

LIVING WITH DEAFNESS: POSITIVE SELF-ADVOCACY AND CAREER SUCCESS

PRESENTER: DR. DAVID BALDRIDGE

DAVID BALDRIDGE: First, thanks everyone for being here today. Career is such an important part of our lives and one of the most difficult things to preserve when we become hearing-impaired.

I did my undergraduate work in Michigan and I earned my Master's in business and finance. My first jobs were with IBM in Detroit and then with Hewlett-Packard in San Diego. As my hearing declined, I was constantly renegotiating how I did my work as well as the type of work I did. When I finally went completely deaf, I went back to school and earned my Ph.D. In my MBA program in Michigan, I used an FM system. By the time I earned my Ph.D., I only used a CART system.

That was extremely difficult, particularly for Ph.D. level statistics. In part-- God bless the CART recorders—if they are a bit the professor's lecture while he is writing statistics on the board, that lag can make understanding difficult. I was grateful to get through my Ph.D. Program. That's when I researched people who are deaf and hard of hearing in the workplace. From personal observation and experience as my own hearing changed, my perceptions of people who are deaf and hard of hearing also changed. If I met someone hard of hearing or deaf when I had more hearing, I might have misjudged their intelligence or their competencies. As I became fully deaf and struggled to learn Sign language, I viewed people around me

differently. I thought how easy it is for people who never had the personal experience of being deaf to misjudge people.

My Ph.D. is from a business college. I work in a college of business. I noticed that prior to the ADA, employers were worried about the cost of accommodation. Then years after the ADA was passed, a lot of the research revealed accommodations were not that expensive after all. I thought about why that might be true. And I realize that it might not be a good thing. It could be that accommodations were not that costly for employers because the accommodations were not being provided. I knew from my own experience that, people were asking for accommodations and getting refusals. Employers were saying no, you can't have them. I realized a lot of people were not asking for the accommodations they needed. Currently, I'm taking a little different angle. I'm trying to research career success. It one thing to find a job; it's something different to have a job that is on par with your intelligence and your education. That's the difference between unemployment and underemployment. My sense among people who are deaf and hard of hearing is tremendous underemployment as well as unemployment exists.

After earning my Ph.D., I went to RIT, Rochester Institute of Technology. That was my first job and I loved it there. Unfortunately, my wife was not real crazy about living in Rochester. As soon as I got my implant, she had the map out, looking for different places to go. My heart is still very much with RIT in Rochester. Physically now I'm in Oregon, working

for Oregon State University. The nice thing about that is I'm one of very few deaf and hard of hearing people. I have more of the uphill battle. One thing I'm curious about here is how many people work in kind of deaf and hard-of-hearing environments? I'd consider RIT a deaf and hard of hearing environment. Oregon State I would say is not. It's a hearing environment. I would like to have a show of hands for a few questions. First question: How many people here are currently employed? Currently working. [Showing of hands]

For those of you who are currently working, I'm curious, how many people work in kind of a deaf and hard of hearing environment which is the focus of their work or the organization. [Showing of hands].

I'd like this to be a conversation as much as possible. Here are some things that we might talk about. One is career strategies. When I wrote the proposal for this workshop, I used the term "Positive Self-advocacy." Now I'd like to change that to "Self leadership." My teaching research is more about leadership at large.

Other topics could be supervisory relationships, coworker relationships and accommodation. From people in the audience, I'd like to hear about common challenges as well as best practices. Anyone who has had a hearing impairment for a long time has observed that different things work for different people. It depends on your personality. It depends on your supervisor's personalities. There are a lot of different ways to go about things.

First a question: Can anyone guess why I want to switch to the term "Self leadership" as opposed to "Self-advocacy?"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There is more power in language. It's more empowering than adversarial.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: That's what I was looking for. A lot of career and work information comes from the education part of vocational rehabilitation literature. That's not generally the frame of mind most business owners and managers think in. They think about things more in terms of workplace efficiency and good leadership. They read business journals and so forth.

