

Search Off the Record - 44th episode

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[00:00:10] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:10] Hello and welcome to another episode of Search Off the Record, a podcast coming to you from the Google Search team, discussing all things Search and maybe having some fun along the way.

[00:00:20] My name is Lizzi, and I'm on the Search Relations team here at Google, mainly taking care of the Google Search Central website, which we sometimes call Onesie. In this episode we're going to focus on accessibility and websites. And to help me with that, I'm joined by Danny, who also works at Google. Hi Danny.

[00:00:38] **Danny:** [00:00:38] Hey, Lizzi.

[00:00:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:38] It's so good to have you here. I'm so excited because I feel like I'm going to get free design tips or something from you just based off of your job title alone. I did stalk you before coming to this podcast recording, and I see that you're a UX interaction designer. Could you tell me a little bit more about what you're doing at Google?

[00:00:38] **Danny:** [00:00:38] Sure.

[00:00:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:58] What is UX interaction design?

[00:01:01] **Danny:** [00:01:01] What is UX interaction? [laughter]

[00:01:03] It's interesting because working in accessibility, you might experience a different take on interaction design. It's certainly a little bit different from previous roles in some ways, but what I'm working on specifically and I just joined the Central accessibility team about a couple months ago, I think now. But my primary role is sort of working on this Android app that Google has called Lookout, which is intended to allow users to experience the world around them using their camera. So thinking about the audience being sort of blind and low vision users, you can use this app to point your camera around at various things and it tells you what's happening. There's like a currency mode if you want to understand the denominations of the currency that you have in your hand.

[00:01:52] There's a documents mode that allows you to read documents. It sort of ingests, creates that text on your phone and reads documents to you. We also recently launched images mode, which allows you to share an image to look out or upload an image and it tells you what's in that image.

[00:02:12] Right now, it might tell you there's maybe two adults, there's trees or woods or something like that. That was just launched, which we're really excited about. That's I would say the majority of where I've spent my time with this new team. I mean I'm still just ramping up, but I've sort of been in the accessibility.

[00:02:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:31] Yeah, just a few months ago, like that's brand new to the Lookout. You already gave a perfect summary about what the team is working on and you're just ramping up, so I mean that's like five stars if you know what the new project is that you joined. I think ramping up, that's good.

[00:02:47] **Danny:** [00:02:47] Yeah.

[00:02:48] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:48] So the the images thing. So that's something that you could save the image and then upload later to look at it?

[00:02:54] **Danny:** [00:02:54] Yeah.

[00:02:55] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:55] Or what would be the use case?

[00:02:56] **Danny:** [00:02:56] The way I kind of like to use it is you get a text, let's say, from friends and you want to take that image and share it to Lookout as if you're sharing it to any app. And it will automatically be in images mode and communicate to you what's in the image.

[00:03:15] But if you're in the app as a starting point, and you go to images mode, there's an "Image Upload" button. You can choose your image as you would with any other image upload experience and you can get the image into Lookout that way for it to tell you what's going on.

[00:03:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:31] OK, so it could be something that maybe you found like on Reddit or the Internet or something, and you saved it and then you wanted to look at it later. You took a picture when you were out and about. And then you're at home and you're like, "OK, I'm now ready to review whatever it was that I took a picture of later." It's sort of asynchronous, it doesn't need to be hovering right now above the thing.

[00:03:50] **Danny:** [00:03:50] Yeah, and you don't even need to save it per se, I mean you could just share it, right? You don't need to go through that process of downloading it to your local...

[00:03:59] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:59] Saving to device.

[00:04:01] **Danny:** [00:04:01] Yeah, exactly.

[00:04:09] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:09] Yeah, and then you just have all these screenshots or something from your messages that people have texted you, it's like too much.

[00:04:08] **Danny:** [00:04:08] Sure, yeah.

[00:04:02] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:02] Save to your device.

[00:04:10] **Danny:** [00:04:10] Yeah, exactly.

[00:04:11] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:11] OK, so taking it back, I don't know, more than from a few months ago, how did you come to be involved in accessibility? And was it design before accessibility or when did the two kind of intersect?

