

Six Years of Accessibility Discovery and Education...And We're Only Just Getting Started

PROVISIONAL AGENDA v.6.1 (Updated September 11, 2024)

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

(i=invited but not confirmed)

Wednesday, November 13, 2024

9:00-10:30 am: Unlocking Inclusive Travel with an AI-(e.g. Accessibility Immersive-Hands-On Workshop)

Join us for an immersive Pre-Conference Hands-On AI Prompt Coaching Workshop, where we'll delve into the transformative power of artificial intelligence (AI) for travel industry executives.

What to Expect:

- **Beyond the Basics:** This isn't your typical AI session! We'll go beyond theory and dive into practical applications. Bring your laptops and open your minds for a truly interactive experience.
- **Empowering Travelers with Disabilities:** Discover how AI can revolutionize travel for people with disabilities. Learn how to create accessible accommodations, find tailored transportation options, and identify inclusive attractions.
- **Insights into Action:** Explore how AI turns questions into discoveries and insights into actionable steps. From personalized recommendations to seamless experiences, AI is your travel companion.

Your AI Coach: Presenter Todd Brook, CEO and Founder of Unchained, will guide you through practical skills and strategies to promote inclusivity in your travel offerings and elevate your AI IQ through hands-on exercises. Todd and his group serve as an outsourced Chief AI Officer for travel marketers and consulting on roadmaps, tools, and training needed to align your organization on the path forward.

10:30-11:30 am: InnovateAble Showcase PitchFest:

Elevating Accessibility and Beyond!

Get ready for a high-energy event that celebrates cutting-edge innovations, technology, and services! At the InnovateAble Showcase PitchFest, we're not just advancing

accessibility; we're propelling the future of travel, sustainability, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

Presenting Companies:

- [BeMyEyes](#): Imagine an AI app that guides blind travelers through hotels and attractions with ease and 90% accuracy.
- [360 Direct Video](#): Where deaf visitors at conferences and meetings can access ASL through a variety of travel scenarios.
- [Hero Hinge](#): Discover how Hero Hinge is revolutionizing automatic door access as it uses battery power to open ADA room doors at a 1/3 of the price.
- [True Omni](#): Uncover the groundbreaking inclusive visitor center kiosk that can be modified to be available to all.
- [CTI One](#): An AI- powered rollator that not only moves at your command, but recognizes you and drives up to meet your needs.

Join us for rapid fire 3-minute pitches followed by engaging 7-minute Q&A sessions. It's not just a showcase: it's a journey toward a better, more accessible future.

11:30-12:00 noon: Empowering Destinations: The Accessibility Playbook Unveiled

Discover the groundbreaking "Destination Centric" edition of the Accessibility Playbook! Produced in collaboration with Destinations International, this playbook is set to transform the way 750 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) worldwide approach accessibility. **Highlights: Sophia Hyder Hoch**, Chief Inclusion Officer, Destinations International

12:00-1:15 pm: Lunch on your own

Enjoy Fisherman's Wharf Dining.

1:15-1:30 pm: Opening Remarks

1:30-1:50 pm: Google for Everyone!

Introducing the Accessibility Playlist on Youtube, where you can scroll through scores of videos that demonstrate the platform's accessible features as well as learn the backstory behind the disabled team members who created them. Presenter, **Jackie Greenberg Pearce**, Event Program Manager, Google Accessibility.(i)

1:50-2:50 pm: Navigating Tomorrow: AARP's Insights on Aging Travelers

- **The latest Research and Insights:** AARP unveils research, trends, and strategies that shape the future of travel for older adults. From digital tools to accessible destinations, discover how the travel industry adapts to meet the unique needs and aspirations of this dynamic demographic. Exploring aspects of the senior traveler. Panelists include: **Cassandra Burton**, Senior Research Advisor, AARP
- **The Latest Trends in Airport Accessibility:** How cutting-edge accessibility innovations at the just renovated PDX International Airport will make the dreaded airport experience inclusive for everyone. **Walter Marchbanks**, Customer Programs and Services Manager, Portland International Airport
- **TSA and the Aging Traveler.** An overview of the little known services available to disabled travelers and seniors as they travel. Will it be possible to "age-out" of TSA security clearance? Jose Bonilla, Executive Director, Traveler Engagement, TSA

2:50-3:10 pm: A Decade of Tracking the Growth of Disabled Travel Trends (2010-2025)