That's why the term "Self leadership" will be much more appealing, I would think, because advocating brings a different type of thinking to mind. Either is a good term but when business people think about advocating, it seems opposition. Yet, sometimes the best way to advocate is by solving a problem for your employer or boss without their even aware you're advocating. All you're trying to do is work better. I'd love to keep that conversation going and hear about your experiences.

One thing I want to focus on is career success. That means different things to different people. I'm curious what career success means to people here. What do you want from your career? I'll make that multiple choice. How many people would say that their primary objective is to make as much money as they can? No? Would success be to earn respect from the people around you? For example, when you greet someone new and what your

profession is, you feel proud about what you do? It seems like that maybe appeals to people a little bit more. How about just being satisfied with what you do? What I just mentioned before are more external satisfactions. Now, when you talk to someone else they recognize you like your job, you feel good about that. That response would be more internal. If you never got that recognition for what you do day-to-day, would you feel good about that? These are the most common responses when you ask people what career success is. Most people assume that other people think money is the most important thing. However, when you ask people, most people would say no, that it's more the satisfaction with their work and their career, that's the most important thing.

So with feeling satisfied with hour work being first and foremost and the money part being secondary, I'm curious to hear from people in the room how being deaf or hard-of-hearing has impacted your work and your career. Who's willing to share their experience?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, David, I was a teacher for many years. I taught both junior high school level and community college level. I taught English and Spanish and creative writing. Eventually I taught a little American Sign Language at a community college. I would learn it and then bring it to the college. I lived way out in the country in the state of New Jersey. If you don't think there is such a thing, there is. After a while I felt it was so difficult to hear in the classroom that I went to school to learn Sign language. I ended up being able to teach that at a beginning level. But I felt

for a long time after that I was not using the skills and knowledge that I had, nor was I able to learn more. That was so disappointing and I wasn't as satisfied with my life when I wasn't able to use the things that I had learned. That was my experience. Then I got a cochlear implant and I went to school to learn social work. It's related to teaching, actually. My life took off from there. I worked for New Jersey Association of the Deaf/Blind, which was a very satisfying job.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I just want to recap a couple of key things that I heard. One was that it was hard to get new information and it was hard to communicate in a hearing environment. If I understood right, you went back to school, you changed your career and you began working for an organization that helped people who are deaf and blind. You were in a deaf and blind environment at that point. That's one common career strategy that people follow quite successfully. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I would like to share my story. I was 27 when I was suddenly deafened. I owned two stores that sold candy. A few months later, the head office invited me for a conversation, because they thought a deaf person running our stores was not a good idea. The first thing they said was, "How would you like to build instruments and become an instrument maker? I asked, "Why would I want to do that? Did you receive any complaints from the customers?" No complaints. I then asked about the shop results. "Were they not good or satisfying?" They replied, "No. They're fine. The results are fine." So once again I asked, "Why would you want me

to be an instrument builder? They explained, "You work in a tourist city and many German tourists go there. You can't hear what they're saying." I answered them, "Well, I'll study German and learn how to read lips in German." That was my answer. That shut them up. I worked there for 32 more years. The last four years I found a job at an organization for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. I do feel more at home in that organization, I have to say.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: Thank you. Let me ask some more yes and no questions. I want to get a sense of people's experiences. This is not scientific, but good for conversation. I preface all of the following questions with, "if you were not deaf and hard of hearing would you..." Make more money? How many people say no? Would you have a better job? [Showing of hands] Would you be more likely to be promoted? Would you have a more satisfying job? [Showing of hands] That's pretty typical. Most people would say they definitely would make more money if they were not deaf or hard-of-hearing. This is often related to the promotion issue. Promotions seem to be one of the most difficult barriers for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. They seem to do well as specialists. When it comes to leading a group of hearing people, that's a very difficult hurdle to overcome.

