

**LILY BOND:** Hi, everyone. Thanks so much for joining us virtually. We're really excited to present this session which was supposed to be at CSUN this year. But we're really thrilled to have an opportunity to do it virtually since we were unable to be there this year.

We hope everyone is staying safe and well. Our presentation is called No Team, No Resources, No Problem. And we're with 3Play Media. And you can follow us on Twitter @3playmedia. We also want to mention that we welcome feedback and thoughts on the presentation. And you can feel free to reach out to us with any feedback you have.

To introduce ourselves, I'm Lily Bond. I'm the Senior Director of Marketing at 3Play Media. I run our marketing team and strategy. And I'm really passionate about accessibility, which is why I'm here. A fun fact about me is that I studied classical voice in college and was almost an opera singer. But luckily I wasn't, and here I am.

**LANYA BUTLER:** My name is Lanya Butler. I am a Senior Full-Stack Engineer at 3Play. And I spend a lot of my day writing code. Like Lily, I am passionate about accessibility. And for fun, I am a circus performer.

Throughout this presentation, we'll be using A11y as an acronym for accessibility. This is symbolic for the importance of being an ally to the disability community. And there are also 11 letters between the A and Y in accessibility.

**LILY BOND:** So to give you a little bit of background, which I think is helpful as we dive into this presentation, it's important to understand where we're coming from being a part of 3Play Media. 3Play Media is a closed captioning audio description and translation company. So we work directly with video accessibility.

And I think an important caveat here is that we are an accessibility company. So we already had awareness and understanding of the importance of accessibility within our company. And I think that made it a little bit easier for us to make this happen, this being a more accessible company.

But it's kind of an uphill battle for everyone, regardless of how your company feels about accessibility. So we're really going to cover some helpful tips that we've found to build accessibility into 3Play without a team or without any dedicated resources.

So to kind of kick us off, I want to explain why we're doing this presentation. Last year at this time-- or not exactly at this time anymore-- we, Lanya and I, were at CSUN. It was my fifth CSUN and Lanya's first CSUN.

And we went to a presentation together by Oracle on building accessibility into the development process. And we kind of had an aha moment that this is something that we could do at 3Play, too, and that this was something that if we kind of put our minds together, we might be able to implement and create a more centralized approach to accessibility at 3Play. And we were really excited about kicking that off.

And I also just wanted to note, it was my fifth time, like I said, and it was Lanya's first time. And one thing that really still stands out to me that Lanya said was, they really went into CSUN thinking that everyone knew what they were doing and that the conference would be a series of presentations telling them how to make accessibility happen at our company.

But they found it super refreshing to learn that it's more about figuring it out together. And that everyone's in this together trying to figure it out. So I think that's really what our presentation is about.

This is kind of how we've figured some things out. And again, we're welcoming feedback. And we're still figuring it out. So I hope you'll take this with a grain of salt. But we're kind of using this as a starting point to do more.

And I think it's also important to note that sometimes progress is really slow. So prior to 2019, this is kind of what accessibility looked like at 3Play. And we have four markers on the screen with dates. So the first marker is pre-2015.

When I started at 3Play, pretty much the only thing we were doing as a company for accessibility was PDF remediation. So we were remediating all of our white papers and also making all of our public facing marketing content accessible as we were using HTML best practices in our blog, making sure we had color contrast in all texts, but basically some of the basics around web accessibility. And there was a lot more that we could do.

In 2016, which is our second date marker, we started getting more involved with the accessibility community. And I think this was a real jumping off point for us because it made us feel much closer to the people that our service serves. So we started a project called Faces Behind the Screen, which is a series of interviews with people in the deaf and hard of hearing

community as well as the blind and low vision community, really learning about their experiences with technology and their lives in general. And that really brought accessibility to the forefront of people's minds at 3Play.

2017 is the third marker here. It's titled marketing. What that means is we did a full public site redesign in 2017 of our marketing website. 3Play.com really focused on making our full website accessible.

And then in 2018, I took something back from CSUN that year, too. And that was about building accessibility into the onboarding process so that people learn accessibility right away. So we implemented an accessibility in onboarding in 2018. And that's going to be something that we really kind of dive into later about how to make that happen.

**LANYA BUTLER:** So as Lilly said, in 2019, we attended CSUN together and felt moved to make accessibility more of a central goal for our company for the year. So we set some goals for ourselves, including creating an accessibility committee, which we call 3Pla11y, creating an internal accessibility guideline sheet, which we based off of WCAG 2.1, so that our company could understand the guidelines in more bite-sized chunks, and so they could interact with them slightly easier. We had an annual goal of rewriting our account system to improve the user experience and code maintainability. And we made sure to build accessibility into those plans and goals.

So looking back at our year, we're really excited about the amount of growth we've had in shaping the company culture and processes. And we have five tips to share with you from what we've learned. Our first tip is to make it shared.

