects of AI in your community, large and small employers from Amazon to your neighborhood grocery are looking to employing these technologies. We hope today's program

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better prepares you for the coming of AI by understanding the risk of this technology and for people with disabilities to be recruited on capability and potential. Next slide, please.

I'm excited to hear from our panel of experts, all known leaders in disability. I would like to introduce Debra Ruh who will lead you there a lively program with each of our speakers. Debra, you can turn on your camera now. Debra is a global inclusion strategist, market influencer, internationally recognized keynote speaker, successful entrepreneur, and exceptional mother.

Debra is a host of a popular program "human potential at work" and she is an author of three book, inclusion branding, tapping into hidden capital and finding your voice using social media. Debra is frequently interviewed by various media outlets with over 400,000 followers across all mediums of social media. Debra is as co-founder of the award-winner access chat, one of the largest tweet chats with 8 billion tweets. Debra, take it away.

DEBRA RUH: 06:22

Thank you so much, Elaine. Thank you so much for everyone joining us on this important topic. I live in Virginia and we are having problems with Wi-Fi, so I'm going the turn off my video during this event just to make sure I can be as clear as possible. Next slide.

As we're moving slides, as Elaine was asking me who were the right people to invites to be on this panel, I thought well, I know three brilliant people who are adding tremendous value to these conversations the first one is Heather Dowdy. Heather Dowdy leads the partner strategy for the Microsoft artificial intelligence for accessibility. Heather is responsible for nurturing global partnerships with startups, researchers and NGO's. Let me stop to say health, will you turn on your camera? Thank you, welcome so much. Heather is as an engineer. Very impressed with women who are engineers.

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So, Heather is responsible for nurturing the growing number of global partnerships with startups, researchers, and NGO's and providing grantees with resources to scale the impact of technology for people with disabilities. She has 15 years of experience and developing and demonstrating accessible technology in mobile, web, and artificial intelligence. Heather Dowdy is passionate about connecting the dots across disability, race, and tech. As the oldest daughter of deaf parents, she is fluent in American Sign Language. She loves using the design thinking process to create solutions that empower marginalized communities and improve use ability for everyone. A strong believer in empowering communities through education and she is the co-founder of Microsoft ninja camp and board member of deaf kids CODE providing STEM leadership training to high school students. I am turning off my camera. Welcome to the show today. Let me give you time to introduce yourself briefly.

HEATHER DOWDY: 08:49 Thank you, Debra and thank you, Kessler Foundation for having me for such an important topic. I remember the panel back in the fall and I was thinking, yes, that a conversation I want to be a part of because I love talking about innovation. As Debra described, I love to partner with the many innovators around the world at Microsoft with our AI for accessibility program and these innovators are leveraging AI in order to empower people with disabilities. So, I could talk about innovation and the future accessibility and AI all day.

RUH: 09:34 Thank you, Heather. Our next panelist is Frances West and we'll ask Frances to turn on her camera. I'm very proud to have worked for Frances West far long time. She is an international known thought leader, speaker, strategy advisor, and women-in-technology. Her human-first approach to leadership and focus on digital inclusion comes from her journey as a first-generation, non-English speaking immigrant and her career as a technology executive including IBM's first chief accessibility officer and I think she was the first woman to be named the

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chief accessibility officer. She is an appointed faculty instructor at the University of Massachusetts medical school and holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in Boston in recognition of her work in accessibility, research and digital inclusion. She is the author Hoff "authentic inclusion" and her book isle amazing. Highly recommend it. She is founder of Francis west co-and global strategy advisory company. Welcome to the program and tell us more about your work.

FRANCES WEST: 11:02 Thank you very much, Debra for that introduction. Thanks Kessler Foundation for bringing this incredible panel together. Debra and I and many of us have gone back way back many years. I think all of us were in the technology field and this is the time that the technology and the humanity have to come together and this topic gives us a chance to look at the most interesting and emerging technology that is going to affect us all. While it has a lot of challenges, but it is at the beginning of a brand-new technology that is full of promises, so I'm extremely honored to be on this panel and also delighted that we will be able to have a great session with some to feel colleagues that I work with and have, you know, huge respect for, so thank you again.

RUH: 12:01 Thank you, Frances. Certainly, last but not least is my partner in crime from the United Kingdom. He is joining us from outside of London, Neil Milliken. I'm excited to partner with Neil on the award-winning and verified by Twitter access chat. Neil is the global head of accessibility at Atos and the scientific community and Atos distinguished expert. He, as I mentioned, co-founder of AXSchat, the world's largest tweet chat, I believe. He is on the board of Directors for world institute on disability. He is non Exec chair of the board at the genius within and chair of the diversity board of institute for coding. Neil was named in the top 10 of the Shaw trust power list in 2018 and named D&I practitioner of the year in 2019 disability smart awards. For those who are not familiar with a, to it is a multibillion-dollar brand located in France, but they have employees all over the

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world, including 10,000 employees in the United States.  
Welcome to the program. Do you want to tell the audience a little bit about yourself?

