

## **AMI Podcast v.1 - Final Cut**

*[ Upbeat music plays briefly. Then Abilities at Work podcast interviewer Glen Walsh begins speaking. He introduces Accessible Media Inc. HR Business Partner, Elysia Yardley ]*

Hello and welcome to Abilities at Work, a podcast hosted by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment. Coming up now, we're going to hear from Elysia Yardley from AMI. Thanks so much for coming today. Can you introduce yourself, your name, your occupation, and where you're working from?

*[ Elysia begins speaking ]*

So my name is Elysia Yardley.

I work for Accessible Media Inc., a not for profit media company. I am the HR Business Partner for the organization. I've been with the company for almost 6 years.

*[ Glen responds and then asks Elysia two questions ]*

That's great. So how does AMI leverage technology to enhance accessibility and create more inclusive environments for people experiencing disabilities? Ensuring they have equal opportunities in education, employment, and the community engagements?

*[ Elysia answers ]*

We leverage technology in several ways. We have assistive and adaptive software, including JAWS, ZoomText, there are a couple of other softwares that are available for persons with disability. We have a large print keyboards as well. We have a braille printer. We want to make sure that we are leveraging the technological resources we have to create that inclusive environment for our team.

And when we have individuals that are coming on board for our work placement programs, or somebody who has a vision impairment, for example, then we will ensure that we have that assistive technology for them.

*[ Glen responds ]*

That's great. So your organization has gone through many changes including finding services such as the renewal or renaming, Accessibility Media Ltd. or AMI in 2010.

In what way have your disability related employment practices evolved over those years, and what did the journey look like?

[ *Elysia replies* ]

So our disability related employment practices, we did start out as a reading service for persons who are blind or partially sighted. We have also used closed captioning and descriptive video with our content for persons who are blind or partially sighted as well.

As we've evolved, we've developed what we call IDB, which is Integrative Described Video, which means that accessibility is woven into the original script. So it's painting a picture without that third party voice, and it's really trying to bring across that accessibility.

In addition, we have rolled out a work placement program for persons with disabilities to gain access to broadcast media, and we ensure we have people from the pan disability community. So originally as we had started for reading services for persons who are blind or partially sighted, we now have different services and we take on people with invisible disabilities.

We try to accommodate in every way, shape and form. We listen to feedback. We have an accessibility feedback process with the organization that we listen to as well. And so we've really adapted to move to that next step and be a real leader in accessibility in media.

[ *Glen responds* ]

That's so great. So tell us about your role. I guess we definitely want to learn about what you do at AMI around accessibility.

[ *Elysia answers* ]

So as the HR business partner, I am responsible for our top employer application, where we talk about any diversity and inclusion initiatives. I do any accessibility with recruitment, selection, training, development – anytime we use a vendor, I ensure that the training is accessible for persons who are blind or partially sighted.

One of the things we have also rolled out is a work placement program, as I mentioned, for persons with disabilities to gain that exposure. It was something that we did not have. I think what will be important is, or what is important in my role around accessibility is that I am making sure that we are as inclusive of an organization as humanly possible.

And I think that for me is very important, that we have that accessibility, that we do accessibility audits, that we are reviewing our policies and procedures on a regular basis.

[ *Glen responds and then proceeds to ask another question* ]

Oh, that's really good. Has AMI incorporated any new inclusive approaches or programs that excite you that you're passionate about or that have been successful?

[ *Elysia replies* ]

Yeah. We have incorporated programs such as our work placement program. It's resulted in the placement of 20 persons with disabilities in the workplace, created an accessibility advisory committee, and we will be rolling out accessibility awareness training for all of our staff. We've been applying for the top diversity and inclusion employer awards.

And that, for me, is very important as well. And the other piece is that we have been really trying to, like I said, take that next step, do accessibility audits, really making sure that we are progressive and ahead of the curve.

[ *Glen answers and then asks the following question* ]

It's great. I love learning about different organizations and what they're doing in terms of accessibility and offering those to the employees and in terms of recruiting as well.

How does your participation in CASE's Ability at Work Advisory Committee and or MentorAbility Initiative help you promote inclusion at AMI?

[ *Elysia responds* ]

Good question. I would say that it's the Initiatives, it's the communication with persons from different events or different industries – different industries, different ideas, listening

to perhaps how they do things at their organization, things that they might be struggling with, because that might be a problem that I've got on my end as well.

And so it's interesting to hear that exchange of ideas – mentoring. I am a big believer in mentorship. We have our work placement program, but we also want to make sure that we are mentoring persons with disabilities that maybe aren't looking to get paid or do a placement with us, but are just looking for advice and guidance.

I think that really does help to benefit inclusion at AMI because it helps us to understand maybe the different workforce that's out there. It helps us to exchange ideas, implement new processes and procedures. And also to learn from our mentees, because it – sometimes when you're in an organization, you don't always know that maybe something you're doing is wrong, or it could be improved somehow.

[ *Glen responds and then asks a final question* ]

Great. And the last question, is there any additional information you'd like to share about building a disability inclusion workplace?

[ *Elysia answers* ]

Building a disability inclusive workplace, I think – what I would say is that a lot of the fixes are very quick and very cheap, if not free. There is a fear, I think, with a lot of employers that it's going to cost a lot of money to create a disability inclusive workplace.

That is absolutely not the case. It's as little as asking for what accommodation might you need prior to an interview. It's also getting feedback, accessibility feedback from your staff, creating an environment where disclosure is encouraged so that we are able to accommodate the best of our abilities.

I would say at AMI, we are very progressive in that sense, and we know that there are – everybody brings something to the table. We have an amazing workforce. We have a large number of persons with disabilities in our workforce. And I think that, sometimes there is a fear about hiring persons with disabilities, creating that inclusive workspace.

I do believe that just – education, getting feedback, speaking to other employers, attending seminars. Those have all really helped me to open my eyes coming from the for profit sector, and I would definitely encourage that in anybody else.

[ *Glen concludes the interview* ]

No, thank you so much. I think we learned a lot here at this podcast about all the initiatives that AMI is doing, and it's great talking to you today.

And yeah, like I say, we learned a lot today, and we're going to take a lot of that away. And it's great to reflect on all the great initiatives that you're doing at AMI.

[ *Elysia thanks Glen* ]

Thank you very much. And I'm just very happy to be able to be part of this advisory committee and to work with other people who feel strongly about inclusion.

[ *Glen finishes the podcast episode by mentioning the following information. The upbeat music at the start of the episode plays again* ]

If you like this podcast, be sure to subscribe and share. For more resources and to learn about supporting people experiencing disabilities, visit [supportedemployment dot c a](http://supportedemployment dot c a).

- Transcript of 9 minute and 11 second Podcast Season 4 audio file titled “AMI Podcast v.1  
- Final Cut”