In a groundbreaking study, the Open Doors Organization (ODO), in association with the Harris Poll, has meticulously tracked the spending and travel patterns of American adults with disabilities over the past fifteen years. Their comprehensive market studies, conducted in 2010, 2015, 2020 and now 2025, reveal fascinating insights into the growth of disabled travel. From air travel to rideshare services and from lodging to cruise lines and destination choices, this research sheds insights about how disabled travel has changed. **Laurel Van Horn**, Director of Programs, Open Doors Organization

3:10-3:45 pm: From Paris to LA: Insights on Helping LA Win Accessible Gold in 2028

In Conversation: John Morris, founder, Wheelchair Travel, shares his unique perspective as a wheelchair influencer and blogger who attended the Paris Olympics, to help **Adam Burke**, President and CEO of the Los Angeles Convention and Tourism Board, shape the visitor experience to accommodate the expected 400,000 plus disabled travelers at the 2028 Olympics.

3:45-4:00 pm: Catching the Next Wave in Cruising? An Overview of ICON of the Seas

Recent research by the Cruise Line Industry Association (CLIA), revealed that 80% of people with disabilities prefer a cruise line experience over other options. Royal Caribbean's ICON of the Seas is a floating theme park. Presenter: **Ron Pettit**, Head of Disability Inclusion, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

4:00-4:20 pm: Afternoon Break

4:20-4:30 pm: Steal this Idea! Accessible Video Itinerary

Embark on a virtual tour like no other! Tampa Bay's Accessible Itinerary uses Threshold 360 Video to weave the region's top accessible attractions into an itinerary. **Skylar Houck**, Marketing Manager, Visit Tampa Bay.

4:30-5:30 pm: How the Industry Can Make travel more Inviting to Blind and Low Visit Visitors

Session Overview: Join us for an inspiring session at **TravelAbility Summit** where we delve into practical ways to make destinations more inviting for blind and low vision visitors. Our experts will share insights, strategies, and real-world examples to enhance accessibility and create memorable experiences.

Mike May: As a Navigation Advisor at the American Printing House and medal holder in Downhill Skiing. **Kathy Martinez:** Formerly VP of Global Disability Inclusion, Expedia and Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability during the Obama administration. **Sassy Wyatt:** Founder of Blind Girl Adventures. Moderator: **Rachel Kamen**, Public Affairs Community Specialist, **Waymo (i)**.

5:30 pm: Opening Reception

Network and celebrate the start of the summit

November 14:

7:15-8:45 am: Networking Breakfast

8:45-9:05 am: In Honor of The Unicorn: Inclusive Hospitality In Conversation with Ron Kuzon, the new owner of America's Only Ultra-Accessible Hotel

In conversation with the visionary new owners of The Schoolhouse Hotel, in White Sulphur Springs, VA. The Schoolhouse is America's sole ultra-accessible hotel with 100% of the rooms beyond ADA compliant. This unique hotel will serve as a living showcase for cutting-edge accessibility innovations, adaptive technology, thoughtful spatial designs and functional styling for hotel developers planning to accommodate the tsunami of baby boomers in the future.

9:00-10:00 am The Hotel Owners/Executives Panel

A panel of hotel owners and executives come together with leading members of the disability travel community to engage in enriching dialogue that fosters understanding and results in a more inclusive experience for everyone.

Hotel Panelists: **Apoorva Gandhi**, Sr. VP Multi-Cultural Affairs and Social Impact, **Marriott International**. **Adam Suleman**, owner, Equinox Hospitality. Equinox owns or manages 15 branded (Marriott, IHG, Hilton, Hyatt, Sonesta) and independent hotels.

Bimel Patel, Owner, Concept Hotel Group (I). Concept Hotels owns a series of independent hotels throughout California.

Steven Marais, VP Rooms, Noblehouse Hotels.

10:00-10:40 am: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. What's the Worst Travel Experience You've Ever Had—and What's the Best?

We ask a panel of disabled travelers and caregivers about their most horrifying travel experiences as well as their most rewarding.

Presenters:

- **Mobility:** Kristy Durso, Founder, Incredible Adventures Travel
- **Blind and Visually Impaired:** Kathy Martinez, former VP Accessibility Inclusion, Expedia.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder:** Alan Day, Founder, Autism Double Checked
- **Deafness:** Lily Yu, founder, Deaf Journeys
- **Autism,** Talia Salem, Senior Manager, Editorial Strategy, Ritz Carlton Hotels

10:40-11:20 am: Forward Thinking States Discuss Their Approaches to Accessibility

Explore the ways in which states proactively address accessibility for travel and visitors. By sharing best practices, innovative policies, and collaborative efforts, these states aim to create welcoming environments for all travelers, regardless of their abilities.