NEIL MILLIKEN: 13:36 Thank you. Obviously, my head is so large they can't fit through the door. Yes, I work for Atos. We are a digital transformation outfit that goes everything from landing space probes on comets for the space agency, designing quantum computers and delivering the Olympics and the Paralympics to the mundane stuff with helping people with their day-to-day digital workplace experience, but that is not that mundane because that is where the rubber hits the road and that is where inclusion happens.

I'm delighted to be joining you with Debra and Francis and all people I respect greatly, and I am looking forward to the discussion today.

RUH: 14:28 OK, great. Thank you so much, Neil. I'm going to ask questions one at a time of the panelists and if the other panelists want to respond also to the question they can just let know or ping me in chat. We're going to start with Heather. Heather tell us about the biggest opportunities with accessibility within AI.

DOWDY: 14:54 Thanks, Debra. With AI, it's here, right? It is around us whether that is speech recognition or translation or image recognition, but there is such an opportunity, I believe, to disrupt what has been when we look at accessibility and when we look at disability history.

Particularly, because we're here to talk about employment, I mean the unemployment rate for people with disabilities has been the same for 30 years. It is time to disrupt that and AI presents an opportunity to do just that because it is technology that gives us options and flexibility, and so, I'm really excited to think more about what solutions can come about that can empower and support people with disabilities when it comes to AI.

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When I think about disrupting, I think about an opportunity, not just to create tech for being cool, but to change the culture, one of my favorite projects to talk about within the AI for accessibility program is a project by researchers at Vanderbilt University and they are developing a virtual job coach for people living with autism to prepare for job interviews.

Their very much job coach can detect stress levels and eye gaze, and it is the job coach that actually adjusts the interview based on how the candidate is doing, and what that means is it is us, the environment that adjusts.

So many times, we talk about, well, the person with the disability should adjust, but here is an opportunity for technology to support and allow us to make the environment more accessible, so I think there are lots more opportunities to change what has been and certainly to empower people with disabilities through AI.

**RUH: 17:20** Excellent points, Heather. Frances, I'm going to go to you next. How does AI affect the entire eco process beyond just recruiting? Maybe it is not that easy, but I know you got this.

**WEST: 17:36** Thank you for the question. I agree with what Heather just said that this is a time for huge disruption. We have heard a lot of, frankly not so pleasant or not so positive news about AI's impact on employment, in this case, we're talking about people with disabilities.

I can tell you that AI employment kind of bias issues exist for everybody. Any underrepresented population, if you look at the latest there was an article published by AI Now Institute out of New York City. The whole 36 pages about how women are being discriminated against by AI.

So, the good news is we are in this together, so to speak. AI as a technology absolutely needs the community participation, which is a great thing, because historically when you talk about



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technology innovation, it is usually a few people and most cases men in the garage or in a back office coming out with technology that changes the world. AI trying to mimic human this is one technology that all of us need to participate, so this is a great opportunity all of us can play a role.

Going back to your question specifically, there is AI being used in a positive way today and enabling people with disabilities to participate in employment. Just this morning, I tutored about this startup company called Ira. They used remote agent along with AI, for example, to help people in the beginning the application is to help people who are blind or low vision to navigate to go shopping or do things like that.

Since then, Ira has started an employment initiative to help, for example, a person to prepare for interviews and also some of the interviews involve testing, so again, using remote agent plus AI, kind of a combination to assist a person with a disability in the interview process.

There are many aspects of the employment process from identifying the job through a job board that the AI can help to funnel, filter all the way to preparing for the employment to actual employment and post-employment in the workplace. When we talk about AI, we should think of an entire ecosystem and where some of the issues that we need to keep an out our, but where are the places that we can deploy AI and help with productivity.

RUH: 20:45 Excellent points. I want to bring in people -- I want to bring in the audience when possible and we have at question and so Neil, I'm going to ask you to come on, because this was a question, I was going to ask Neil anyway. I should have done it at the beginning, so I apologize. What specifically is AI and she goes on to say what steps can we take to help facilitate success for those who we work with who have psychiatric disabilities? Neil, you don't have to answer the last part of it until -- we can do that later, but we should talk what is AI? What are we



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talking about here? If you want to dig into the other part of the question, we can do that now or we can do that later.

MILLIKEN: 21:32 OK, I think there are multiple definitions of what constitutes artificial intelligence. We had an interview with Joanna Bryson who was in the Google's AI ethics committee that imploded. She defined AI extremely broadly, which essentially was anything that humans invented that enabled other humans to do stuff that they would not be able to do before. It was taking away the effort of doing something. She even defined power steering as AI because people who were not big and burly to be able to drive. Most of us understand AI to be something different to that. It is built upon machine learning, and that really when we think about whether something is intelligent or not, we're thinking of this virtual assistance that is becoming more human-like. It is not human. Essentially, it is the collection of these different machine learning tools, the speech recognition, the text-to-speech and the combination of them put together in a way that becomes quasi-intelligent, so we have these rules-based systems that enable decision making or processes to be carried out.

