

# ADVOCACY CHATS

## **EPISODE 2: MOBILITY MOJO TALKS HOTEL ACCESS**

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Hello, listeners, and welcome to another PVA advocacy chat. This is Susan Prokop, National Advocacy Director, for PVA and.

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I am your host today and I'm delighted to be joined by Stephen Cluskey with Mobility Mojo.

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As the country emerges from its COVID 19 lockdowns, many American's thoughts are beginning to turn to travel and going to much loved places they visited or exploring interesting new locales.

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The challenge for people with disabilities, however, is often finding places to stay that can accommodate them in a manner that makes for a positive experience. Stephen Cluskey.

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is an accessibility consultant and wheelchair user based in Dublin, Ireland. From his own experience, he and his partner.

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in Mobility Mojo, Noelle Daly, they realized that accessibility standards can differ from country to country.

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and planning a vacation is often difficult if guests don't know what to expect before they arrive. They determined that the more information people had about the level of accessibility in a hotel

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the more confident they would feel to book and travel; and thus, Mobility Mojo was born. So, Stephen, I invite you to tell us a little bit about yourself - what is Mobility Mojo and why did you all create it?

Mobility Mojo

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Sure, Susan, it's great to talk to you. Thanks for having us this evening here in Ireland.

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Like you mentioned, I'm a wheelchair user myself. I had an accident a number of years ago, which left me paralyzed from the neck down and I've been thrown into this world of.

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obstacles but also a lot of possibilities. The problem that we're trying to solve, is that we.

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understand from European research and from global research, there are more than half a billion people globally.

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that don't travel because of a lack of information on accessibility - a billion people globally with some form of disability.

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and more than half that group don't travel; so, our mission, Susan, is to empower those people, to give them the information they need.

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to make an informed decision as to what what suits their needs in terms of accessibility, and so, our company, what we've developed is.

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some technology which firstly helps hotels to capture all that accessibility information to things like the height of the bed, the gap underneath the bed.

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and the specifications in bathrooms, etc, and just for clarity actually when we talk about accessibility.

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we talk about them in the broader sense, so this is your.

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elderly mother or father with the bad hip and the bad knees, your parents with the strollers and the buggies, the tourists with the suitcases, and that billion people globally with some form of a disability.

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And so, our software helps hotels to capture what they have, and then a simple line of code integration on their website and.



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the end user has access now to all that accessibility information, including photos and including detailed measurements and a breakdown of 60 plus different criteria.

user avatar

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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So, Mobility Mojo is an app, as they call it, and how.

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exactly does it work? It's the hotel that provides the data points, if that is correct, and maybe you talked a little bit about those data points, a moment ago.

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If you can amplify on that - how is the information that the hotel provides - how do you all verify the.

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data that the hotel is providing?

user avatar

Mobility Mojo

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So, the first thing to say, is we're a human business, supported by technology and.

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we were fortunate enough, with significant investment over the last couple of years, we've been able to develop something to a really you know world class type level.

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The process - and in order for us to achieve that impact that we're talking about with that half a billion people - .

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the product we designed with my own background as a United Nations certified accessibility expert and our co-founder Noelle likewise.

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The process we designed was to be as simple and straightforward to use as possible so that someone with the most limited.

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technology knowledge, would be able to use our software to capture that accessibility information and, you're right, it's the hotel themselves that undertake that process.

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If you imagine, Susan, you're a hotel manager, one of our customers, you would open the link on your phone.

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that we send you. You walk through the hotel - you take some photos - take some measurements and answer some questions and in the space of 30 to 40 minutes you've captured.

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all that accessibility information and then in terms of the data points, we've developed.

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the standards to go along with this, and based on ADA which has incredible standards with the.

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hotel industry, and we have ISO standards which are European based standards and Noelle, our co-founder, is heading up the European delegation.

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to determine European accessibility standards and from Ireland's point of view as well, so we have a huge amount of experience with this.