[00:04:24] **Danny:** [00:04:24] Yeah, it was definitely design before accessibility. I became a UX designer. I started to kind of study UX back in 2013, and I sort of was able to become a UX designer just learning while being a Googler. I started at Google in 2011. And it was definitely design first.

[00:04:47] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:47] What was your first role at Google or what did you get hired in to do?

[00:04:51] **Danny:** [00:04:51] My first role was in the ad space. I was a technical account manager, so I was sort of a technical liaison. I would kind of work alongside our account managers and sales people and folks that interact with our clients and sort of have that technical expertise for any time we needed to understand the back end of our advertising products a little bit better and maybe do some custom work or something like that with the client.

[00:05:23] And then eventually, I was sort of--I didn't know about UX when I joined Google, but once I understood it, I just reached out to a UX designer at Google and he was super kind and took me on as a mentor.

[00:05:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:05:38] I love that!

[00:05:40] **Danny:** [00:05:40] Yeah, so I was still sort of working on the same product as a technical account manager, but also learning about UX through that lens and working with a designer of the same product. So that's sort of the beginnings of how I started to get involved with UX design.

[00:06:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:06:00] Had you always been sort of like design-minded, a creative person in your free time? That that sort of blended into, "I want to also do this at work," like find a way to be creative at work is sort of, I find sometimes difficult for creative-minded people.

[00:06:16] **Danny:** [00:06:16] Yeah, I think so. I never thought of myself that way, but once I had this profession, it helped validate to me that I am a creative person.

[00:06:26] I was always interested in tech, and I always had an opinion on how things were laid out and how apps worked, and why did they do it like this, and why couldn't it just be this way, and even something as trivial seemingly as how you format your documents for school, right? That was like stuff that I would probably be geekier about that type of stuff.

[00:06:47] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:06:47] OK, so if we were in a group project together, you would be formatting the doc that we're in to make sure that the sections are in the right spot; or if we're doing like a PowerPoint

presentation, you would be driving that part of the project probably.

[00:07:01] **Danny:** [00:07:01] Yeah, stuff like that. Also stuff that's a little bit more sinister. When you're really young, you're kind of trying to make the number of pages that you have look longer for school or...

[00:07:11] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:11] Oh!

[00:07:12] **Danny:** [00:07:12] Stuff like that.

[00:07:13] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:13] Sneaky!

[00:07:13] **Danny:** [00:07:11] Yeah, I would say that.

[00:07:15] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:15] Making the period larger. Let me see, what are the top tricks, like spaces between sentences.

[00:07:21] **Danny:** [00:07:21] Yeah, exactly. But, no. I did always like to make things more readable. That was sort of when I look back, the beginnings of it. And then I also did a fair amount of coding. I felt like when I got into school and when I got into the professional world, it was kind of like, "Everyone, if you wanted to work on software, you needed to code or needed to understand it in some way." And I always felt like that was a barrier.

[00:07:49] And so I learned it a little bit, and I always kind of had to experience it in some way. But I ultimately was just like, my mind doesn't work like this. And so when UX design came up, that was a way for me to be like, "OK you can have an opinion on the software and the UI and how it works, and not necessarily be the one coding. And I'm sure some people are-- there's plenty of very technical UX designers out there, UX engineers who do have that experience and were developers first. I know you know plenty of designers who were developers first, but that wasn't exactly my interest. So I think that also drew me into UX design, just knowing that it could be visual. To me, that sounded fun just going to work and playing with shapes and colors, versus just sitting in Excel and sitting in a spreadsheet and documents and emails, and stuff like that.

[00:08:45] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:08:45] Totally, and I can imagine having that background to know what's possible or be able to speak the same language as the developers is helpful. To say like, "This is what I want and I know that you can do it, because I know at least what's sort of the functions behind, what the shapes can do and say it in the words that they know about.

[00:09:06] **Danny:** [00:09:06] For sure.

[00:09:07] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:07] So how did this then meet accessibility? So it was developing and then design, and then accessibility.

[00:09:14] **Danny:** [00:09:14] Yeah, I guess I found myself asking about accessibility, and it became apparent to me that there was an opportunity to become a subject matter expert in accessibility on one of my previous teams as a UX designer. And so once I started to learn about accessibility, I saw that there was a very rich amount of content that was already there that wasn't taken advantage of just in general. I didn't hear about it as much as there was depth of content if that makes sense.