They facilitate greater speed and greater efficiency, but as people mentioned with speed and efficiency also comes risk because the processes have predicated on data, and those data sets contain historical bias and that is one of the challenges that we have as practitioners in the space is understanding the bias and trying to work to remove the bias.

For psychiatric disabilities, I'm not a specialist in psychiatric disabilities, but I have a background around cognitive accessibility and there are definitely elements that can help simplify stuff. IBM is one of the, or that first created text simplification tools that used AI to remove the complexity out of text that helps people like myself with dyslexia.

As Frances mentioned there are tools to helping people with difficulties in the hiring process with their confidence. I will

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open it up for others at this point, because I don't feel necessarily qualified to talk about the psychiatric side of things.

WEST: 24:39 I would add one example. I know there was research using AI, analyzing a speech pattern, which one of the key technology outcomes of AI is a lot of natural language processing and as Neil said simplification is one and recognition of pattern is another strong attributes of artificial intelligence. In this case, there was research done on a speech pattern that can predict the onset of schizophrenia, so that is one example of how AI is helping with psychiatric disabilities, it is in the beginning, but it is promising.

RUH: 25:39 I agree. There is a lot of work that needs to be done. Heather, let me ask you another question, one thing we want to talk about is the current applications and how it is working right now with the recruiting and the HR and all of those different things.

What are your thoughts going back to, you know, what we are living with COVID-19, what are your thoughts on learnings from COVID-19 that might influence the current technology trends that AI can help solve?

DOWDY: 26:22 Yeah, there is so much that we're learning about COVID and the pandemic globally. I think it will certainly impact technology and the future of work for some time to come. I think that COVID has certainly highlighted that equality is not equity. We're all kind of lumped into this pandemic together, but yet there have been inequities in health and racial justice that has surfaced during this pandemic.

When it comes to the workplace there is certainly an opportunity to think about flexibility. The disability community has been working on flexibility and with the pandemic we have seen it is possible and there are assistive technologies that can help to make working remotely more inclusive and accessible. When I think about being able to turn on captions for a

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meeting, being able to provide multiple inputs, not just using your voice, but chat and text, this again, points to how well flexibility, not only serves people with disabilities, but it serves us all in living in a time such as the pandemic.

I want to point out the the question earlier, before the pandemic, the mental health and mental health disabilities or the number one growing disability in the world and with the pandemic, screenings for anxiety and depression have increased almost 400% according to mental health America. There certainly is an opportunity for us to have a broader conversation about mental health and how technology can help. I'm encouraged that researchers are starting to think about in an innovation space and we certainly looked at some partners and projects that try to figure out exactly what is the intervention and support that could be delivered to the person with a mental health condition or disability at the right time.

And so to Neil's point that is where AI sort of shines it processes lots of data and can model a little bit of the future based on that, and certainly could help us in coming up with more solutions.

**RUH: 29:35** Well said. Well said, Heather. The next question I'm going to go to Neil. I'm going to dove tail off what Heather was saying, how can AI help recruiters to make the process more equitable and diverse, but what about the candidate with disabilities as well and then I'm going to move to Frances. Thank you.

**MILLIKEN: 29:52** I think there is a double-edge sword here, because there has been a lot of AI tools that have been designed to speed up the hiring process that haven't really thought that much about disabilities at all. They are saying they are removing bias from the recruiting process, but they haven't thought about disability bias, so there is danger there.

At the same time, there are tools that are positively impacting the opportunities for people to apply. So, for example, when you change the language of the job description and the way

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that you describe what success looks like in a role that doesn't require the standard way of describing, "must be able to stand for 8 hours" be a corporate commander, and all of this kind of stuff, removing that language and we have been working in my own organization with an organization, removing that language, removing the sort of the gendered language and the descriptions around how we describe the roles and what we require from people has had an impact on whop is applying for the jobs.

If you describe a role in a very sort of macho way requiring lots of physical effort, it makes it sound unattractive. You're saying to some people, we expect you to behave in this certain way, whereas, when you start using language that talks about outcomes rather than describing how you might do the role then it changes stuff. The process of writing job descriptions is long winded. In an organization of ours where we have 10,000 people, we have lots of job descriptions. One way to make the difference is use AI to go through and scroll the job descriptions and suggest changes and make them.

The other things we can do is things like helping schedule, helping capture the information for people requiring adjustments, making sure we do all of these things quickly. We capture all of this stuff, so I think that is a positive side. I do think there are lots of other things that still need to be thought out, because where we're doing things like using computers to look at people's body language, we may be excluding large parts of the neuro divergence population who don't look at the camera the same way, don't interact in the same way. Where we are doing timed tests, we may be making assumptions about people.