The satisfaction level of people who are deaf and hard of hearing seems to be good. Contributing to that though seems that if you're deaf and hard-of-hearing and you have a job, you're often grateful for it. Right now, we see that also in the population at large unemployment is so high. Some

people are able to change their career and find new meaning in being somebody who is deaf or hard-of-hearing and helping others struggling with the same problems. However, the number of deaf and hard of hearing people employed is much lower than in the general population. As a disability group, though, we're near the top which means people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing have an easier time finding work compared to people with other disabilities. Compared to people with no disability, there is a huge gap.

I am going to explain the results of a meta analysis study. Laying career success out graphically, the far column is for salary, promotions are in the middle and satisfaction is on the right. Some researchers statistically summarized 20 to 30 different peer reviewed publications on career success. By statistically aggregating all these studies, they found the top predictors or the things most correlated with the three aspects of job or career satisfaction. For example, for salary, the top four predictors that correlate with higher salary are education level, political skills, work experience, and cognitive variables. In other words, your political skills explain as much of the variance in salary as does your education or your IQ, your cognitive ability.

For employees most interested in career satisfaction, locus of control is a top predictor. Locus of control is the extent to which you believe you control your own destiny. It's a character trait. Some people believe the opposite, that it's a matter of fate. Things were meant to be a certain way, and life is just unfolding in that way. High locus of control is a feeling that you have a lot

of control over what happens in your life. Locus of control and supervisor supportiveness is related. A top reason why people leave their job is they don't get along with their immediate supervisors. That is one of the primary predictors of turmoil.

These studies concern the general population. They were not for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The reason I'm showing you this is that I'm curious how these top predictors may be different for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Career sponsorship means that your company or work unit, view you not just as an employee. Rather your company tries to help you manage your career development, such as what your next job would be. Working someplace that has career sponsorship is also a good predictor of career satisfaction. Related to that are the training programs. If career sponsorship is a plan, then training development are the actual training programs. Proactivity is related to locus of control. People who are proactive in managing their own careers are much more satisfied.

Extroversion is a personality trait. It's literally the extent to which you draw energy from being around other people. It's not necessarily social skills. Some introverted people need to be alone to recharge their battery. They may still have good people skills. In the deaf and hard of hearing group we see a whole mixture. I think if you're hard-of-hearing, the communication process can make it trying to be around other people, right? A lot of us need to be alone: take the cochlear implants and hearing aids out and recharge

our batteries, so to speak.

I have my own thoughts about how these predictors are different for the deaf and hard of hearing community. But before I bias you, I'd love to hear what a couple of people here think. Do those apply to us? Also, do they apply differently?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm extroverted. I came from a sales and marketing background and I obtained supposedly a high level of career success. Still I think we have to work a lot harder and that there is what I would call non-intended discrimination in the workforce. For example, I avoid the phone as many of us do. Everything is on e-mail. What look like mistakes that other people would have in conversation, gives the perception of creating more errors. Also, I was at our global headquarters last week and I was listening to molecular scientists who were talking technical stuff. One is Japanese, one, Spanish, one, German. I had a migraine by the end of the day because of the intense listening. I had to learn to be my own advocate and to do so in a way that didn't make other people feel bad.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I think of reminding other people that we are working harder and certain situations are more difficult. I'm a tenured professor now, so I can complain and I'm hard to get rid of at this point. I make sure that I remind people, thanks for inviting me to your party. After working all day, I will be too tired to enjoy it or enjoy myself. But I always make sure that they know that I do want to be invited every time, even if I say no a lot.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I guess my initial reaction is those predictors all

apply, but they are more difficult to leverage. You just have to work harder to leverage any of those to promote yourself.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: When you think about building social capital, that is, who you know, who knows you, and your ability to use those relationships in order to get a job done at work, not, do we do that differently? Should deaf and hard of hearing people do that differently?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think social capital's big. The more you have, the better you're going to do. However, as you alluded to, when you fade away from using the phone and things like that, maintaining social capital just becomes more difficult. I don't think it's any less important. I think it's probably harder to achieve.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: What do people do in order to build their social capital? I have my own strategies, but I'm curious what other people do. How do you stay equally connected?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't know anyone who has the problems that I have. I go to a lot of networking groups. I'm associated with a lot of small businesses, so I go to small business network groups. I do find it's harder for me with my hearing loss to keep going to the networking groups. But, I do that. I do a social media. I join groups online. I network in a lot of different ways.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: Since I can't go to a lunch with six other colleagues in a noisy environment, the strategy I've adopted is to explain to my colleagues that the bigger the group gets, the more alone I am. I make sure