[00:09:49] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:49] Yes, I can definitely relate to that, because I've delved into accessibility more this year in particular. I knew about it before maybe just from like the writing angle, because we have style guidelines for writing for accessibility-- I'm a technical writer. So that's generally the thing that I would think about first, but in terms of testing and starting to look at what's out there, like "OK, I want to now see how accessible my website is and you do a search for it, or like look at what we have internally.

[00:10:17] There is a million things laying around, everybody has checklists. There's so many resources that it can be overwhelming to know which thing is-- how do I know? You could spend a lot of time just reading to find out. OK, what are all the things that I could be looking at?

[00:10:32] And that there are so many different guidelines or tips or testing tools, and things that people have written to just sort of ingest that, I can see as a curious person that can be definitely a trajectory that you could find yourself exploring.

[00:10:47] **Danny:** [00:09:13] Yeah, I think it's also just nice because you can find all the resources yourself for the most part.

[00:10:54] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:54] Yes.

[00:10:55] **Danny:** [00:10:55] And so you can learn, there's plenty of books. There's tons of guidelines on the Internet and it's really up to you how quickly you want to learn about accessibility. And it gives you the ability to just kind of take something from some guidelines or some website, and then you come back to your own sort of scope whatever it is that you work on, and you can immediately sort of apply it.

[00:11:15] Or if you understand code, you can kind of be like, "Oh this tag is missing, maybe I can go back here and find it and see if I'm following these guidelines. so to speak.

[00:11:24] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:24] Yes.

[00:11:25] **Danny:** [00:11:25] So I think if you just take the time to do the right searches and just look around, you can take those resources and apply them pretty quickly, and that's really nice if you're trying to make sure that your work is more accessible.

[00:11:38] But I think on a more human level, as a professional, you want to do things that are good for the world, right?

[00:11:46] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:46] Yes.

[00:11:47] **Danny:** [00:11:47] There's plenty of jobs out there where the end goal is making money or reducing inefficiencies or whatever. And I think that the business world is always going to have that. And I think my goal in becoming a designer and learning about accessibility was sort of just to continue to inch towards that human thing, like empathy and understanding people and feeling good about what you do, all that good stuff.

[00:12:17] And so, I guess I've always just sort of been iterating on what it is my role and inching towards whatever my idea of that is. So I think that's what helped me get into accessibility, is just like, this is really interesting, and it's undeniably a good thing for business or sites or whatever. And there's also just kind of a massive deficit on the Internet. Most of the Internet's just not really accessible, right?

[00:12:43] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:43] Yes.

[00:12:44] **Danny:** [00:12:44] It doesn't follow those guidelines that we're talking about: color contrast and structure, and all that good stuff that I'm sure we'll talk about.

[00:12:51] So there's a lot of resources to follow. There's a tremendous amount of space to improve. And so, just knowing that I think it makes it an easy space to dive into if you want to just make your website more accessible, or you want to just be a subject matter expert in anything.

[00:13:09] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:09] Yeah, it can be very rewarding as well, especially if you want your thing, whatever it is your project, your website, whatever you're working on to work well for everyone who's using it or could be using it. And this is like a huge pocket where you're like, "Oh, all these things I didn't know that it wasn't working in these conditions."

[00:13:27] **Danny:** [00:13:27] Sure.

[00:13:27] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:27] And once you sort of realize that and you're able to make fixes, it can be very rewarding to like broaden the scope of whatever it is, especially as an interaction designer, like you're thinking about like how are things working for people, like the actual functions behind. Is this nice or usable? Not even nice, it's just like, can you use this thing? Let alone, is it pleasant or delightful to use or easy to use? It's just like, can you use it at all? And are we even there yet for it to be like this is delightful.

[00:13:57] **Danny:** [00:13:57] Sure, yeah, I agree. I totally agree with that sentiment. I also just feel like I do love design. And to me accessibility is just a part of creating good design. It's not like this tangential thing. It's a part of that purview per se or that sort of scope, or that interest of mine. So they're one and the same to me.