Also, when we're combing through CV's, we use AI's to comb through CV's, we may pick up spelling mistakes, which may be irrelevant to the role that the person is carrying out, but discarding a candidate straight away. How we apply them will determine what the impact is.

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RUH: 33:34 Agreed. There is so much we're still figuring out. Frances, I'm going to ask a question from one of the participants that goes - it is close to what I was going to ask you. Joseph Riddle says in hiring employment, how should we weed the likely biased data that the AI is learning from an order to ensure AI decisions in the future are equitable?

WEST: 34:04 This is a very big question. To edit out the bias like Neil said take, you know, a combination of the thinking logic, whoever writes the recruitment application and data sets being fed into the AI machine and the data set could include an example of key words, you know, does it have an intentional or unintentional bias towards that.

Right now, a lot of these innovation occur with the technology company, and this is one of those areas, like I mentioned earlier, there is an increasing awareness of a voice and frankly not just noise, but voice from the communities about how AI, you know, bias are against any underrepresented population can geometrically impact, a negative impact. So, every technology company, especially the big ones, I know IBM, Microsoft, Google, everybody is re-examining their AI strategy, right. There is a trust computing, there is fairness computing, there is ethical computing, so that is a good thing that says everybody is aware that we have to do a lot more than just pushing this technology out, but that does not stop the startups in trying to adapt or adopt AI technology and go to print, so to speak.

This is one area earlier that we talked about it is not just the technology company's responsibility and role in kind of shepherding AI to be fair. It is everybody's role. When I say "everybody" we have to work with the government to make sure the policy has its legislative power, but also as a community level or at the University level, academia has to come together to put, frankly, not just pressure, but design of this methodology to the tech companies and involving real people, real people with disabilities in this kind of use case, design and testing all of their applications that is the only way

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you can step by step to -- in the best ways scenario is to prevent bias being built in, but if the bias is built in because the data set is not correct or comprehensive then add to that data set.

It is not an easy question to answer, because it really has to be a holistic approach.

**RUH: 37:16** Agreed, agreed. There are two questions from the same person and I'm going to talk about that. They are great questions. The recruiting process is now online, and not person centered. A majority of the intellectual and cognitive disability talent don't have a college degree. Supported employment agencies often target this talent pool for minimum-wage job, stocking, cleaning, is there an appetite for companies to invest on-the-job training and apprenticeship for IDD talent, not just autism to be hired. You can decide by show of hands who wants to take these on, but there is no standards to certify that ATS is ethical or has limited bias. I just want to say I was actually reading is AI the enemy of diversity and here is a quote. AI skeptics roll out a 2018 story about Amazon, which scrapped an AI-driven tool because it was making choices in favor of male applicants for software development positions. Because the algorithm was based on data from past success story, the majority was white and male, it gave lower scores to candidates with female attribute, such as those who attended an all-women's college. I thought his point about whitening up a resume is funny and scary. Who wants to take this on. OK, Neil, we will go. You.

**MILLIKEN: 39:21** I will take the first one. So, because my organization is actually active in this space, so we are taking on placements and during COVID for supported placements in the UK called can kick start where we are supporting neuro divergent candidates to come in and work with us. It is not just an autism-hiring program there is a wide range of different neuro divergent conditions. We are doing this.

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We recognize that the standard process does not work for everyone. I had my fair share of bad interviews as one of those people that you class as having an intellectual disability. So, I fully support flexibility in the way that we assess and hire people whether that be through job trials or alternate means. I think there is no single solution to this, particularly with cognitive even within the cognitive accessibility community, different conditions conflict and contrast, so what might work for one group won't work for another. Having that flexibilities, having that understanding that you may need to assess the multiple modalities is really important. But also, just running these programs and making sure you get people in the workplace where people can understand there is value and these people add to the life of the company, to the ideas of the company, the perspectives they bring are different and that in of itself is valuable. It is a worthwhile effort.

So, I think yes, we see the janitorial jobs and I'm keen to find ways to move away from disability employment programs being at that low level. What we need to find is careers, what we need to be supporting is careers and actually then artificial intelligence, once you're through the door, through tools like speech recognition, which has supported me through my career. I would not have gotten my MBA without speech recognition then it is useful. You can have the assistance, the Cortana's of this worlds, the auto suggestions, all of the spell checking and the grammar checking, and all of this stuff helps you once you're through the door. We have to open the door in the first place and the challenge is with some of the innate biases and the reinforcement of company culture, because we already defined success. Frances once said I'm as 42L. She described me as a 42L, because I'm male of a certain height and probably certain chest size. You were being generous at the time. I probably fit that jacket now. I fit that white male, mid 40's, trope of what a leadership looks like and we need to be thinking for a successful organization -- I do apologize -- essentially, we need to be taking much greater care of making sure we are diverse, and we have go from the widest pool of people, so we get the widest talent and the widest perspective.



