ADA Big Picture

*Note: transcript lightly edited for clarity.*

**Joel Hagen:** Hello and welcome to the Legrand | AV podcast, The Download. This month, we're doing a series of episodes on making AV technology ADA compliant. I'm Joel Hagen, your guide through this special series. Thanks for joining me on this journey.

In the last episode, we covered all the hits, the questions we get asked most when it comes to ADA compliance, whether it's protrusions from a wall, the height of a work surface, where operable parts need to be located, and much more. All that good stuff you need to know down to the inch. For this episode, we're going to take a high-level overview of the basics, starting with what is the ADA, what is the scope of the law, and how designing with the ADA in mind enhances the experience for everyone.

And I'll even throw in a “why is Legrand | AV doing this” for you along the way.

Let's start with the most basic definition. The Americans with Disabilities Act, the ADA, was signed into law over 30 years ago on July 26, 1990, and updated in 2008 to ensure the provision of equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just like other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. The ADA is what ensures people with disabilities are given the same opportunities for employment, buying goods and services, and participating in civic life.

The ADA covers a wide range of disabilities, some listed, some not, some of which are visible, and some of which are not. Roughly 26 percent of adults, or 13 of all age groups in the U.S. have some sort of disability according to the U.S. Census. Some examples of disabilities are blindness or low vision, deafness or hearing loss, diabetes, cancer, mobility disabilities, such as requiring a wheelchair or cane, major depressive disorders, and many, many more. The ADA has five different sections called titles. Title 1 covers employer requirements. Title 4 focuses on telecommunications.

In the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, the government set minimum standards for state and local government facilities, Title II, and public accommodations and commercial facilities to be readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities, Title III. These standards cover everything from washing machines, to parking spaces, to miniature golf facilities, so it can be tricky to sift through to find specific standards that AV industry professionals should know.

Consider this podcast series a sort of companion piece to Legrand | AV's publication, “ADA in AV, Making AV Technology ADA Compliant.” The guide is the most comprehensive publication specifically for the AV industry about the ADA that we know of. This podcast and the guide are meant to serve for educational purposes only, not as legal advice.

If you're looking for specific guidance or details, you should contact the folks at ADA.gov.

Now, no discussion about the ADA should go without some direct experience from the people who are most affected by it. Our next guest, Dan O'Donnell, has been in AV sales from home theater systems around Y2K all the way to his current position as director of outside sales at Starin.

He's well known in the AV industry, but more importantly for this series, he's had a significant insight into how AV can impact the experiences of people with disabilities. Thank you for coming to the podcast, Dan.

**Dan O'Donnell:** Joel, thanks so much for having me.

**Joel Hagen:** You know, I really wanted to have you on because you have a particular insight with bridging both the AV industry and ADA concerns, I'm just going to leave it to you to explain that for us.

**Dan O'Donnell:** Joel. Thanks for having me, man. I'm so grateful to be here talking about a topic that's just really near and dear to my heart. You know, I'd like to share with the audience just a little bit about why I think you tapped me for this podcast today.

You know, I have a unique experience of being in tech my entire professional career, and for the last 20 years, being a caregiver to our son. My wife and I, we have three kids, and our oldest son, Matthew, we call him Matty for short, when he was born, he was diagnosed with quadriplegic cerebral palsy. So for those of you who don't have a parental medical degree, like I do, for the last 20 years, that means he has quadriplegia.

So he's in a wheelchair, he is nonverbal, but this kid is full of life. Cognitively, he's there. He laughs at all the silly things that I do, and he just loves and enjoys life. And we've had just an amazing ride over the last 20 years. So I think, you know, being a parent, being a caregiver, and of course, a member of this amazing AV community and space, I'm just so excited to kind of talk about what it's like to be in that and then also sitting in meetings on the factory side, on the dealer side, and now on the distribution side where I see the conversations start to surface and being able to come in as a subject matter expert is really great.

You know, I can tell you it's a tough job, being a parent with a special needs child. But it's made me into a piece of steel in some cases. It's amazing when I think back 20 years ago, and we're sitting down with the chief of neurology at one of the most recognized children's hospitals in the entire world. I met families from all over at our time there. And the Chief of Neurology, someone who had years and years of schooling, years and years of experience, tell me and my wife all the things that our newborn baby would never do.