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We also developed it with focus groups - with the elderly, with architects and engineers, with those of varying disabilities, visual, hearing, and.

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mobility impairments, cognitive, and not so much on the cognitive part - and we've tried to keep this as broad as possible, so that it has the most impact on the most people possible.

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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So, the hotel manager who goes through their facility and takes the photographs that are then uploaded or downloaded to the app.

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I guess because they are their photographs and then they supply the actual measurements for what they're photographing.

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That.

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is one way of verifying what it is you're being told, insofar as the accessibility features are concerned?

Mobility Mojo

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Yeah, we've checks and balances along the way; so, we've built a system to make sure that the information is as accurate as possible, so our.



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employees are trained up on what to look for in terms of accessibility; so, if you imagine you've completed the processes and then you said, your.

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door is two inches wide you know those sort of things we can very easily pick up on we balance that against the photographs that you provide as well, but we're very clear.

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in the direction that's given to the hotel manager or the staff member of the hotel who undertake the evaluation process. So, for example, the bedroom is to take.

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three photos of the bedroom from different angles, the bathroom is to make sure you capture the gap.

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beside the toilet so that you can see the space that's available there for someone who's a wheelchair user, for example, to be able to transfer themselves over - so we've touch points along the way to make sure.

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that the information is accurate as possible, but the way we've designed this enables us to have the scale that we're looking for, so you know to deal with a Marriott or a Hilton that have six, 7000 hotels globally is no problem at all for us.

user avatar

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

08:29

Well, maybe that leads into the next question - for the end user consumer, how does Mobility Mojo work? I understand.

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you've partnered with Virgin Hotels and its Chicago property, for example, to use the app and so maybe walk us through what a potential guest would do to find out how accessible that hotel is.

Mobility Mojo

09:00

So, it's very straightforward and very simple and when an end user visits the hotel website there's a button front and center there - similar to one of those chat buttons - in the bottom corner of a website.

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As you jump on the website, you get a pop up saying, "Looking for our accessibility information?" You click that button.

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and you're provided that detailed level of information; so, it gives you that confidence and the knowledge to know what to expect.

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And we've seen this lacking, you know globally. Many hotels have really good facilities in terms of accessibility, but there is no one size fits all.

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Like I mentioned, our co founder - she's a wheelchair user herself - and when she's traveling to a hotel something that's important to her.

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is the height of the bed so that she can transfer herself over from the wheelchair onto the bed.

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Whereas me as a quadriplegic - paralyzed from the neck down -something that's important to me is whether there's a gap under the bed, so that you can get a hoist in or out.

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So two wheelchair users are two totally different needs and requirements and the simplicity of visiting the website and seeing that information.

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we've seen today it has really empowered people and it's driving the change that I think we're all looking for in the world around this.

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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Well, I believe you've done some research recently on accessibility in a number of hotel chains around the world. What exactly did your research entail and.

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do you have any preliminary findings that you can share from your exploration?

Mobility Mojo

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Yeah, the report hasn't been released, yet, but there was a huge amount of work put into it.

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So, we personally contacted more than 1000 hotels globally from the biggest hotel groups, the 10 largest groups in the world to get a sense of the the accessibility landscape.

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including the facilities, the information they provide compared to other services on the phone, and.

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some of the findings that came back from that were not that shocking, but you know it was great to be able to really quantify.

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So, what we found you know one or two of the data points, Susan, was that more than 50% of those hotels - those 1000 hotels - didn't enable.

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you to book the accessible bedroom online. So, the process for someone without accessibility needs, you know - you go to the site, you book your room, put your credit card details in - you're done.

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There is a lot more friction in the process for someone with accessibility needs. It's a phone call.

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to the hotel. Well, firstly, maybe a visit to their website to try and find the information. Then it's a phone call to the hotel and the hotel has to go off.

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take some measurements, or find the details that you're looking for - come back to you. Then you're looking at a confirmation email, giving your credit card details over the phone - all the unnecessary.