Making accessibility a shared responsibility is the best advice that we can give. Some ways we've done this include creating a committee so that the responsibility doesn't rest on one person, dividing and conquering tasks, and making individual people subject matter experts so that they can be a point person.

So when you don't have a dedicated accessibility resource, you need to spread out responsibility and knowledge. Everyone in our company has a regular day job responsibility. And if you try to take on accessibility alone, it can be extremely overwhelming. And it's just way too much work.

So we decided to create a committee which we call 3Pla11y. In choosing the committee, we

considered the following factors, namely passion and diversity. Again, because this would be outside of someone's standard job description, we needed for it to be volunteer. So we looked for people who would get really excited about accessibility and would go an extra mile with us. When you see someone who is really passionate, it's easy for that passion to spread to other people.

We also knew that accessibility covers a lot of ground from the way we hire to the way you design or build software. So we wanted the members of the 3Pla11y Committee to reflect the whole range of departments that we have 3Play. Adding diversity to the committee adds a variety of strength and perspectives.

Finally, you can't learn accessibility best practices overnight. So when picking people we thought would be good candidates for 3Pla11y, we thought about shaping the committee into groups of people where individuals could be subject matter experts in areas that complemented their standard jobs. This way when people in the company have questions, we have one person to point them to. This also gives the person who's learning about accessibility a small, bite-sized chunk to start with.

Here is a layout of some of our 3Pla11y Committee. This is about six in 15 people that we have on the committee now. As an example, I am a senior developer. And I was the technical lead on our account system redesign. So it made a lot of sense for me to be the expert on code design best practices, as well as our VPAT.

As a designer, Derek needed to build accessibility standards straight into our designs. So he is our expert on usability and accessibility for that. And as our customer product manager who leads a lot of our QA testing, Hug was central to building out a process that includes accessibility.

3Pla11y ended up with a lot of people, about 14 out of our 55 people, which ends up being a quarter of our company. However, we ended up creating a lot of subcommittees for specific tasks in order to get stuff done. For example, we created a guidelines committee to write a set of internal guidelines based off of WCAG And we pulled a diverse set of members from 3Pla11y who had knowledge about marketing, UX, legal, or development.

We found that even with our small group of five, it was sometimes hard to make decisions on the best way to move forward. So I recommend always having one decision maker for all of your committees. Another example is our Global Accessibility Awareness Day planning

committee. That was made up of four people across marketing, development, and HR.

Various departments at 3Play have their own subcultures. And having a diverse set of members in our planning committee has helped to create events that keep people engaged with accessibility events.

**LILY BOND:**

Our second tip is to make it universal, so making accessibility a priority from the beginning with everyone at the company has been really key in getting company wide awareness, really. A few ways that we do that are through onboarding, which I mentioned.

So this has been kind of one of the biggest wins we've had as a company is building accessibility into our onboarding process as a full section that every employee goes through the beginning of their time at 3Play so that we educate employees early on accessibility. And it becomes a part of their awareness of everything they do.

The second thing we've done is we've created an A11y Slack channel to let everyone in the company be an advocate in their own way by sharing articles, sharing tips, and sharing stories. And then we also have found that it's really important as a company to give back. So committing to annual charitable donations in the accessibility world can be a great way to get your company involved with accessibility.

Making accessibility a part of onboarding-- so these are some tips that we've learned from building accessibility into our onboarding process. And just as an overview, as a company we have a course-based onboarding process where every department has a course that new employees go through to learn the basics of what each department does and all of the relevant information that they should know in their role.

And in addition to every department, we now have an accessibility course. And we also have an accessibility presentation on everyone's first day at the company, which I provide, and I train every single person in kind of the basics of awareness around accessibility because a lot of people come in not necessarily knowing those basics.

So the first tip here is build it first. Don't just ask to make an accessibility onboarding section, build it. Having something to show helps with buy-in. So when I kind of came out of CSUN with this idea like, oh, my gosh, we should build accessibility into onboarding.

I knew that if I asked for permission to do that, people would be concerned about the time

commitment, about the process there. But it took me probably half an hour to put together the basics of an onboarding section with some ideas of questions we could ask, quizzes we could give people, and resources that we could provide.

And once I had that grounding, which, again, was not a big time commitment, it became really easy to get buy-in because people could see something and said, oh, wow, yes, this would be super helpful. And as long as it's not a big time commitment, go for it. So from there, I built it out a lot more but having that grounding really was key to getting buy-in there.

Building awareness, so making your accessibility onboarding really engaging with hands on activities will open the employee's eyes to accessibility. So instead of just asking them, what's the proper color contrast ratio, make them try some hex codes and provide you with different color combinations that are accessible and make them kind of ask questions about why or why not something is accessible.