And I really believe that defeat and that information fueled us to prove a wrong every step of the way. And as we get into it, you know, the things like he would never walk. We found a device called a KidWalk. He would never talk. We found a device called the My Tobii and with a tremendous amount of training and work into it, he was able to talk kind of like what Stephen Hawking would use. Everyone's familiar with that one of those assistive devices. You would never eat by mouth. Quality of life would be bad. The kid goes to the beach. We got an awesome beach wheelchair called water wheels where we could go all the way into the ocean or into the gulf, which is awesome.

So super excited to be here and chat with you about, you know, some of my experiences, ADA and what I'm seeing, especially from how products can be used today, maybe some improvements that we can make as well. And hopefully help some of the people in the AV community realize that this is really an untapped vertical. Kind of like how eSports is all the buzz and you know, but what about accessible AV? Because that could definitely hit a bigger audience.

**Joel Hagen:** Absolutely. And I like how you have this 20-year history of dealing with ADA issues and have probably seen quite a change and an appreciation of good design over that time with Matty’s particular needs. Can I call him Matty?

**Dan O'Donnell:** Of course. Love that when he sees this, he's going to be over the moon.

**Joel Hagen:** Awesome. Hello, Matty. So yeah, over the 20 years, how much have things changed would you say?

**Dan O'Donnell:** They've changed tremendously for the better. And I think when I look and I see like ADA, right, one of the words in there is disability, right?

And it's kind of a negative term. I always try to look at things glass half full, and I try to look for the good, and inside that word disability is the word ability, right? So I've seen things like in airports, especially from an auditory and a visual, which really, the basis of AV, right?

Audio, video, and as far as all the smart people in the medical field like to call it, but that's getting so much better. Think about screen sizes, hearing, different senses, you know, different user experiences. But it's definitely getting better. I remember when Matty was much smaller, and we'd have to go hide in a corner to kind of change him.

And now there's great signage, right? You know, could be digital could be analog, on where changing areas would be. Changing areas are getting better. And just overall accessibility continues to improve. But what's really special is, I think, how AV can really kick that up a notch in a lot of different applications.

**Joel Hagen:** Absolutely. Let's talk about now, where do you feel the industry is versus where it needs to go?

**Dan O'Donnell:** So I would have to say that for most people that look at like ADA, I think. And again, I haven't seen every install, every building, every project, but I've been on some pretty amazing projects over the last 20 years, between the factory side and now in the distributor side, we have with some of our dealers, and it’s just amazing to see what's out there.

I think the challenge is because of the unknown, and I think podcasts like this and your efforts with ADA and just creating awareness around the vertical, I was looking back through some of our DMs all the way back from 2019. And I know this has been a hot topic for you, but as far as where it can go, I think it can grow tremendously. I think of everyday products that are used in AV, and I'll give you an example like a cable retractor, right? We have some great cable retractors from Legrand. There's other partners that also have solutions like this, but if you're an integrator, you're a designer and you put those into a bid and then all of a sudden we get to the value engineering stage of a project because we're a little bit over budget because of the granite or the glass that was picked or the type of furniture that was picked and who always takes the hit? Us, the AV people, right?

How many times have you been in those conference rooms where there's a 30-foot HDMI cable coiled up in the corner of the room? All it takes is one person to kind of call that out and say, “well, what if someone can't reach down and grab that cable and then connect it to their device, and it keeps that person at home versus being there in the moment in the environment?”

So I think if we look at some of the things that we have right now and how they can create accessibility, that really can make all the difference in the world. Because one of the other things that I think we have to look at is the people who are using these places now. So, if we look at some of the verticals that we all service in this industry – classrooms, workplace, retail, house, worship, live events – a lot of them are designed where people who can walk and have no motor challenges are easily accessible.

But what happens when somebody in that organization gets ill or has a big life change that prevents them from doing things the way they always had been doing it? A lot of times in AV we hear, “well, that's not the way we used to do it. We've always done it this way.” Well, what happens when life throws you that curveball, and how can we take the products that we have today, and make them adaptable make them accessible. And then as manufacturers and designers and consultants, how can we look to make those improvements that just may not be on the surface visible right in front of you?

**Joel Hagen:** That brings up a good point, but there always seems to be a tension between being ADA compliant and cost overruns.

But I imagine that divide is shrinking every year with the prices of AV products that can do a lot more things. Are you seeing more creative uses of existing products to achieve ADA compliance?