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That means the AI data sets that we are training from now don't cut it, so we need to work to build better ones and that means working in consultation and collaboration with the community.

RUH: 43:32 Well said.

MILLIKEN: 43:33 Speaking of community that was Caroline Casey ringing me.

RUH: 43:44 Elaine made a comment in the message to me that sort of goes along with the drop we need to whiten our resumes and I don't know if anyone wants to take that on. I will say I don't want us to whiten our resumes, but at the same time it is important for us to get jobs and so sometimes we have to understand the limitations of what we're working with and right now there is a lot of changes taking place and I don't know Frances and Heather, if you want to weigh in on that. Go ahead, Heather and Frances looks like she does as well. Heather let's go with you first then Frances.

DOWDY: 44:24 Definitely. I love the questions coming through. Pipeline is important and both questions are related in the sense that I tend to say tech is as biased as the people making it. We really have to sort of shift the way we look at bias to be more of a spectrum and figure out how to reduce it. If someone said your website is accessible, you have to test that in order to know that.

I get wary of solutions that are like, this is going to be no bias. I think that when it comes to the question about, you know, resume and what has worked historically, it goes back to data, which Frances talked about. The truth is there is what we consider a data desert when it comes to inclusive data sets that include people with disabilities. So, we will need organizations that can collect more data. We will also need practitioners at companies to really ask questions about the solutions, the AI solutions and the decisions that are being made.

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If the AI system is set up the individual and decision making, what data sets were included? We started talk about data sheets in the industry, where you can dig in to see if the AI model was, the machine learning model was trained on an inclusive data set. There's a lot to be said here about the fact that, yeah, at the surface, AI is great at modeling the future based on the past, based on history, and I think in order to change that, because history has not worked well for marginalized communities, including people with disabilities then we're going to need to make sure these data sets are inclusive and the disability community are involved in collecting that data and there is transparency and accountability, also holding the value tension of balancing privacy.

RUH: 46:59 Frances?

WEST: 47:01 Oh, yeah, so I do want to say the question earlier was about do we need to whiten the resume. There is beginning to have a movement to move away from the traditional concept of resume. I can point to the example in this case, IBM, a former chief executive officer started this movement called the new-collar initiatives. So, historically, we have white collar job, blue collar jobs and now there is a new concept of new-collar job, you don't have to have a college degree. The focus is on your ability and this is one thing that AI, as overtime can help, because like Neil and Heather says, AI is good in processing large amount of data and as we go further and further into the future, we can begin to categorize people's abilities, not resumes. In the not so distance future, we will be able to match in people's abilities and we're beginning to see some beginning of that. There is employment company, a new company called inclusively using artificial intelligence as a backbone focusing on people with disabilities employment understand what their abilities are and what, instead of calling accommodation, they call it success enablers to mix it up, so they can present to the hiring companies at different kind of profile or narratives and stay in the past.

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That is why I'm bullish about AI because we can change the old thinking like resumes. You probably know universities are throwing away SAT's tests now, I think Harvard next year, their mission does not look at SAT as a standard test. We know a lot of people with disabilities are not in the bell curve in the standard. In my way of thinking, they are edge workers, edge thinkers because they are unique and different. Again, these are just a couple of examples that I think are the trend of technology and the trend of employment as a stance is beginning to change and if we harness the power of thinking and participation of the strong disability community then we have a change -- we have a real good chance to shape the future differently.

**RUH: 50:10** Well said, Frances. I would like to ask and this is a great question, how can people with disabilities to make sure their voices are being heard? I know there are initiatives all over the world to make sure we are included in the data sets, but I want to see if you have any specific things you want to address with that question or comment.

**DOWDY: 50:43** It is an opportunity for community partners to help in serving the disability community and collecting this data. Again, it is important to be principled in doing so, because we have to balance privacy, but be transparent when we're creating inclusive data sets. I think some folks are more comfortable disclosing their disability to an NGO because there could be implications. Being clear about how that data is being used and the benefits of making these inclusive data sets is important, but I do think there is an opportunity for community partners to get involved and sternly companies are looking at it and how we address it with the products that people are using, and really giving people the opportunity to opt in on whether or not they want to share and make those solutions better.

**RUH: 51:52** Well said. Well said. Neil, do you mind answering the question that an anonymous attendee sent. Many individuals have

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trouble using speech to text because of their accents or speech is not accessible by the tool. Any tips or suggestions?

MILLIKEN: 52:26 Yes, OK, there are multiple layers to unpack here. Speech recognition has been around for a long time, but it is getting better exponentially and fast. At the same time, there are still challenge, particularly for people with speech impediments and particularly for people with strong accents. My wife is not a native English speaker. She is from Southeast Asia. She dictates in her own language and it is fine. When she tries to talk to Siri, she complains that Siri is racist and sexist, because it only responds to me. So, I can tell Siri what to do and Siri will behave, but it won't for her because she is falling outside of what is recognizing as the accepted models of speech.