Kind of one of our hot tips here is to have one of the onboarding pieces be using a screen reader. So that's definitely been eye-opening for a lot of employees who may not have even heard of a screen reader in the past when they're getting started with a new company that prioritizes accessibility.

And then our third tip here-- and this is kind of like critical. This is the piece that's like I can't stress this enough-- is make it required. So just requiring every single person in the company to do these things, it doesn't take a ton of time for anyone to have one presentation on the first day and to have them do one course on accessibility means that every person at 3Play has the same baseline knowledge of accessibility. And every single person can move forward with accessibility in mind for their role.

Using Slack has been a really fun way to get people involved with accessibility at 3Play. Our Slack channel is very active with legal updates, assistive technology news, and incredible stories related to accessibility. On the screen there is an iPhone with a view of our Slack channel.

And an example of something that Lanya shared in August, it's an article, "Service Dogs in Training, Attend a Private Performance of Billy Elliot to Learn Proper Theater Behavior," which is obviously a very delightful update. A few other examples that we've shared recently are, "The FCC Proposes Expanding Video Description Mandates," "Two Blind Brothers with a Shop Blind Campaign," and Rebecca Alexander describing how to clean your cane, ComPilot, and

sunglasses with disinfecting products.

On the screen, we also have an image of a chart of our accessibility Slack channel usage. And since January of 2018 through January of 2019, there was mixed usage here. But really starting in March-- quick note there-- that was exactly when Lanya and I attended CSUN last year and made a commitment to really prioritize accessibility.

We've just seen a huge spike in activity across the company, which is amazing. And another pro tip here is it's a great way to create a dedicated space for people to ask questions about accessibility. I mean, we get great questions from people across the company here all the time.

I mentioned charitable donations. So we as a company have a couple of times a year where we have a big company event focused on charitable donations in the accessibility community. My tips here are create a campaign.

So on Giving Tuesday every year, we've built a campaign that rallies our employees and customers around submitting files. And for every file submitted, we make a donation to an accessibility charity. And last year we chose the Hearing Loss Association of America, which is a great organization. But we mix it up every year. And we also make donations on Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

**LANYA BUTLER:** Our third tip is to make it fun. We believe that a key to get a company to care about accessibility is to bake it into the culture. You need to engage people and make them care.

Some ways we've done this include creating social events that relate to accessibility, holding workshops to encourage empathy, and involving the whole company opportunities to learn from the disability community. For Global Accessibility Awareness Day last year, our GAAD committee planned a team bonding event to build wheelchairs. The entire company participated, from all of our new hires, all the way through to our co-founders. We've also participated in the Walk For Hearing.

We've held empathy workshops with workshops like using screen readers or learning short phrases in ASL. We acknowledge that empathy workshops are divisive. But at 3Play, we found that they were extremely helpful to bring awareness around necessary accommodations that people had no previous exposure to or awareness of.

We've also worked to engage the office with a variety of storytelling projects through the year. Lily mentioned Faces Behind the Screen. It is a project that was inspired by Humans of New York. And through photographs and interviews, it aims to be a platform for people with disabilities to show their stories and perspectives.

So through this project, we're hoping to bring more awareness to the importance of web accessibility. This was a project that our marketing team started in 2017. But more recently we've expanded the project so that everyone from any department is encouraged to get involved.

We recently had members of our support team and HR teams write stories. We also had social media campaigns, #SignYourThanks and #SignYourLove, around Valentine's Day and Thanksgiving Day. And we encouraged people to learn short phrases in ASL that expressed what they were thankful for or loved. The whole office filmed these phrases and posted them on social media. And we had great office participation.

**LILY BOND:**

The next trick is to make it usable. Don't scare your team away with massive checklists. We've found that employee's eyes kind of gloss over when we send them a WCAG checklist. And so making accessibility guidelines engaging has been a big challenge and something we've put a lot of effort into.

A few ways that we've done this are with context clues. So instead of giving them a checklist and expecting them to use it, we give them scenarios and expect them to apply guidelines to scenarios that are relevant to them. By making it relevant and separating guidelines by what will be applicable to their department and their job roles and their everyday life, we've been able to avoid information overload by only pointing people to what they really need to know. And then humanizing these guidelines, so building empathy by adding user stories to each guideline has been another way that we've tried to get people excited about using these guidelines because they care about the impact that they can have.

So in terms of applying guidelines to scenarios they know, we really take examples of everyday activities that each department does and apply guidelines that may be relevant to them. For example, with a sales rep, they might be writing an email. In fact, they write dozens of emails every day, but what guidelines and best practices are important for them to know and why? How can they add alt text to any images in their email signature? What language should they use so that if they don't know who they're talking to they don't assign any potential



people with disabilities?