**Dan O'Donnell:** Absolutely. I think especially if we look at some of these environmental sensors that could really help people, they've come down so much in cost. Some of them now are even P.O.E. and they're so affordable where years ago, you would think that it really was a more one-off bespoke-type solution. So I think taking products that are mainstream and bringing them into the fold is a big help. And one of them, which I think so many users use, or at least half the market, right? If I'm battling my wife, who's an Android fan, and I'm an iOS fan, but you even take the new iPad Pro, and it actually can date back the last two generations under accessibility, there's actually an eye gaze and a dwell and some of the AAC type terminology that speech therapists are using to help people with special needs all over the spectrum. Everything from slight impairments all the way to pretty severe on the spectrum where you can actually use an iPad and you could put it in guided access. You could use these environmental controls, but you can actually look at an icon on an iPad to help press a button.

How cool would that be if you're in your UC room and you can “One touch to join.” What about “One look to join,” right? And be able to help that accessibility where someone still can have that room function.

So, yeah, I think there's when you start peeling back the onion. There are so many things that are already here today, and with minor improvements or apps… So in the case of that iPad, there's an app for $300. And you figure the price of an iPad, you know, depending on what size you prefer, what size the person would need and that app, rivals systems and solutions, like that computer that used to be connected to the late Stephen Hawking's power wheelchair. That computer and God knows how much the mount cost, we know mounts are expensive for right now, but that device alone was well over $20,000 just a short while ago. Companies are still selling them for $10,000 to $15,000.

But if you could take everyday items like an iPad and use a software like a touch chat and with a little bit of training and a little bit of education, be able to open up a whole new world of accessibility for users.

**Joel Hagen:** Have you had that experience with Matty where like something comes along that wasn't available before and it just opens up that whole new world?

**Dan O'Donnell:** Absolutely. I think some of the things that come along with Apple Home Kit and Google Home and stuff like that have done it. I can tell you firsthand, we were one of those families in line fighting with insurance trying to get one of those accessible devices.

Fortunately, we were so lucky to get one and use it. But I can tell you, it relates so much to our business. And if you think of special multipurpose rooms or classrooms that were designed 5, 10 years ago, where basically you need to be an engineer in order to run the remote?

You think about user experience and that the person who programmed it knows how to use it, and no matter how many great pages and page flips and macros and functionality that they have, there were still a lot of people in the C-suite that were like, “hey, can we call IT and tell them to turn the room on and get it ready for us?”

Same thing happened for us. Then along comes the iPad, and it's something that, not to knock on Apple, but they don't really even advertise it much. Even with a recent update and changing iPads, I had to remember how to go in and set up the app. And I was searching all over YouTube for a video.

Fortunately enough, I found a dad that walked through with a screen share on how to do it and how to get it set up for the dwell that I needed for Matty. And I think we're going to see even more and more of that, Joel. I think we're going to see more and more of that where it's set in silent accessibility. Like it's there, and that's one of the special things about AV is we get to unlock that, right? Like cable retractors. They're great. They're convenient. Take away the clutter, but could you imagine being that consultant, that engineer, that AV integrator. You're sitting across the table, and you may not know, cause up until now, I really don't advertise that I have you know, my, my home life, what's going on at home, you know, some people know, and they ask and it's fine. I don't hide it, but I'm, I'm not looking for you know, sympathy. Like that's the hand we were dealt and we're going to make the best of it.

But you are that person sitting across the table from the decision-maker. You're talking about articulating mounts that come down for the interactive flat panel, or you're talking about the cable retractors and you reference, “if you have someone that has mobility issues, this is great because they're able to come in.”

They may not tell you. I may not share everything with someone that's trying to sell me something, but it could be that one spark that resonates with that stakeholder. And they're like, “Yep, I'm going with that person because there's somebody in my organization or somebody in my family that we care about that we want to be able to accommodate to and help them.”

And they may not even know. So I think what you're doing with this podcast, what you do with the guide. I would encourage people just to think a little bit deeper behind the ones and zeros. What's the UX, what's the CX around the tech that we're putting into these spaces.

**Joel Hagen:** Yeah. I think AV professionals should be aware that U.S. census has up to 25 percent of people in the U.S. have some sort of disability that they're dealing with, and that is a large chunk of the population that you're cutting out if you're not doing this stuff. And I love the story about the dad who had to figure it out, but then he thought, you know what? I bet other people are going to have that same struggle. And he put together a video, and that's awesome.