Panelists: **Kevin Wright**, VP Marketing, Travel Oregon. **Rafael Villaneuava**, Director, Travel Nevada. **Nick Nerbonne**, Director, Media, Digital, Industry Relations, Travel Michigan.

11:20-11:40: Morning Break

11:40-12:30 pm: The Autism Hour

Includes the following sessions:

The Lived Experience: Autism Parents discuss their travel experiences

From airports to hotels, sensory overload to emotional regulation, our panel of parents will delve into the challenges faced by neurodiverse travelers. This session promises valuable insights and actionable takeaways to help the industry know how they can be more accepting and supportive.

Moderator: **Alan Day**, CEO, Autism Double Checked. **Kristy Durso**, Founder, Accessible Travel Network. **Alex Stratikis**, Autism Tourism Consultant, Autism Adventures Abroad.

New Research: The Impact of ADHD, Autism and Neurodiversity on Families that Travel

MMGY released a landmark survey where, for the first time, parents of children with ADHD, autism or other forms of neurodiversity share their plans, preferences and challenges for future family vacations.

Chris Davidson, EVP, Travel Intelligence, MMGY Global

Has Visit Myrtle Beach Gone Hollywood?

The story of how Visit Myrtle Beach developed the concept for 'Traveling on The Spectrum' and successfully sold it to a major streaming service. After months of rejections, their persistence paid off as multiple streaming channels competed for the distribution rights which ultimately went to NBC's Peacock.

Presenter: **Stuart Butler**, CMO, Visit Myrtle Beach.

Steal these Ideas: DIY Autism Readiness Group Training

How Experience Kissimmee created their own Introductory Autism Readiness Class for their stakeholders. **Jason Holic**. How Visit Loudoun partnered with their local chapter of the ARC to develop autism training. **Jennifer Christie**, Director of Marketing and Industry Relations, Visit Loudoun.

12:30-2:00 pm Lunch

2:00-3:00 pm: How We Got Started... and Where We Are today.

Accessibility may be a journey with no finish line, but it's also one with many starting lines. Discover how three travel organizations embarked on their accessible journeys. Learn from how these three travel organizations began.

- Gain inspiration and confidence to kickstart your own accessibility initiatives
- Learn how destinations address accessibility around historical homes/attractions.
- Connect with industry experts who've paved the way.
- Leave with practical steps to make your destination more inclusive.

Presenters: **Jennifer Christie**, Director of Marketing and Industry Relations, Visit Loudoun. **Alex Zimdars**, Performance Marketing Manager, Visit Milwaukee. **Connor Nolan**, Destination Development Manager, Visit Lane County.

2:00-3:00 pm. **BREAKOUT: The Companion**. It's mostly family members, companions and caregivers of people with disabilities that research, plan, and book the travel. They're also the troubleshooters when things go awry. How can we market to this important segment and how can we all make their experience less laborious. Panelists: **Lynn Osmond**, former CEO, Choose Chicago, moderator. **Joy Burns**, Alliances and Community Coordinator, **Wheel the World**; **Jason Lehmbeck**, founder, **Undivided**; **Bobby Chappell**, Strategy and Implementation Consultant, **Tourism Impact Services**.

3:00-3:30 pm: **Unlocking ROI: Return on Investment or Return on Impact**

Discover how two destinations measure the value of accessibility in different ways. While Choose Lansing extracted data from the Longwoods Michigan Visitor Study that would ultimately provide proof that three years of proactively building and promoting accessibility paid off in measurable ROI, the Oregon Coast took a different approach that involved immersive education, grants to fund accessibility upgrades and promotion. Presenters: **Julie Pingston**, CEO, Choose Lansing; **Arica Sears**, Deputy Director, Oregon Coast Visitors Association.

3:00-3:30 pm. **BREAKOUT Can Adding Accessibility Information to RFP Responses be a differentiator that will win more Meetings business?** By including accessibility information in their bids to meeting planners, destinations and hotels can set themselves apart from other competitors and transform their events into welcoming spaces for all. A destination and meeting planner discuss their experiences.

Presenters: **Toni Bastian**, Director of Accessibility and Tourism Sales, Visit Richmond. **Sarika Sheth**, Managing Director, 38 North Connections.