[00:14:19] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:14:19] I would agree with that. I think once you sort of get introduced to the concept that there are these other things to be looking at, it makes sense to go that direction. So I guess when you're approaching a project and you're thinking about design or assessing something, are you

typically auditing an existing thing to improve it or you handed like a new thing like we're working on a launch this website or this app afresh or something that's maybe been sitting around for a while that you may want to audit?

[00:14:49] Because for me, I've been working on this website, and it's a thing that's been existing, so then it seemed like the first step would be then to audit what I have to see how is it even doing right now. Is it terrible? Where are the areas and how do you even approach making improvements? So for you, what would be one of the things that you first start to look at? Would it be something from an audit perspective or like from a launch, like we are pushing this project out?

[00:15:16] **Danny:** [00:15:16] Well, hopefully you're not waiting until launch.

[00:15:19] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:15:19] Yes. new things, I guess. I guess it's more of design first. You're not handed something that's like, "Oh these people before me had not thought about accessibility. And they might be missing certain things and this thing is already out there." I think a lot of people are probably in that boat and it's sort of, I don't know, is it nicer? Probably it's nicer to launch with the thing like working well from square one, but you might not have the luxury, I guess, depending on what you're working on, perhaps.

[00:15:46] **Danny:** [00:15:46] Sure, I've definitely heard that before. I would agree with you. I think most people if they're tasked with accessibility, they're probably in a situation like you are, where there's something existing and someone is kind of like, "Can we make this more accessible, Lizzi? Can you figure out a way to--what is it that we need to do to make it more accessible?" I'm sure that is right that is the most probably common scenario that somebody who's working in.

[00:16:13] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:16:13] Well, yeah tasked or you've discovered it. Maybe people are listening to this podcast and they're like, Oh...

[00:16:19] **Danny:** [00:16:19] Yeah!

[00:16:20] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:16:20] I should look into this.

[00:16:21] **Danny:** [00:16:21] Yeah, for sure. I think since we're talking about websites, I mean the way that I might approach it. For example, and this is just me, but I happen to be colorblind, so when I first come to a website, it's fairly easy for me to find the gotchas of not having strong enough color contrast. And other examples of that are you go to websites, and they might have a massive hero image and there's just text sort of overlaid on top of it. That makes it difficult to see if you don't have a solid background behind the text.

[00:16:58] You have sometimes some very very light text. There might be some decisions there that are more aesthetically leaning and the aesthetics sort of steamrolled the accessibility. So you might have a really light text or really gray text, or you might have text that sort of appears as you scroll or something like that. And I guess that in particular would be OK, but you know what I mean, like something that's just like...

[00:17:24] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:24] Are these like borderline things that are trendy to do from a design perspective? Like the light gray thing that you're talking about. I've seen that and not so many people choosing very deep black for the font, perhaps. "Steamroll," that's a good word.

[00:17:39] **Danny:** [00:16:20] Yeah, exactly, but even beyond that, I think one thing that I always look for is also spacing, right? I like to think there's a little bit of a push happening in terms of just cognitive accessibility in the space and making sure that what you might call "chunking your paragraphs" and "spacing them out."

[00:17:59] Bullets are great, but just sort of making sure that your text is succinct, and that you don't just sort of put the user in front of giant blocks of text that they have to read through, because whether they're sort of neurodiverse or not, they probably won't read a giant chunk of text. So beyond just sort of color contrast and the readability of the font and stuff like that.

[00:18:22] You want to be able to space things out and make them consumable, so to speak. And that's one space that I might look to that's fairly easy to understand and anybody who owns a website, whether, you know, it's a coded one or one where you are actually coding it up, or it's just sort of one of those plug-and-play type of websites where you're just editing the text, I think that's something that everyone can kind of do.

[00:18:49] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:18:49] Yeah, I mean you have access to this even when you're writing an internal document or something. Like a Google Doc, I'm writing a project thing and it's just for my team to understand what I'm working on. Even like emails that we write, chunking things out to be consumable and

scannable, so that you could see sort of-- yes, you start with a visual thing, but also like having it read to you and making sure that we're not just going on and on in like some long paragraph with multiple ideas.

[00:19:19] It can be hard to then understand where am I? Where is this thing even going? What kind of a document am I in? A page, what have you. Are there cues to tell me that I should continue reading? I don't know.