that I meet with people as much as I can, having one-on-one coffee or lunch together. I also go to places where I know it's going to be easier for me to communicate. That is a substitute that I use in order to maintain my social capital. On the one hand, work isn't a coffee break. Work isn't the lunch. I'm always amazed how I learn things during the lunch and the coffee break that are never on the agenda for the meetings that are maybe more important in a lot of ways. Have other people have experienced that, too? Any other good strategies that people have?

I read so many times in publications for people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, that you should never ever fake it. Right? Our lunchtime speaker today said a few things that I thought made a lot of sense. She said, people will try twice and never a third time. If it's not twice, it's somewhere around there, right? It depends on the situation. If someone is really shy, they may just be too embarrassed to repeat what they said a third or a fourth time. We can take it personally that it's more likely about what they're feeling than about us at that point. I try to be clear about speech reading. If I'm getting the general idea of what someone is saying, but I'm not getting the details, I let them know what I'm getting and not getting. I think, I've worked with this person for ten years. He ought to know I can't hear. Yet, it's always risky to assume that they know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I do the smile and laugh sometimes, when it's a cocktail party or something inconsequential like that. I often go to large scientific conferences and don't have a clue about what is going on

sometimes. I'm horrible if someone whispers to me. I just tell them I do not do whispers. Then I take my pen and write down my question and I put it to them and I give them the pen. That's been an extremely successful strategy because they generally will write down the answer.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: That's great. I'm trying to get better at that myself. If I go to a cocktail party, meeting as many people as I can, shaking hands, smiling, nodding, and saying, "So good to see you," I also say, "I look forward to talking to you when I can actually hear what you're saying and that's not tonight." It's a simple thing, but it's taken me 30 years to figure that out and get comfortable with it. That's the proactivity we're talking about, self-leadership and the positive attitude.

Have many of you have been following Dancing with the Stars? One of the contestants was a vet from the Iraq war. He has burns over his whole body and his face is badly disfigured. In talking about his own experience, he said he had decided he would at least just try being positive. Every day he would wake up--he hated how he looked--and try being positive. You see the pictures of him in a hospital bed and then you see him gracefully Dancing with the Stars. It was just incredible. I thought about his simple proactive strategy that every day I'm just going to try to be positive. If I'm out there being positive, how will people react to me?

I must say one of my biggest challenges, and this may be true for you, too, is I get tired of explaining about hearing impairment. Does the person who takes my coffee order need to know? Sometimes they do. I've got to

communicate with them. Sometimes it's frustrating having to explain and re-explain. Self-leadership wins. I'm not advocating or viewing the people around me as my adversaries. Rather, I'm leading myself and helping lead the people around me with good grace and patience that I have in most cases but not always. Like it or not, something constantly goes better if I take the lead on explaining my communication needs and proactively manage that with my supervisor and my coworkers.

Certainly, with my students. Every class I teach, on the first session I have them do a speech reading activity. Their assignment is to pair up and share with their partner some random sentence. They must do so without voicing. The first time they tried to speak as they normally would. Then that became more dynamic and dramatic to help their partner understand. It's my way of quickly putting them in my shoes and giving them more appreciation of what things are like for me. On the first day, I show them a picture of a cochlear implant and I joke with them that I'm probably their first bionic professor without having to pay additional tuition. The students like that knowing it's something I can joke about is important for them, too.

Returning to job satisfaction, we talked about salary. How about political skills? Are political skills different for people who are deaf and hard of hearing from people who are hearing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Maybe for us, we would need to have an agreement with someone who, if something was said we missed, that person would fill us in later. We would trust that our special person would take care of that for us.