**Dan O'Donnell:** Oh, it's great. It's so funny. The first thing you see in some of these videos - people are so quick to say “like, and subscribe,” before the video even starts.

And then you see somebody take some time out of their day. And it's amazing. Those videos, they make a difference.

**Joel Hagen:** So can you provide some examples of inaccessible AV installations and the issues that they pose for your family or for others that you know?

**Dan O'Donnell:** So as far as like inaccessibility, I think that many of the installs today, or we think of like what those guidelines are, do one of two things. I think it either puts that person on a platform or a spotlight where they don't really feel integrated into it. And it's kind of like calling it out. And I think one way of looking at that is design, where if you were to come into my home, you'd never know that the bathroom for Matty is ADA.

Right, like there's a way of putting design in in the same kind of a mindset just like we have in-wall speakers and we have hidden speakers and hidden technology. I think one of the neat things that we can do is take our tech and put it in where it doesn't have to always call out what's going on in the room. It's kind of there.

And it's that thought process where it's all connected.

**Joel Hagen:** Can you provide some examples of really amazing accessible AV installations and how they change your experience with an organization or a brand or however you want to…

**Dan O'Donnell:** I'll give you a good example of something that happened probably about four or five years ago.

One of the greatest places for special needs families is Disney. And Disney has been so accommodating over the years for our family. Think about going into a sales center or going into U.S. Bank Stadium. I remember taking a tour of U.S. Bank Stadium, and they were trying to sell luxury boxes, and we were out there with the integrator that was working in that and got a chance to go through.

And when they open the door, you go into this dark room. And inside this dark room, there was a screen. And I think at that time, Adrian Peterson was playing and all of the sudden he says, “Are you ready? Are you ready?” And then the doors open and then there's 65-inch screens all the way down. And it makes you feel like you're running down the tunnel.

And I think of that experience where, “did they have to go to that level in AV to be able to bring that experience?” Because it could have just been a diorama. And the reason I bring that up is we go to Disney, and this is right before they start all the construction at EPCOT. There was an area that was off to the left, right as you go into the World Showcase, that you go into, and for anybody who's visited recently, it's really turned into bathrooms and some quick service area to get a snack and take a break.

But they had this amazing immersive experience where you think of some people that may have auditory and visual challenges. But to be immersed into those environments is amazing.

But I can tell you between the projection mapping and the audio and everything that was there, my son's face, he just lit up. So I wheel him up and show him a picture of something like, coming soon. This is what the build-out is going to be. Basically it'd be almost like AR, VR, life experience where you're in that environment, in that room.

It was pretty amazing. It's still something, a video that I share with a lot of people, that I have on my phone because it was just really neat how you bring in projection mapping and all the visual components, all the audio components to really get immersed into that. I know not every budget and every project has Disney money, but there are ways that we can make those, those subtle improvements to be able to deliver those experiences.

**Joel Hagen:** Yeah, and that's a lot more specialized kind of entertainment experience that they're creating, too. Absolutely. So, what advice would you give to AV designers, integrators, and installers to ensure they consistently meet ADA requirements and, we're not working in a vacuum, we're talking to architects, engineers, interior designers, so everyone has a hand in creating this outcome. How do you navigate all those ins and outs with so many different people to approach ADA compliance?

**Dan O'Donnell:** I think at the beginning of your question, you hit it. How do we convince the architects, consultants, and designers? Because in a lot of the bigger projects, it starts there. Making sure that they have all the resources.

I think the guide that you put together, you've been working on so much. Having a chance to review that really helps create curiosity, and I think creates a conversation that will... Okay, you know what? Products are getting easier to integrate. We don't need a lot of heavy lifting because in the IoT world that we're in now, a lot of products are connecting together and creating better workflows. But I think a combination of having accessibility and looking at it from a view of, “Yes, if I were to use the space or if I'm designing a system, it's good for me, but did I really talk to everybody inside that organization? Did I talk to the facilities team? Did I even talk to the HR team? Did I talk to other people in that organization? Just to see where else we can have impact?” And we can help because it's interesting that as AV, we're the last ones on the job, but we're the first budget to get cut.