[00:19:33] Especially if it's longer paragraph text like that. And then when you think about localization or translation of that content, and then things becoming longer in other languages. So translated to like German or something and then your heading is even longer, so starting out with writing something that is shorter. It benefits in so many more ways, but that's probably where we overlap more with the writing and spacing things out for sure.

[00:19:57] **Danny:** [00:19:57] For sure.

[00:19:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:58] OK, so you would look at things visually, you've got like a built-in tester to see immediately what's going on with the website. What other kind of things would you look at or listen to?

[00:20:10] **Danny:** [00:20:10] So... Yeah. [laughter]

[00:20:12] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:12] I guess you look at everything. [laughter]

[00:20:14] **Danny:** [00:20:14] Yeah.

[00:20:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:14] Would that be the next thing? Using other senses?

[00:20:17] **Danny:** [00:20:17] Yeah, I mean, another thing and I'm just trying to keep it accessible in itself like what are some really easy things that anybody can kind of just start to do. But another example besides the text or like the graphical images and contrast and things that are visible per se, you can kind of just start to hit your Tab key, you know, if you use a keyboard.

[00:20:39] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:39] Yeah.

[00:20:39] **Danny:** [00:20:39] Just see where it goes. Ideally it moves in sort of, you know, in an English website it would move left to right top to down in the way that we read right, and it's not necessarily perfectly like that that's not a "be all end all it has to be that way," but generally speaking that would be sort of an intuitive way for your flow to move, your keyboard navigation.

[00:21:05] And if you do start to-- So let's say you go to a website and you hit the Tab key, a lot of accessibility minded sites will often in that first keystroke of the Tab key, will have a "skip links" menu, what we call skip links menu. So oftentimes the most common function of that is to be able to skip to the main content. So you can kind of skip past all of the navigation and the top bar and anything that's sort of I guess persistent throughout the site experience and into the main content as it's been defined by the developer of that page.

[00:21:45] So that's really useful. And then oftentimes you'll find other functions within that skip links menu. So for example, you hit Tab and then it's like skip to main content and then you hit Tab again and then some other function will appear, maybe it's-- you want-- you can jump to some sort of keyboard shortcuts menu or maybe you can jump to give accessibility feedback or something like that, right.

[00:22:08] And then it will naturally progress to whatever the next Tab stop is the next one and the next one but that's another way that you might sort of implement something accessibility-minded on your website is having that that skip links menu and also ensuring that the flow, as we call it, of the Tab stops, making sure that that's intuitive.

[00:22:29] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:29] Right, so you're not like jumping around from like the heading to then "now we're out in the top level navigation" or something.

[00:22:36] **Danny:** [00:22:36] Exactly.

[00:22:37] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:37] The order doesn't make sense.

[00:22:38] **Danny:** [00:22:38] Yeah.

[00:22:39] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:39] So at this point would you be in the screen reader tabbing or like you're saying just hitting tab on the keyboard, like we're not even haven't installed anything or we're in like voiceover mode, nothing like that.

[00:22:50] **Danny:** [00:22:50] Yeah, I would say it should work without the screen reader, right, and we can talk about the screen reader next, but yeah I would say just having like a good focus, right, having like a visible good contrast keyboard focus on whatever element it is that that focus is on is important so you can kind of begin to, you know, get a sense for how well executed those types of things are without even knowing anything about a screen reader.

[00:23:19] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:23:19] Yes, because that's a learning curve there too, is like picking a screen reader and installing it and learning to use that device with things that are just like on the web or like using your computer and setting it up can be even a hurdle to get started there. Do you have a preferred screen reader or something that you would recommend that people test out?

[00:23:40] **Danny:** [00:23:40] Yeah. So I would say the screen reader you should use is the one that's probably already available to you.

[00:23:48] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:23:48] Yes.

[00:23:49] **Danny:** [00:23:49] So if you use Chrome, we have Chromevox. If you use an Android phone, it should have Talkback. If you use an Apple device, it'll have Voiceover. So a lot of different companies I've sort of listed out a browser and like operating systems that have screen readers available to you. There's also the third parties, the NVDA's and the JAWS, and those companies who have screen readers that are actually, based on the data that I've seen have the most amount of users, those third parties.