We would do the same for them, also. I'm not saying that we are less able. It's just nice to know that there would be somebody to clue us in.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: To pick the right person for that would be a political skill.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: Yes, and that's one skill that is employed successfully by a lot of people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Another thing to touch upon as you mentioned is the exchange. You want to be able to give back both emotionally and in terms of maintaining social capital. If there isn't a way to make an exchange, eventually loyalty wears away a bit.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And loyalty is very important in politics.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I want mention that advocacy can be negative, that is can have negative connotations because it implies conflict. It can also imply a one way with no exchange. When I speak to business groups, I always point out their legal obligations about accommodation. I also try to share research about how people can contribute more fully. People very much want to make contributions to their organizations. When I talk to people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, I try to get them to think about how they can add the most value to their organizations. Focusing: forget about what you can't do and focus on what you can do really well and add value to your organization. If you're adding a lot of value to your organization, then you have both the economic and the political capital to get the things that you need. Focus on the accommodations that are going to have the biggest pay back and get those first.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was just wondering before you move on if you could answer the question whether these predictors apply differently in some other way that we haven't already talked about to deaf and hard of hearing people.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I guess, the overall thought would be similar to what you said before. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you need to work harder and smarter and perhaps be better at what you do than what your hearing counterparts do. I went completely deaf in my 20s, I was probably more arrogant and less focused on what I wanted to do. Becoming deaf made me really focus on what I could do really well. In applying to different universities, I wanted to go someplace where I would be above average in my research because I knew that would buy me a lot of safety. I might have gone to a bigger name University if I were not deaf or hard of hearing. Instead, I want to go someplace where I would be a star researcher, knowing that if I couldn't do the politics quite as well, I still had some cushion. In that context, education is one of the best investments anyone can make. You definitely need to have the paper credentials. Work experience is probably the same. It's really helpful to have a track record after you become deaf, so that you can show your employer what you have done.

With cognitive ability, I think we need to be aware that a lot of our intellect can be used just following the conversation. We spend more brainpower trying to figure out what's being said or managing our deafness.

So it helps if we're doing something that we are almost a little bit over qualified for.

I'm also a big advocate of strong one-on-one relationships. Having one or more trusted allies who help make sure that we don't miss out on things is really important strategy. That person can be a mentor. Ideally, have someone who is above you mentor rather than a peer because you get different information. If you supervise people, meet with them one-on-one all the time so you can make sure that you have a constant flow of communication.

I think locus of control and the proactivity are probably even more important for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. If you own it and you manage it, it's going to make a bigger difference for you than it does for someone who is] I'm still collecting data on these. So far my reasoning is based on the interviews and conversations that I've had. When I get enough data, I can do this mathematically. In our culture, having the numbers that go behind the statements mean a lot.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You keep bringing up deaf and hard of hearing in one sentence. From my point of view, there is a big difference between people who are deaf and people who are hard of hearing, such as using Sign language versus lip reading. Are you addressing the differences in your research?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: Statistically I need a really big population in order to test separately hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf. I definitely agree

with you that some strategies apply more to one group than another group. Comparing people who are born deaf to those who become hard of hearing is your biggest contrast. And that is a big difference. Also comparing either of those groups with the hearing population, that distance is so big that we can put the two kinds of deaf groups together.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Cochlear implants is one thing that makes a big difference. I know quite a few people, deaf and hard of hearing, who have cochlear implants. That's another issue that you have to consider.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: In my case, I've been fortunate enough to live the full spectrum. I'm back to square one. I really appreciate the comment and I am trying to take those things into consideration.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How you're collecting your data?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I have so many different practices. I start with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, the whole spectrum, and review their resumes. I find out about their education and work history. If they don't have a resume, then I just ask about their education and the jobs that they have had. The next step is people fill out an online questionnaire. The questionnaire covers different aspects of them as a person, their experiences at work and what the outcomes were.