So how do you separate yourself from nice to have to need to have? ADA speaks volumes for that because whether it's the cable retractor, the cable on the floor, the wireless sharing product that you're going to have at the table and making that easily accessible, whether it's a plug-and-play or a simple app. A lot of those products have apps now, where maybe that user has an iOS device with them and they can look at it. They can open the app with their eyes and they can go and they can start the meeting and run the presentation. Maybe they're not the presenter, but maybe there's some person in the organization that still wants to work, that still wants to contribute to the community, and AV and tech has so many different avenues that it can go.

But to your point, starting with the design, and whether it’s already an existing product, or if you're a manufacturer inside your organization, having those conversations. So many products are built in a vacuum. In this day and age between influencers and social media, you know where to find input. People know where to find feedback, and you can do that in a discreet way and then bring that back in if you choose. You can bring that person in and have them talk to those people and just share some experiences about how we take this off-the-shelf product and really put it to more people. So those numbers and the census are huge.

You dig even deeper and you look into different diagnoses throughout, you know. You know, everything that encompasses ADA, the numbers are unbelievable. Like when you think of that percentage of 330 million people, that is a lot of people that we can help and impact and help change your lives.

**Joel Hagen:** Are there any specific considerations for AV installations in public spaces like auditoriums or conference rooms regarding ADA compliance that you think everyone should understand? Like this baseline should be done every time.

**Dan O'Donnell:** If we look at it as a baseline, the obvious of bigger doorways, better turning radius and stuff like that for people that are in wheelchairs. But I would look at it as, because I'm sure there's lots of stuff that because of my own experiences I'm missing out on, so I remember Stevie Wonder getting up at one of the awards shows not too long ago. Talking about how the music community can help people. And I can help blind and visually impaired people. I would say think of those experiences and think of those things that you've seen along the way, because I'm not touching all the different avenues. Depending on what that disability is, whether it's right in front of you or maybe a hidden disability. If you're looking for a baseline, try to bring in some of your own life experiences with that, and then think about the same thing for speaker placement for displays. Are the displays too high? Are they too low? Are they in a good spot? Are there enough displays?

I think, Joel, you and I have probably been in thousands of bowling alley meeting rooms. Could you imagine being in the quarterly review executive briefing room and you're sitting there either turned to the right or turned to the left for 2, 3 hours because you want to be shown that you're paying attention? Or is it a huddle space where everyone's out there looking at their screens and then looking up occasionally and working like a coworking environment? So I think the baseline should be use the guides and the tools that are available, but also just be aware and create that awareness that this is kind of the starting point. What things can you do additionally with the tools that are there? If you're on the factory side, what are some of the things that we can improve?

Because I love the point you brought up. You're helping people with accessibility challenges, but you can also make it better for everybody because could you imagine you're an able-bodied person, but you're sitting in a chair for six hours and you're just looking to your left or looking to your right?

You know, why aren't there screens all over the room? We’ve got matrix switchers. We’ve got cables. We’ve got distribution amps. We’ve got extenders. We have so many cool things to help some of those spaces where because of the design restrictions and maybe the layouts that were done in a more architectural design way. Technology, and AV in particular, has a way of enhancing those spaces to make them better for everybody to use.

So don't just walk into a room and go, Oh, here's the bowling alley room – 20 person room, 98-inch screen on the front of the room, a couple of connection points. My job is done. Take it to the next level. Make those suggestions about a cart, interactive whiteboard, some other kind of assistive technology.

But you know, go in that direction and just look for a little bit more. Those minor adjustments could mean a huge, huge difference for so many people.

**Joel Hagen:** And yeah, there's some big changes coming out of the pandemic where we're rethinking conference rooms. Microsoft is orienting everyone to the camera rather than to the other side of the table and how that creates a more equitable experience for someone calling in that maybe due to mobility, they can't get into the office, but if they join a bowling table conference call, they're just kind of off to the side and no one's really involving them. Yeah, with the new layouts, I'm really excited about that and the opportunities that are created by that to just make the experience better, and not people in the room versus people remote.

**Dan O'Donnell:** Absolutely. And there's even some tech now with some of the all-in-one product out there where they're putting side firing cameras on the far ends of the screens shooting across.

So it's definitely getting better. But the thinking of nice to have versus need to have… I think one of the big takeaways for our community, both on the manufacturing side, the design side and the installation side is, how do you separate yourself from the last one in on the job and the first budget to get cut and having a mindset, whether you're a system designer on the job working through a consultant's documents? You're looking through construction drawings and whatnot. And obviously, you want to win the bid.