There is work on the way for all of the main voice systems to look at nonstandard speech models to improve this, so speech from the deaf and hard of hearing community, speech nonnative speakers. I hate to say be patient, because I would not be patient if I was in your position either, but it will improve.

What we have seen is where machine learning is really good, is the quicker it learns, so keep shouting at the smart systems, keep trying to correct them. Don't get disheartened. I spend a very tough few hours outside of Glasgow in Scotland teaching a bunch of people with thick Scotland accents to use speech recognition. We got there in the end, but with the automated systems, the training does not happen immediately. It gets sent back and only if you allow it to have a data, so there is another issue, which is trust. Do you trust the big corporations with your data that they are not going to be listening to you, they are not goings to be identifying you to enable them to take that and learn from it. So, it is a question of sort of what do you give and what do you take back?

RUH: 54:59 Well said. Heather, I want to ask you the next question and Connie Hawk, I'm still learning about AI. Will the AI have the

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ability to work as an ASL interpreter at the deaf person's job interview site?

DOWDY: 55:21 Oh, good question, right? The deaf community wants to know, and we are along ways off from that very much so, because of the need for more data sets with Sign Language. I will also say certainly the approach is not to replace Sign Language Interpreters, but I like to think of AI as put the super in human. How do we complement them? How do we make it easier for them to do their job, so perhaps they are doing something else, so one way in which we're looking at that is a project at RIT, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and they are looking at all hybrid caption model?

Traditionally, at university, you might have a Captioner that is typing during the class and then there is an AI solution that is automatically picking up speech recognition, and so there's the solution where they are trying to bring both of those together, the human Captioner and the AI solution, so that by you leveraging some of the automatic captions then the Captioner is able to then correct, spend time correcting the mistakes and making sure the data set improves and the solution improves, so I say that to say the focus is how to complement our jobs and how to make it easier for us.

RUH: 57:02 Well said. Frances next question. I have my own question, but we're getting such great questions from the audience I want to make sure to get to all of them. Tracy made some great points and asked a question, as is the case with any technology it can be used well or abused. Voice mail, you can hide behind it or provide timely responses easier. We integrate autism employment advisers have been working with higher view and on demand AI based platform to make sure it is autism friendly. I think the real issue is ensuring that we, the individuals with disabilities and their advocates have representation at the

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development level, companies creating the new solutions need to be testing the platforms with various populations, which others have said. As an extends of what Heather said, how can each of us and represent more layers, can we have the Kessler seal of approval or like the underwriter's lab to ensure this occurs.

**WEST: 58:23** This question actually gets to the essence of my being right now. Many of you or some of you may know that I have been focusing on trying to really help, for example. The application of AI is coming out of the startup, right, you have tech companies that create the AI platforms, but the usage of AI technology to create health care solutions is actually in this kind of a startup world. So you are right that collectively as a community, if we can begin to really educate the entire ecosystem from incubation to innovation to design process in making sure people with disabilities boast their point of view and their needs are in the technology function and feature is integrated.

Right now, we don't have that process and AI, the entire AI world, if you read any business articles, you know tons and tons of, we're talking about billions of dollars, not million, billions of dollars, the faster the startup goes, if we are not in there, the faster the negative impacts are going to occur. So, I think there is more to be done in integrating, but from a -- integrating people with disabilities mindset and understanding the process into the "development." When I say development, I mean the entire ecosystem, especially in the startup, because they are the ones that are creating these solutions that affect all of us on a day-to-day basis, so a great question.

**KATZ: 01:00:44** You guys are having so much fun, I'm going to jump in here, because we're getting towards the end. I'm always the practical person and I want to kind of ask a question for some of the people who are actually working out there as agencies. If I take somebody to a job interview site and first they have to fill out an online application and it times out, and then I find I can't get through the system because I can't -- that person cannot get

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that application, what do I do? How do I help that person who I'm trying to get employed get through that system? What are some of the steps I can take?

DOWDY: 1:01:27 I will chime in and say that sitting back and looking at how to design the user experience from end-to-end is not new to AI, but it is still very cornerstone to build an accessible experience. I think that in the case of providing just access from the get-go, it is important to give multiple modes of input. AI has shown U.S. that we can do that. -- shown us that we can do that. You can provide via text or voice or image recognition of a form, so there are other way, so building in that flexibility and making sure that you look at the end-to-end experience particularly in the mindset of including people with disabilities and thinking through how a person with various disabilities might go through that experience is still really key.

KATZ: 01:02:26 Neil, were you going to say something?