[00:24:24] But I think that just using the one that's available to you is going to be easiest, especially if you're first just starting out. And figuring out how it is that you turn it on, there's generally-- I would probably just do a really quick search it'll be right there at the top whatever it is that you're looking for. So you know, for example--

[00:24:44] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:44] Yeah, like "screen reader" plus whatever device you're on, like, "I have a Mac, how do I turn on the screen reader?" That kind of thing?

[00:24:51] **Danny:** [00:24:51] Yeah. And oftentimes those on/off switches, those are very easy to access. So what's a good example?

[00:24:57] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:57] I think on mine, I've been using Voiceover just because I have a Mac set up and there's like a keyboard shortcut to turn it on, and the first time I used it it took me aback. I think because for me I'm using things with my eyes mostly and then to have information overload on the ears is a completely different experience. So to having like the speed read to you like things that you're not normally used to experiencing the world this way, I think is a good way to sort of learn the other use cases for sure.

[00:25:30] **Danny:** [00:25:30] Totally. Yeah, I mean, I think I've seen some like sort of shortcuts to turning on your screen reader be as simple as hitting your power button three times or something like that where you're just like, "oh that's really easy." But, yeah.

[00:25:42] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:25:42] And probably something that you get used to, like how it navigates, like you probably use that same thing. Just like how we would be like I'm an iPhone user or whatever device you sort of get used to whatever the shortcuts are and then you just tend to use that device again and again.

[00:25:56] **Danny:** [00:25:56] Yeah, and going back to what you said earlier. It is jarring, right, if you've never heard a screen reader before. I would say that if you're getting started bring some patience, right. Make sure that your volume is sort of in your control easily and if it is sort of jarring, I've seen it happen or maybe I've even done this before where I was starting out and I'm just kind of like I can't.

[00:26:20] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:20] It can't feel too much.

[00:26:21] **Danny:** [00:26:21] It's a sensory overload if you're not used to it.

[00:26:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:23] Yes. And if you don't know what the default settings are, like the volume, like the device is like reading it too loud it can take you aback or if you're like in a public setting or

something, and then the device is now reading out loud and you didn't have headphones in or like being prepared for sure these kinds of things I guess. And then the preferences for speed, because you tend to also then maybe want it to once you get acclimated, you're like, I could listen to this faster or I can navigate faster, but in the beginning it might be like you're reading too fast for my ears to be paying attention.

[00:26:57] **Danny:** [00:26:57] Sure.

[00:26:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:58] When you're learning I guess.

[00:26:59] **Danny:** [00:26:59] Yeah, mine is super slow, it's like a bedtime story. It's just like--

[00:27:02] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:02] You nudge it down?

[00:27:04] **Danny:** [00:27:04] Yeah, I nudge it way down because I want to understand pretty thoroughly and I'm proficient enough where I can just skip something if it's going on and anyone who uses a screen reader somewhat regularly will be able to know how to navigate in such a way that they're getting out of it what they want, but it can be frustrating if you don't know how to jump around, you're kind of stuck and you don't know how to navigate to the element that you want to get to and you don't know how to skip to an element that you want to get to and you sort of find yourself to say the website isn't particularly accessible.

[00:27:39] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:39] Exactly.

[00:27:40] **Danny:** [00:27:40] Right that's why you're there.

[00:27:42] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:42] Like you don't know. Is it me? Is it the tool? Is it the website that's bad? Like, do I not know how to use this thing or have I found something that could be improved? It's sort of hard to know like which one is the culprit I guess. Specially when you're learning.

[00:27:57] **Danny:** [00:27:57] Yeah. So just learning some fundamental basics of the screen reader, setting your preferences, bringing some patience. I think those are some good steps to getting started with assistive technology and just trying to make it easy on yourself too, you don't have to go and download some, some even cost money. You want to use what you have I guess if you're just getting started, if that's your preference, if for some reason that's just easier for you.

[00:28:25] But yeah, if you just keep those things in mind then your introduction to assistive technology will be smoother.

[00:28:32] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:32] And would you say that this is the first thing that people should do? If they wanted to get started with accessibility what would be one thing that you would call people to? Should they test their website out first or should they do some reading? Would there be like a resource? What would be the one thing that people should do if they wanted to start thinking about accessibility?