On the marketing team, if you're writing a blog, who could interact with that blog and what guidelines should they follow to support that use case making sure that the marketing team knows all of the best practices for heading structure in a blog and all the ways to make a table accessible or to make an image accessible. And then on the support team, if a support rep gets a ticket with an accessibility complaint, they're kind of the front lines of the company. So really making sure that they know how they should respond and what's important for them to know in that response so that they don't get a ticket, respond negatively, and create a poor experience for someone with disabilities.

Segmenting training for employees has been huge, so not only segmenting the guidelines, but segmenting the training. So we've tagged every guideline that we built in our accessibility guidelines. I guess taking a step back, our legal subcommittee translated WCAG into a set of guidelines for 3Play to use internally on all of our content, both public facing and internal, and segmenting those guidelines with tags for departments so that different teams can view as kind of a subset of guidelines that are relevant to them, and then similarly segmenting training so that we don't overwhelm employees with information that they might not need on a daily basis. So we've developed team-specific trainings to cover what's important to the people that we're talking to.

And making it human is really key at 3Play. So understanding why something is important and tying the requirements back to real users and stories really builds a connection with why we should be doing things. So on the screen, there is an iPad with a guideline around color contrast. It says, never rely solely on color to distinguish information.

And then side-by-side with that is a story from Faces Behind the Screen. Read Brian and Brad's story. These are people that are directly affected by not using the guidelines that are relevant here.

**LANYA BUTLER:** Tip five is to make it sustainable. So we believe that shaping a company into one that cares about accessibility requires process changes in addition to culture changes. Maintaining accessibility is a constant challenge.

You can't just update your code once and call it done. You need processes and systems in place so that future employees learn about accessibility from the day they start and it continues to permeate through the company in the future. For us, this has involved

departmental training, spreading out knowledge, and holding ourselves accountable.

Where are we now? So in 2019, we built a lot of momentum in terms of company culture and awareness. At this point, a quarter of our company is part of the 3Play accessibility committee. And using the 3Play guidelines, we've built and launched accessibility updates to our account system.

The entire 3Play Committee gave a presentation about the state of accessibility at 3Play where everyone in the committee researched a best practice to share with the rest of the company. And we're continuing to look forward to upcoming challenges, like how to sustain this and how to keep ourselves accountable. We have no plans to make this a full time job position and acknowledge that working on this project outside of our standard job responsibilities is difficult.

In 2020, some of our goals include finishing the account system redesign and updating our VPAT, creating more structure around annual goals around accessibility and check-ins for ourselves. We also are going to keep planning culture and social events that care about accessibility. For example, our GAAD team has added a new member from the implementation team. And we're working hard to plan a remote event for next month.

I have some final hot tips to share. The first one is-- don't get buy-in, just do it. It can be really tempting to ask for permission for every initiative that you're starting. And I think this tip is definitely dependent on company culture. But at our small 50-person company, we've found that act first and ask for forgiveness later is the fastest way to make progress.

Obviously, you need to use some common sense. But we've had a lot of success in doing the work first and then making a case for why these changes are important and relevant to our company. Don't discount the impact of small initiatives.

Lily talked earlier about how she added accessibility training to our onboarding. I have made accessibility part of my personal annual goal for the year to make sure that I keep working on this and the whole development team continues to make progress. I added accessibility concerns as a section to our internal bugs and features tracking system at 3Play. One accessibility Slack channel doesn't change a company overnight. But combined with storytelling projects and small process changes over time, you can build up a signal that accessibility is something that matters to your whole company.

The second hot tip is to get good at voluntelling. A skill that I picked up from this experience is voluntelling people for positions. So it's great to ask for volunteers. But what do you do if you hear crickets on the other side? You can point to a few specific people and engage and encourage them. It's a lot harder to say no when someone's saying, hey, Ryan, I think that this would be a great project for you to get involved in.

You can slowly get people involved with a broader initiative by asking them for help for small specific tasks. Asking someone to co-chair a whole accessibility committee and changing the entire company culture can be really daunting. But what if you just ask for help in planning a small task, like a one-hour lunch and learn for Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

**LILY BOND:**

On a final note, we want to acknowledge that we're not perfect as an accessibility team or a company. But we're moving in a positive direction, and we care a lot. We've learned that it's OK for changes to be small and that together they can make a big difference.

And I think just in the last year, we've seen so much momentum and progress at 3Play that we're hoping that some of the lessons we've learned in that experience have been helpful for you and that you can take some of these and apply even little tips from this presentation to make accessibility a broader initiative at your company.

So thank you so much for joining us. I would love to answer any questions, again, love feedback. We both care a lot about accessibility and have really been involved in pushing this forward at 3Play and would love to learn about what you're doing that's working so we can take that back to our company as well.

And just in general, we love to connect with other people in the community. So feel free to reach out to us. My email is [lilly@3playmedia.com](mailto:lilly@3playmedia.com), and Lanya's is [lanya@3playmedia.com](mailto:lanya@3playmedia.com). Thank you so much, everyone.