You want to win the project with the client. Do what you can to have that conversation and get in front of the customer and ask those questions and think of the submittals and pose those questions, “Hey, I would like to provide this as an alternate because it can do this, this, and this.” How do you separate yourself from the nice to have to need to have? That’s someplace where we can win big every day.

**Joel Hagen:** Are you seeing because of the pandemic and the fact that not everyone's going to be in the office anymore from here on out, there's not going to be a conference room set up just for presentations? It's also a video conferencing suite?

And is that kind of reality helpful for the AV integrator to not get their budget cut because companies and schools – they have to have that capability now?

**Dan O'Donnell:** They do. And that's something that people that are proactive, especially on the integrator side, they're winning big time.

I know the few integrators that may not be the integrators that can go and do a 200-person auditorium or really advanced multipurpose room, but they're winning big. Taking all-in-one commercial-grade VC products, putting them on specialized carts with battery packs, and creating a whole level accessibility? Why not? Right? That's something that we can do. You can take an all-in-one panel, speaker, camera, microphone, put it on a cart or have it fixed in a room. But I think it gets back to one thing that we need to do. And it doesn't matter what's going on in the world – someone always has to be selling.

And the way I like to look at it is I don't really do any selling. I just enable the buy, but you can't enable the buy unless you educate. Letting them know that products like this are available, that you can get a great cart, an all-in-one, and have something mobile, or we have products that you can send home to the people that are working from home and give them enterprise-grade camera speaker microphone even in their home and talk about how the home office now becomes the home studio.

It hits so many different aspects of our industry and there's always an opportunity.

**Joel Hagen:** What do you think the future of ADA compliance and AV installation looks like? What should professionals prepare for and what gives you hope about the progression of accessibility options?

**Dan O'Donnell:** Well, it has to get better. And if our industry was like the car industry, everybody’d have a Bugatti and a Lambo right? It's better every year and a little bit cheaper. I think we're in a really good space because so many different aspects of our life now, because of what's happened the last couple of years, got put a spotlight on.

There's a lot of talk about representation. There's a lot of talk about inclusion, and ADA is really the basis of that. ADA is really what helped generate that awareness. And if you think about it, it really doesn't matter what you look like, who you love, or anything, but how do we take this piece of legislation that's there and how do we put it into as much things as we can to help people? One of the natural human things is people like to help people. Help is help and love are two powerful words. I think the future is very bright.

I'll probably close with a quick story because I think it really resonates with me and it was really, really powerful and very moving, and it just shows that we could take an off-the-shelf product and look at the different use cases. I was on my farewell tour when I worked at Key Digital. I worked there for almost 13 years. It was an amazing experience. Worked with some amazing people. It was great. And I was getting ready to go work for Crestron. Which was pretty awesome. And I had a trip to Arizona, and I was there for about a day.

I had about a whole day of work and then red-eyed the next day. Cause as a special needs parent, I had to be like the Navy SEALs. Go in, do my mission, get back to home base, and make sure everything's okay. So I'm out in Arizona. Had a whole bunch of meetings, and then I had a few hours before the red-eye flight.

I never get any time for myself. So I happened to look on my phone and I saw that I was in Scottsdale and I was not too far away from a Tesla dealership. So I was like, “I got a few minutes. I know they're open. I'm going to go and check it out. I want to see what all the buzz is.” The Model Three, I think was just shipping maybe a year at that point. Maybe a year and a half, somewhere around there.

So I go into the store. A young guy’s there, And I said, “Hey, look, I'm a sales guy and I'm not buying anything today, but I have no time for myself. I got like an hour to kill. Can I drive one of these?” And it's so funny being a salesman because, he's like, “of course.” He didn't ask me for my license. Didn't ask me for my address or where I work. He's like, “yeah, let's go for a ride.” He was so excited. We get in the Model Three. And we get on the highway and, he's like, “I'm going to show you something really cool. I'm going to show you what full self driving is.”

We get on the highway and for those of you who've been in a Tesla, you take the right stock and you double tap and you hear this chime. All of a sudden, the steering is taking over on the vehicle and think of it as cruise control with automatic steering. The neat thing being a tech nerd is at that time it was using radar, lidar, sonar, the cameras, all kinds of tech.