3:30-4:00 pm: Accessibility and the Great Outdoors: Empowering All to Explore Natural Beauty

Discover how National Parks and state parks are evolving to ensure that everyone, regardless of physical ability, can experience the wonders of our outdoor spaces. From

all-terrain wheelchairs that conquer rocky trails to audio-described exhibits for the blind, we'll explore the innovative solutions that bridge the gap between preservation and inclusivity.

Jeremy Buzzell, Manager, Park Accessibility for Visitors and Employees. National Park Service (i), **Ashley Lynn Olson**, founder, Wheelchairtraveling.com (i)

4:00-4:20 pm: Afternoon break

4:20-5:20 Out of the Box Consulting Room

6:00-7PM: VIP Private Reception for Accessibility Champions and Destination A11Y Club Members

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9:00-9:15 am: Top 10 trends in Accessible Travel for 2025

Jake Steinman, Founder, TravelAbility

9:00-9:15 am: BREAKOUT Top 10 Trends in Destination Stewardship. Cathy Ritter, Founder, Better Destinations.

9:15-10:15 am: Leveraging the Insight of Content Creators to Amplify Authenticity

A panel of influential social media thinkers provide their perceptions of how their audience has changed and how to reach them.

Alex Stratikis, Autism Adventures Abroad; **Sassy Wyatt**, Blind Girl Travels; **Jennifer Allen**, Wonders within Reach; **Lily Yu**, Deaf Journeys.

9:15-10:15 am: BREAKOUT How Stewardship leverages visitor services and amenities that can be used by residents.

Cathy Ritter, Founder, Better Destinations. (additional Panelists TBD)

10:15-11:00 am: Three Different Approaches to Accessibility: Master Plan, Strategic Plan, Action Plan and No Plan

Three Destinations discuss the trials and tribulations of incorporating accessibility in their master plans.

Panelists: **Jessa Campbell**, Director Destination Development and Communications, Visit Fort Wayne. **Amanda Burke**, Director, Integrated Marketing, Visit the Palm Beaches. **Cassie Ivey**, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement, Visit Charlottesville.

10:15-10:30 am: BREAKOUT Inclusive Marketing Strategies: Reaching Travelers with Disabilities and Their Companions

Digital Targeting Techniques for Identifying Care Companions of Disabled Travelers

Join us for an insightful session led by **Richard Black**, Regional VP of Destinations at **Sojern**, as we explore effective marketing strategies tailored to travelers with disabilities and their care companions. In an increasingly connected world, digital targeting techniques play a crucial role in identifying and engaging this valuable audience.

Key Points:

- **Understanding the Audience:** We'll delve into the unique needs and preferences of disabled travelers and their companions. By understanding their motivations, challenges, and aspirations, we can create more relevant and impactful marketing campaigns
- **Digital Targeting:** Discover cutting-edge techniques for pinpointing care companions of disabled travelers. From personalized ads to data-driven insights, we'll explore how to reach the right audience at the right time.

Richard Black, Regional VP Sojern.

10:30-11:00 AM BREAKOUT Effective marketing and Promotions

Showcase of best practices for promotions and marketing in videos and social media. Learn from Visit Lauderdale's inspiring initiatives, featuring stories of resilience and empowerment. From Blind Bill's beach adventure, to the Deaf Seniors' cultural exploration and the awe-inspiring journey of a Paralympic Swimmer without arms, these real-life narratives demonstrate the power of inclusive marketing.

Presenter: **Richard Gray**, VP Accessibility and Inclusion, Visit Lauderdale.

11:00-11:20 Morning break

11:20-12:00 noon: BREAKOUT What Constitutes a Reasonable Accommodation (for hotels, attractions, restaurants, and meetings)

In many cases, because the ADA law is 34 years old and was written for the median, it works for half the people and doesn't work for the other half. Hospitality organizations can be completely compliant and inaccessible at the same time, depending on the traveler's level of disability. So what really constitutes reasonable accommodation and practical aspects of providing reasonable accommodations for disabled guests in the hospitality industry? This covers hotels, attractions, restaurants, and meetings - emphasizing compliance with the Equality Act and ensuring equal access to services. In addition to the session's content, we'll have a panel representing different disabilities weighing in with their thoughts.

Panelists: **Kristy Durso**, Owner, Incredible Memories Travel who is a wheelchair user and travel advisor. **Craig Radford**, CEO, 360, Direct Video who is deaf., **Sassy Wyatt**, CEO, **Blind Girl Travels**.

12:00-12:30 Show and Tell: Over the Top Accessibility Promotions

12:00-12:30 BREAKOUT Over the Top Stewardship Promotions

12:30-2:00 pm TravelAbility Superstars Luncheon