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process that's involved there compared to.

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you know, a general member of society. So, that was one of the more striking things that came from our research and.

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there was nearly 20% of the hotels have excellent accessible bedrooms but absolutely no information on the website about that. So, there's a real missed opportunity on both sides for their consumers and also for the hoteliers who have these assets that are very much under-utilized.

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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Well, we'll look forward to hearing more about your research when you get that report produced.

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What plans does your company have to partner with other hotel chains in the future?

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Any in the offing?



Mobility Mojo

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So, we believe with the resources we have and the speed of the impact that we're looking for, we are targeting those top eight to 10 hotel groups in the world and we're already in a pilot with one or two of them. I can't say too much because it's.

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in process.

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It's in process. Exactly, but we'd be very optimistic about the future, where this is going, and.

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the potential for this to impact on so many people's lives and remember it's not just that individual with the accessibility needs.

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You know if you're traveling somewhere, and you have accessibility needs, it's your family or your friends that are traveling with you as well, and that one person is usually the deciding factor for where the whole group goes and so there's a lot more that are impacted.

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Beyond that 1 billion people group that we're talking about.

user avatar

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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That's true - it's not just the person with a disability who's traveling it's their.

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partner and friend and family; so, you're quite right in that.

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And again, the app Mobility Mojo is.

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purchased by the hotel, not the consumer. Is that correct?

user avatar

Mobility Mojo

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That's right, we were there to support the hotel - to empower their guests to use their facilities and with our backing.

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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And I believe.

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when you work with the hotels -you've spoken about.





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helping them to enhance their accessibility by giving them feedback and also how a hotel can achieve a higher rating if memory serves me correctly.

user avatar

Mobility Mojo

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Yeah, that's what I mean. First and foremost, we we want to normalize accessibility, so that it is part and parcel of any hotel website of your booking.com or Tripadvisor so that all that information is there in a normal capacity not.

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a segregated site or somewhere different. So, one of the first hotels, we actually worked with -.

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a five star hotel here in Ireland - and they got a 7.8 rating with their accessibility, with an algorithm that works out the score that they get in terms of accessibility.

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And at the end of the process, they get a report with simple things they can do to improve their accessibility and build on that. It's a process. Then not long after.

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working with that hotel, one of their neighboring hotels, who are a competitor, came to us.

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looking for the same thing, and the first question they asked was how do we beat that five star hotel in terms of accessibility rating.

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So, before this sort of gamification of it happened, we were going to hotels saying you need to do this and that; whereas, now they're coming to us saying - okay, how do we beat the other person, and we feel that it's lifting all boats and by structuring things that way.

user avatar

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

16:18

Competition is a good thing.

user avatar

Mobility Mojo

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It's a very good thing.

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

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Well, if.

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our listeners wanted to learn more about Mobility Mojo and how it works where should they go. What's your website?

user avatar

Mobility Mojo

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So, mobilitymojo.com and if anyone would like to email me, you can get me on Stephen@mobilitymojo.com as well.

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And we're always looking for champions and for those with a similar passion to solve this problem, but we genuinely believe that we're on the right track, and what we're doing will impact more than half a billion people, probably great.

user avatar

(Staff) Susan Prokop, Natl. Advocacy Dir

17:01

Okay, so that is mobilitymojo.com.

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And that's simply mobility -M O B I L I T Y - mojo- M O J O.com.

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So, we.

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always have to put a little disclaimer in here that PVA doesn't endorse particular products, but we did want to share this information today to.

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inform our listeners about what's out there and we appreciate your taking the time to inform us about Mobility Mojo and.

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what it can do to broaden accessibility in the travel world. We will look forward to hearing more about your company and your mission.

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to make travel accessible in the future and appreciate your being with us today, Stephen, and good luck with with your product and your program. Thank you so much.

Mobility Mojo

18:11

Susan and thanks to you and the team for having me as well.