And it was basically keeping you in the lines and doing the steering. Then he says, go ahead and hit the left stock. You know, to change lanes, I hit the left stock to change lanes, and the car automatically changed lanes. And I got so emotional because the first thing I thought about was Matty. I thought about Matty because of technology like this, when I'm no longer around to take care of him, he will be able to get to his doctor's appointments, he'll be able to get out and not be homebound or in a place.

And because of that, it really made me a huge fan of Tesla. I can't afford this car now, but maybe in a little while, I'll be able to get it. I have to support this company because the stuff that they're doing, that silent accessibility, that hidden technology, because of my particular use case is going to change the lives of so many people.

You think of people that can't get out and maybe down the road, they'll license that technology to other automakers. They'll be able to work within … they'll have a van or they'll have something else accessible, but the simple fact that something that is really a nice to have. You can have any car you want, right?

You can go to the dealership and all this other stuff, but for me, it was a need to have because I needed this company to succeed. And even though I'm just one person of many at that time, you know, if you look at the sales from 2018, 2019, to where we are now, 2023, and some of the reports you see are just mind-breaking.

I'm rooting for them selfishly because that technology was better, and I've been in cars three times the money on that, and I've never seen tech as advanced. What I would say is think about the hidden technology. Think about the product that's already there in front of you.

And what are some of those features? What are some of those benefits of those solutions? So we're not the last guy on the job in the first budget to get cut. We can create accessibility. We can create better user experiences. Just enjoy the time we have with this really cool tech space that we're in.

**Joel Hagen:** That's incredible. So for people interested in hearing more or obtaining your services, how can they reach you?

**Dan O'Donnell:** Great. I'm a pretty heavy LinkedIn user, so it's probably the best place. I'll use the X platform, formerly known as Twitter. Feel free to reach out to me on LinkedIn or Twitter anytime. Whatever I could do to help, especially when it comes to ADA and accessibility.

It's near and dear to my heart and I’m very passionate about it. So if I can be of any assistance, bounce ideas off, please reach out, and Joel, thanks for all your hard work, man. That guide you put together with your team is amazing. I haven't seen anybody else in the industry put that much time and energy and thoughtfulness into it.

And from, from my personal, the personal community, I can't wait to share that with a lot of the other special needs parents that I'm connected with in the tech industry, because that's the difference maker. Like, we realized that there's opportunity to help people as well as do right. So thank you for that.

**Joel Hagen:** Thank you very much for joining and sharing your experience and your expertise. This has been awesome.

Kathryn Gaskell is back for the second time on this ADA series. She's the Director for Eco-Design and Regulatory for Legrand | AV, as well as a champion for diversity and inclusion. And I'm excited to talk to her this time about the benefits of designing for ADA-compliant spaces. Welcome to the podcast, Kathryn.

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Thanks, Joel.

**Joel Hagen:** All right. So what has been your experience with the ADA and product management in the AV industry?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** So coming from the Chief segment, I've had experience understanding the “why” behind the requirement, allowing us to create solutions to solve really the problems and not just meeting code.

So that's a big piece of understanding ADA is the why – how we provide amazing access to AV equipment for everyone.

**Joel Hagen:** And how much does the ADA play a factor in how you design solutions. The two-inch mount seems to be a must have on the list, but what are some other things that might be a factor in that early process or throughout?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** You know, within developing our solutions, we're looking really at understanding all the regulatory requirements and the spaces that we're creating solutions for. So ADA is one of those compliance items that we need to be aware of. We're committed to knowing the latest compliance issues. But it is, as I mentioned earlier, really important to understand the why so that we're solving for that versus just doing the minimum required Legrand’s focus is really on, on lives.

So our innovation is rooted in that. How can the space be created to create an amazing AV experience so that coworkers can collaborate, so that educators can help their students grow no matter if they're in the classroom that day or remote.

**Joel Hagen:** So it's kind of a wider design frame of thinking than just simply for AV.

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Correct. As you know, design thinking is core to who we are. Making sure we understand the empathy of those users and what the customer is looking for in that space, so that we can meet the needs of everyone, and that it's all-inclusive for use for that space. There's kind of a dividing line where you have the manufacturer, then you have the installer, and they both have their responsibilities.

**Joel Hagen:** How do you decide where you just have to let go and trust the specifier to install a solution properly?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Well, hopefully, all our instructions are well written so that can be done easily. Also, depending on what products they're using are installer-inspired, so making sure that we can do that well. We have great partners, great customers, repeat customers who know our products well, and also new customers who are coming in that haven't necessarily experienced it. We like to create solutions that are easy to install and apply in those spaces.