MILLIKEN: 01:02:28 Heather said it for me, which is to make sure there are multiple modalities, because that is what we do right now. We recognize that not everyone will cope welcome the process, so we make it clear that they are welcome to phone us, e-mail us, get in contact if they are interested and we will find a flexible way to ensure that they can apply. It is about signaling that, because we're not going to be able to put every single flexible way online. What we can do is show that we are willing to listen to candidates and accommodate them and find am way for them to apply and make sure that is clear every time we advertise make sure people know that.

KATZ: 01:03:23 There are a lot of questions in the chat box. I'm going is there a discussion to make sure that person does not come out of the experience sounding or looking robotic. If you're looking at training through AI, how does that person take away something that is more natural, I think that is the question. Someone want to take a shot at that one.

RUH: 01:04:14 Neil?



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MILLIKEN: I think that is a tough question. I don't think we're there yet. I honestly don't think we're there yet, I think AI is only -- is limited in terms of what it can recognize and therefore it is still looking for patents, so if it is looking for patents and trying to pave you in a certain way and you struggle and you are over emphasizing and you are masking, because that is quite common. People have to feel they have to mask to get through and look neuro typical in the interviews they may overdo it. The AI may not recognize that and I think that is still a danger, because you know, that masking may look to AI like it is the behavior that it is look for when actually it is kinds of overdone and people are going through the motions and the humane probably recognize it as being slightly strange. Whereas you will probably be better off being your normal -- your day-to-day self, so whatever you are on a day-to-day basis, if you have monotonic speech that is fine, what we're looking for or what one hopes employees are looking for are your abilities to do the job that we advertised.

We far too frequently select for people that are good at interviews and not good at the jobs that we need them to do, so the skills and getting them to prove that is more important than the way they deliver their answers.

KATZ: 01:06:15 That using skills is really, I think, where even funders are looking at when they look at programs in the field because it incorporates all those people who may not have degree work but have life experiences or lived experiences that can really do the job. There's one topic that we're getting in our community that we really haven't touched on at all today, which is the psychological and personality test that are used through AI screeners and companies. Neil's making a face. I'm sure it's not a favorite of people on this call. But, Frances, do you want to talk about that a little bit?

WEST: 01:06:51 Well, I think the personality obviously being-- what do you call, the intangible attributes. It is the ultimate challenge of the AI,

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right, because now you're talking about something you cannot logically put a binary decision, yes or a no, and I've gone to college or not. But it is this very gray zone. I think there are companies out there doing the unconscious bias study, for example, matching the facial recognition of the, for example, tilting your eyes or the angle of the body. They can derive certain conclusions or indication whether there is biases or not in the relationship of our discussion. So I think, again, this is one of those area that will become more and more mature. And the Myers Briggs kind of a personality test kind of data set is being, quote-unquote, "study and then absorbed". But is it at the level where, really, can cause industrial strength and has it gone through the testing? I don't think so, but that's another reason why this kind of discussion is important. Because we're still at a very-- I always say that AI's like in infant stage right now. It really doesn't know much yet. So the good news, we still have a chance to influence. But there's actually a lot of hard work ahead of us too.

KATZ: 01:08:32 Does anybody else want to comment? Neil?

MILLIKEN: 01:08:34 Yeah. So I'm still a real skeptic about some of these things. So my pal, Dr. Nancy Doyle, calls Myers Briggs the astrology of business. So it's, "What star sign are you?" "Oh, I'm ENFP," or, "I am INTJ." I think there needs to be more science behind some of these business personality types too. Because what we're doing is we're applying business theory, which may not actually have that much science behind it, and then putting prescriptive analytics on top of it. So we're then automating something that's not very scientific in the first place and that's dangerous because then we're making assumptions about people and about their capabilities. So I think that there's real potential, but there's also a lot of work still to be done and a lot of work on the basic fundamentals. And we need to get the fundamentals right because the actual processes and the application of AI is not that difficult. We know how to do that. It's the ethics and the science and the research to create the right data set so that we can take the right decisions.

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- KATZ: 01:09:58 There's another interesting question - we really have time maybe for one or two more - and this is asked by Richard. Giving the advancements of AI and the understanding of different data sets available, has the HR industry still has human resources been a gatekeeper to the older methods? Or is that industry now embracing all these new advancements on AI and also putting less weight on CVs and college degrees?
- WEST: 01:10:27 I could take a shot at it. I mean, if you look up, there is a group called Hacking HR. It's a group of HR really wanting to use data as their baseline of HR thinking. And so from that standpoint, there is an emerging or new breed of HR that actually embracing the technology head-on and understand that HR function is not a support function, but a lead function. And like Neil just said-- by the way, in terms of personality, I think the skill sets of the work of the future, in terms of a leadership, is so different and naturally play to the advantage of people with disabilities because it's a creativity's, it's collaboration, and like [inaudible] connecting different dots. So from that standpoint, again - I'm an optimist - I think the people-with-disability communities and just the way they operate and think has huge potential kind of leg up, so to speak, in the future work scenario.
- KATZ: 01:11:34 Heather, do you want to add something?
- DOWDY: 01:11:36 Yeah. This is such a good conversation, and as you said, we could continue to go on because we all work together. But I love how my colleagues just brought it back to culture. We can't expect technology just to fix everything for us. There are some things that we really have to sit down and think about, like why do we want that particular outcome? Why are we using personality tests? What is the outcome? Is there another way to do it that is more equitable? And so that's just the challenge that I have for everyone that, yes, AI is emerging and there are great benefits, but that doesn't take away from the work that we need to do to really understand how to use it responsibly, and why we need to use it. Using AI to make a decision for us and make automated decisions, hmm, maybe