I also ask them to their supervisor fill out a much shorter questionnaire. That is not easy to get sometimes. We call all of that quantitative data. Once I have that information, I typically ask for follow-up questions via e-mail. I'll have an ASL interpreter for some people, but I worry if I ask people

questions too early, I'll bias them. I try to get the quantitative data first and then do more follow-up interviews.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If we wanted to participate, how would we get involved?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: E-mail. I'm trying to get the word out there because quite honestly you folks here are easy for me to get in touch with. It's the people not involved in something like ALDA who are also critical to the research because those folks don't have the same experiences or savvy that people in this room have.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When did your research start and how long is it going for? When do you expect to complete your research and have your results?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: I'll probably complete collecting data in the next year or so. In terms of getting published, in an academic community that can take three to five years. I can't really post things while I'm collecting data for fear of biasing people's answers. Once I'm pretty much done collecting data, I'll post it on my Web site. If you go to Oregon State's College of Business site and look for faculty, you'll find me. My past research is already on there. Since something like this takes so long and I need to publish in academic journals, which non-academics usually don't enjoy reading, I'm going to find some more accessible method to publish my findings.

I'm interested in finding about how many people work for an organization that is somehow related to deafness or hearing impairments?

Let's see a show of hands. This may lead to another round of discussion

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Disability in general.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: That's even a different group.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We're the protection and advocacy system here in Indiana. That is any disability related subject.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: Another question I have is about your integration or being tightly part of in their work group than their peers are who are not deaf or hard of hearing?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: If you are you more integrated, saying you're extroverted would be the key. For most people that's not true. Most people feel more isolated in the work group. That's potentially a really big problem for us. How many of you feel more integrated in your organization as a whole than your able bodied, hearing coworkers? [Showing of hands] So more people seem to feel less integrated into the organization as a hold than in their work group. I'm curious to hear from people who feel more integrated, how that happens.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm just very outgoing. I have an outgoing personality I had it before I lost my hearing. That's just how I am.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd have to say the same. I'm a Gemini. Also I'm a fighter. I never tried to use my hearing disability as a disadvantage. Most people don't know I'm hearing impaired because I don't have a speech impediment. I'm profoundly deaf on the audiogram. I have come to a place in my life now where I'm an advocate, which is why I got my little dog and I

tell people I'm deaf. I think you have to educate people and let them know you may not be able to hear them, but that doesn't mean I can't do something. It doesn't mean I'm any less smart or capable. There is nothing wrong with my brain other than my ears. If I can see you, I can hear you.

You have to have a sense of humor like Patty said at lunch. You've got to be able to laugh at yourself when someone mouths something for you for the fifth time. You have to learn to laugh at yourself.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: One thing that is very important when you have a hearing problem, is competency. I mean being expert in your line of work. I've been doing tax work for the last 15 years and I have a Master's degree in taxation. My bosses and coworkers like to work with me because they know I have expertise in what I'm doing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a graduate student right now. I'm fascinated with your research because it runs parallel to what my research will be. When I said I felt integrated into the large organization, I was looking at graduate school as a large organization. I make a point of doing that. It's a very conscious effort to stay connected.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm not an extroverted person naturally. I've had to learn to get myself out there. My hearing loss made me do it more because I'm learning that I can't be isolated. I'm becoming more extroverted because of my hearing loss, to tell you the truth.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: You have to be more proactive about staying involved so you know what's going on.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

DSVID BALDRIDGE: So far it appears that isolation is a big issue. So if you're the only hearing-impaired person in your organization, you have to work harder or work differently to be integrated. I think a key outcome from the research will be that the people avoid isolation or find ways to get integrated in their organization. Different people have different ways of doing that. Naturally extroverted folks seem to have their own advantage. Being hyper competent is another strategy. Someone focuses on being a technical expert. In organizations, those are both common sources of power. You can have referent power. You can have power by title. You can have the power of your knowledge. You can have power in your social network. Rightly, people focus on what they do well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I thought of a question. Ten, 20 years ago we didn't have the Internet. We didn't have e-mail. We didn't have text. We didn't have social media. Are we doing better?