[00:28:51] **Danny:** [00:28:51] I think, if I have to choose one it would probably be some sort of education-based thing. I was gonna say you know if you really are a hands-on learner it's maybe easier for you to just learn how to turn on the screen reader and just go from there.

[00:29:06] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:29:06] Yeah, the experience, you sort of realize like immediately, "this is not good." Or if you're just even looking through your site, having the experience can jump out at you sometimes stronger than reading like a document potentially, but also if you don't know what to look for, how do you know if it's bad?

[00:29:21] **Danny:** [00:29:21] Yeah, exactly. I think if you have the patience and doing some searching or reading a book or kind of like understanding accessibility from that standpoint or maybe understanding it from a more general standpoint instead of just jumping right into the technical side or the digital side of accessibility.

[00:29:39] Accessibility certainly doesn't just exist in the digital space, it's a much larger concept than that in the physical world as well. But, yeah, I think educating yourself as much as you want to and then just diving in hands-on, those are both, I would, say essential to being able to make progress in the accessibility space.

[00:30:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:00] And Danny, where can people find you if they wanted to learn more about accessibility, ask you questions or just generally look more about your background?

[00:30:09] **Danny:** [00:30:09] Sure, they can find me on LinkedIn.

[00:30:11] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:11] Amazing and you know the URL, profile name for your LinkedIn or is it something embarrassing?

[00:30:17] **Danny:** [00:30:17] It's... [giggles] No, it's not embarrassing but it is kind of messy, it's like in.danny-farah-36749a8. [laughter]

[00:30:29] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:29] Wow, wow. OK, alright, so we will put the link in the description and then you can just click it to learn more about Danny. And Danny, thank you so much for joining us here today to talk about accessibility, it's been really interesting for me and I hope you the listeners have found it interesting as well.

[00:30:43] **Danny:** [00:30:43] Yeah, thank you so much, Lizzi, I had a great time chatting with you.

[00:30:46] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:46] Me too! Alright and next time on Search Off the Record we'll be taking a look at crawl budget and what does that mean for your website.

[00:30:53] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:30:57] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:57] OK and now that I have you here off Off the Record, I wanted to see if you would give us a design review of our Search Off the Record podcast elements. It's sort of an auditory review for our listeners.

[00:31:10] So right now we're looking at, what we have right here is our title card that we have on YouTube to sort of show the episode title, the number of the episode and what it is. And so it says Search Off the Record at the top, our banner, and then text that says listen to the episode or listen to the podcast, I think that's probably bad that I can't see it from the distance that I'm looking at here right now. And I wanted to get your sort of opinion if you could walk us through. Is this OK or is it bad? Should we fix anything?

[00:31:42] **Danny:** [00:31:42] I would say just going back to my first comments about contrast, it looks like there's a good amount of lighter contrast here, there's also some pretty small text in the bottom left corner, you know, where it says episode 40 also. I think those things could all be improved. I guess my approach is, if it's not accessible then not everybody I think thinks this way, some people think some things are just sort of decorative by nature.

[00:32:12] I kind of feel like maybe we should be going towards a space where everything is accessible as opposed to just being like, "yeah that's just sort of decorative we don't have to make that accessible." So like anything that's too small to see or understand easily, like all the icons or the colors.

[00:32:28] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:32:28] So probably all the things that we're looking at here is probably all too small and I'm seeing light gray which we talked about earlier.

[00:32:36] **Danny:** [00:32:36] Yeah.

[00:32:37] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:32:34] So contrast and size.

[00:32:40] **Danny:** [00:32:40] Yeah, I think so.

[00:32:42] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:32:42] OK, I think we will take all this feedback back to the team and see what we can come up with. And that's the end of this little snippet here.

[00:32:49] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:32:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:32:51] We've been having fun with this podcast and I hope you the listener have found it both entertaining and insightful too. Feel free to drop us a note on Twitter [@googlesearchc](https://twitter.com/googlesearchc) or chat with us at one of the next events we go to if you have any thoughts. And of course don't forget to like and subscribe. Thank you and goodbye!

[00:33:09] ♪ [music] ♪