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that's not the best use of it. Perhaps helping us to make decisions, informed decisions, hey, there is opportunity there.

KATZ: 01:12:35 So with that comment, Heather, that really sets us for really the last question we have time for which is, in an agile team building suitable software there's great opportunity. So there's great opportunity really for people with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities to be testers of some of these systems. How can they get involved in doing that? How do they know what's going on? Or is there open calls, for example, for people to kind of test the software within agencies or job candidates? How do people get involved?

DOWDY: 01:13:08 Yes. There are always batherings. Nothing is finished the first cycle. And so please include people with disabilities to test people with disabilities. Neil said be patient. I say get involved. [crosstalk]--

KATZ: 01:13:21 So how do they get involved? That's the question. How do they get involved?

DOWDY: 01:13:25 Yeah. There's definitely lots of beta releases in the market, whether that's app or whether that's within testing within a company for sure.

KATZ: 01:13:35 And how do you hear about that if you're-- I mean, if I'm just sitting in New Jersey and working, doing my daily job and I'm either a person with a disability or work with disabilities or have people with disabilities in my families, how do I hear about those opportunities? Does the companies put out notices that they're looking for testers?

DUH: 01:13:50 Yeah. I'm seeing it on-- yeah. I'm seeing it on social media. I'm seeing requests on social media. I don't know about the rest of you. Go ahead, Heather.

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WEST: 01:14:01 And I will also say that universities. I mean because this is such a new technology, a lot of companies, private sectors are actually going and in collaboration with universities everywhere. So check all your local university and see if they're doing anything and then actually involve yourself in some of their projects. To me, that actually is the best way to get started. And then go to your local-- a lot of the cities now have these innovation hubs, right, incubators, accelerators. They actually have a special track for AI.

DOWDY: 1:04:43 There are also community forums as well. We're no stranger to giving our feedback when something isn't working, and then you get tapped to test the next thing or to test the improvement. So continue to give feedback on products.

KATZ: 1:14:56 Well, we have just about a minute left, and I'd like to give everybody just a 30-second wrap-up. So let's just start with Heather. Just wrap up kind of your last thoughts.

DOWDY: 1:15:06 Get involved. Inclusive data sets are really key given that AI runs on lots and lots of data. And so inclusive data sets means that we're including people with disabilities. And when designing AI solutions and implementing them, particularly in the employment space, think about flexibility, personalization, but also the outcomes. What are the outcomes? Why are you using that technology, and is that the best use of the technology?

KATZ: 1:15:33 Neil, what would you like to add?

MILLIKEN: 1:15:35 So I talked a lot about science, but we also need sociologists and historians building tech because these people understand what's gone before. And they inform our understanding of the data set and the understanding of the biases and the potential challenges that we might face. So they can help us predict some of the things that might happen.

KATZ: 1:15:59 Great, and Frances?

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WEST: 1:16:01 I would just say that AI actually needs your help. Right? I mean, as technology gets more human, human needs to get human. We should use every opportunity like university access and social media. Like Clubhouse, I just noticed, is a new social media forum that, of course, is not accessible to people who are deaf. But anyway, the social media forum creates a community voice that is absolutely needed. So again, this is a kind of opportunity that we can shape the future.

KATZ: 1:16:32 And, Debra, another really quick wrap-up.

DUH: 1:16:36 Well, I would just say that I know that I'm working on something some of you all know about that's really going to pull the community together so our voices can be more heard. So I think anything that we can do to help each other be heard and make sure that we're opening the door wide behind others or bringing in more diverse conversations, I think adds value to this. And thank you, Elaine and Kessler, for your leadership. I like that seal of approval they suggested, Elaine.

1:17:02 [crosstalk]

DUH: 1:17:03 Why don't you answer that?

KATZ: 1:17:05 That's a good idea. You notice I avoided that right now. But I want to thank you all, Heather and Frances and Neil and Deborah, for all your expertise and information today. It was great to have you and go forward with strength. Talk to you soon. Thank you all for joining us today.

ANNOUNCER: 1:17:25 For more information about this symposium or past symposiums, go to [KesslerFoundation.org/2021Symposium](https://KesslerFoundation.org/2021Symposium)