**Joel Hagen:** Part of the design process is talking to integrators and end users. Over time, have you seen other aspects of the ADA become a bigger part of your awareness?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Yes. I think it's also important to keep track of the ADA as specific to U.S. legislation, but how those applications apply globally are true for making sure that everything is accessible even though this is American disabilities.

It is appropriate for us to consider all across the globe to make sure that technologies, controls, and content are all accessible for anyone. That could be a different-aged child in the education system in schools, or it could be someone in a seated position because of being in a wheelchair.

But making sure that they can reach access is important so that everyone can learn and grow and collaborate.

**Joel Hagen:** The ADA covers such a wide range of conditions and disabilities. How do you see designers taking into account mobility versus vision versus hearing versus even cognitive disabilities when working out a system to accommodate the greatest number of end users?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Well, I think it's the holistic approach and making sure that they keep that in mind as they're designing it. Luckily technologies help assist many of those things as well. So, having a display that can go up or down. Having a mount that's close to the wall to not infringe on the spaces. Making sure that low-profile is an option. Just keeping in mind all of those opportunities is great for designers and and integrators to pay attention to.

**Joel Hagen:** Universal design. When I hear that phrase, I think of large-handled cooking utensils that kind of came out 20 years ago and how that kind of thinking is just permeated throughout every design in every field.

And do you feel like AV has also moved along that path to create universal designs that are truly usable by people of all abilities.

**Kathryn Gaskell:** I believe so. I think everything follows an evolution and we learn as we do things and we improve them as we continue to design and innovate. So as easy as the height adjustable carts I spoke about, 10 years ago were typically those that just an installer had to adjust.

So it was kind of set it and forget it. But you can have different heights. That created different viewing ranges. Today, there are electric or dynamic height-adjustable solutions that can be used by the user with ease, with either electric pushing a button or a finger touch going up and down. That happened over time. Equally all technologies are seeing those improvements for easier UIs, user interfaces, with controllers.

Easy to set up equipment – making sure that everything's easy to read or more pictorial for global translating. All of that makes it easier as well.

**Joel Hagen:** And, you know, why us? How does Legrand | AV fit into this ADA for AV? You know, why are we doing this?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Because it's the right thing to do.

And because we really want to make sure everyone can experience this, you know, similar experiences. Legrand | AV provides space solutions for corporate education, digital signage, just to name a few. And we're innovating on how those spaces can improve lives for working, learning, and more, and really for everybody.

**Joel Hagen:** And it wouldn't be a podcast without some plugs, jumping back to multi-sensory design. Do any particular Legrand | AV solutions come to mind that you'd like to be able to take a look at?

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Well, I encourage everyone to go to Legrand | AV.com because there's amazing solutions throughout our portfolio. Definitely the depth of mounting. Making sure you're paying attention to a two-inch or less if you're in a corridor for the mount because the TV most likely can be two inches or less. Interactivity IDEA screens from daylight are wonderful as well. Height adjustable solutions to get access to things. Some of our lecterns make sure you have clearance underneath them to make sure that your feet will fit nicely so you can reach and use.

But there are a lot of solutions that Legrand | AV provides.

**Joel Hagen:** All right. Well, thank you for diving into the deep end of the ADA, Kathryn.

**Kathryn Gaskell:** Thank you. We appreciate it.

**Joel Hagen:** Okay. That wraps up this episode of the series. I'd like to thank Kathryn Gaskell and Dan O'Donnell for bringing knowledge galore for this important topic. For the next episode, we're diving into the A of AV. How can we create audio systems that ensure everyone has the ability to participate? You'll find out next time.

If you can't wait, I've got news for you. Our freshly published ADA guide for AV is available right now at Legrandav.com.

This podcast series is intended to be used for educational purposes only. The intent is to serve as a guide to ADA regulations pertaining to the installation and usage of audio visual technology.

However, none of it shall be construed as legal advice, nor should you rely on this content without obtaining your own project-specific verification. Those seeking additional details or legally accurate definitions of the ADA's audio visual technology requirements should contact ADA.gov.

The Download is a product of Legrand | AV. Written and hosted by Joel Hagen. Editing provided by Beth K. Gibbs of Lift Podcasting. Until next time!