DAVID BALDRIDGE: One story I'll tell as part of that change is for the culturally deaf group, there used to be a lot more industry related jobs that don't exist anymore. On the other hand, we have a lot of new tools that we didn't have before. When cell phones first came out, I hated them because they seemed to pose one more barrier for me. Then Wyndtel came out and I always remind my hearing colleagues that we have been text-messaging way, way back before you guys had text messaging. Wyndtell was the specialized texting device for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

My one answer would be that the ADA has certainly not brought about huge benefits. It seems to have increased employment a lot among people who have multiple disabilities. Employment increased only a bit among people with one disability, people who are hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, but the ADA has not really helped with overall employment rates. I do think that as our economy becomes more specialized, there will be more room for us to carve out our own niches. It takes a lot of intelligence, sophistication and social capital to do that. Not everyone has those resources.

AUDIENCE: I want to challenge you on your last ADA thoughts. The research that I'm aware of shows that people with one disability, not the multiple disabilities, are the ones who are maintaining their jobs. The individuals with multiple disabilities or with more severe disabilities are the ones who are unemployed or who never had a job. They are being sheltered. They are shuttled to sheltered workshops and work for minimum wage or below the minimum. pay. The ADA, and that's where I work, protects their rights and has been fairly helpful. Of course you've got the big lawsuits out there. We only hear about the big things. However, at least in our agency, there have been a lot of inroads representing individuals. I see a bigger inroad for people with one disability than for people with more severe or with multiple disabilities. Also, the individuals who are more willing to advocate for themselves and who know how to use the ADA, get the reasonable accommodations.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have that piece of legislation there, as well as

the Rehab Act and the Communications Act, and the Developmental Disabilities Act, so if people understand how to use those acts to advocate appropriately for themselves, they definitely can have an impact. Of course, the Justice Department and the courts will have their interpretations. It's a case-by-case issue and always will be.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: What I cited is research by an employment economist which appeared to be a thorough and well done study He just looked at overall employment rates and how they have changed among those groups pre-and post-ADA. I was not happy to see those statistics. Same as you, on a day-to-day basis, talking with people, I see the ADA helping people.

AUDIENCE: It's not been a huge, systemic change. But there are some very successful, individual changes.

DAVID BALDRIDGE: By the same token, some people have argued that where employers might have said would have said, "Sorry, we don't hire people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing or this job is not appropriate..." now you don't hear that. Right? It's illegal.

That it doesn't mean it's not going to happen. Now a person might hear, "You're over qualified for the job." Or, "We just hired someone last week." So some people argue that the ADA has--someone used the term--an "Unintended or silent discrimination." Even well intentioned people may want to help, but are afraid to bring up the word accommodation or opening up that can of worms. It's a complicated mix.

Quickly, this is on accommodations. When I researched accommodation before, most people could cite instances where they did not ask for the accommodation that they needed. Although a lot of people would say that that wasn't true, when they were pressed further, they agreed. When asked questions about what accommodations they would need to be promoted or to be more satisfied with your job, essentially, everyone could think of different accommodations that they needed. They had only thought of asking for the accommodations that they had to have to do their job. If promoted and had to attend a conference, they would need captioning. Most people can think of things like that, but we tend to limit our thinking about accommodations to what we need to do our job, right now. Arguably, that is a bit of a self-limiting behavior.

About careers, I feel for everyone in this room in terms of how hard you work in your jobs. I know I work really hard every day. Other than you fellow people here, most people don't appreciate how much work it is to follow a conversation at a dinner party. I encourage you to pursue your career success, to be proactive and to steal good ideas from the people sitting next to you. They often share the same problems.

Thank you for being here today. Please e-mail me. I'd love to hear your story, if I can help I'd love to help. Thank you.

[Applause]

David Baldrige is a professor at Oregon State University where he teaches on leadership, negotiation and interpersonal effectiveness. His research examines the workplace experiences of people who are Deaf or late-deafened. David is a deafened adult and member of ALDA.