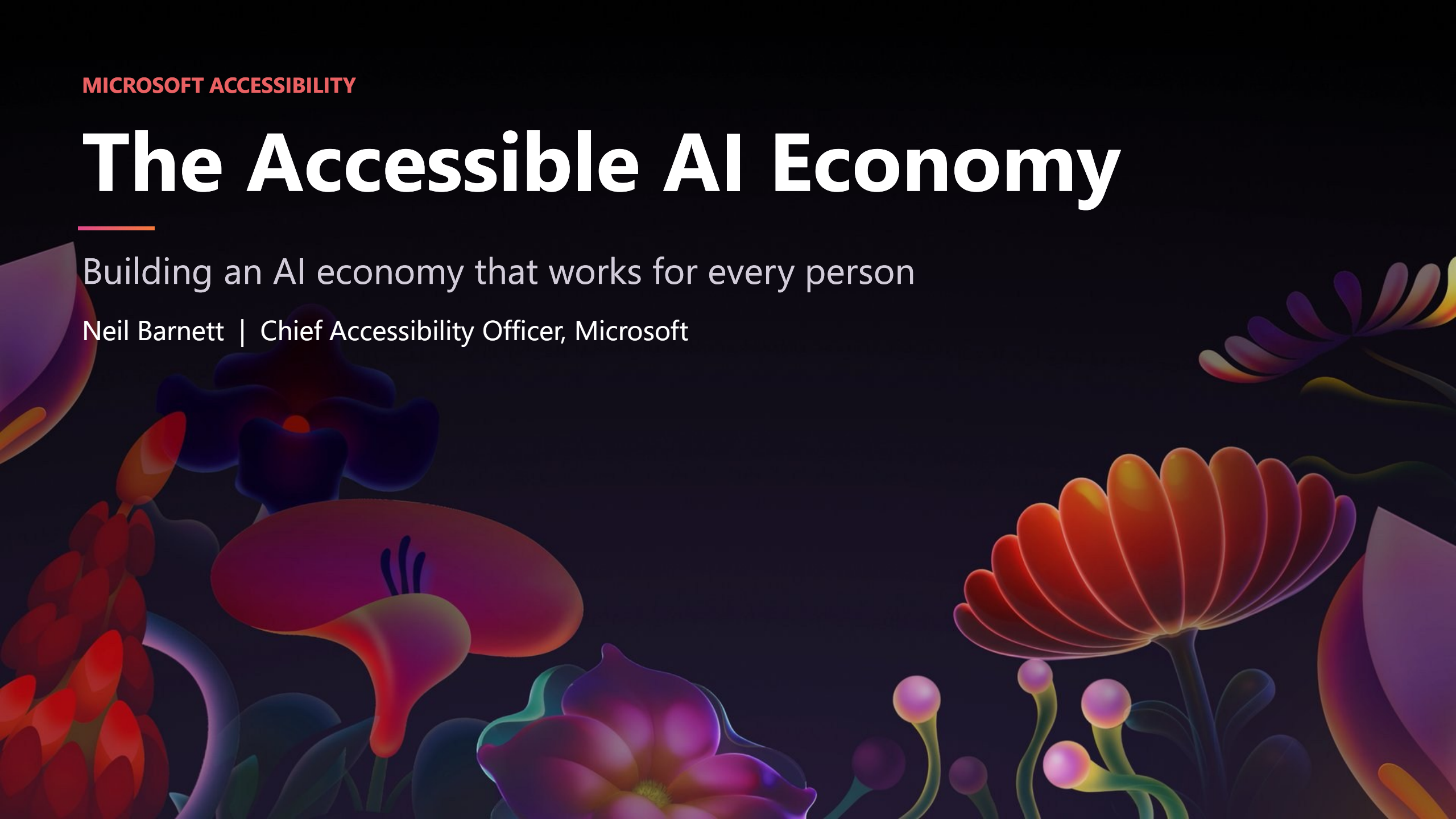
MICROSOFT ACCESSIBILITY

The Accessible AI Economy

Building an AI economy that works for every person

Neil Barnett | Chief Accessibility Officer, Microsoft



BEFORE THE CAO ROLE

Where I built the foundation

Areas that put lived experience at the center of how Microsoft serves customers and employees

CUSTOMERS

Voice of Customer: Disability Answer Desk
Dedicated support that turns customer feedback into product change

Be My Eyes
Partnership bringing on-demand visual help to blind and low-vision customers

EMPLOYEES

Autism & Neurodiversity Hiring
Co-developed a hiring path built on strengths

Disability Self-ID
Making it safe for employees to count themselves in

Global Adjustments
Workplace accommodations for employees worldwide

Disability ERG
Community and voice for employees with disabilities

Accessible Employee Experience & Voice of Employee
Accessible tools, spaces and listening

The common thread
Lived experience shapes what we build

THE MICROSOFT ACCESSIBILITY TEAM

Nine ways we open doors

Nothing about us without us. Nine areas, one team, built with the disability community.

01 PRODUCT

Build it in

Inclusive Design
Designing with people with disabilities from day one

AI Innovation
Using AI to innovate at scale

3rd Party Assistive Technology
Working with the tools people already rely on

02 POLICY

Set the bar

Global Disability Policy
Championing accessibility as a fundamental right, worldwide

Governance & Standards
One accessibility bar for every product we ship

Training
Every employee equipped to build accessibly

03 PEOPLE

Be there for people

Customer Support
Disability Answer Desk: expert help when it matters

Customer Engagements
Partnering with customers and governments on their journey

Employee Experience
An accessible workplace for our own people

Our mission

Empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more

Disability impacts (almost) everyone

1.3B

people live with a disability.

When we build accessible products, we build for everyone.

83% will experience disability during working age, including temporary or situational

75% of disabilities are non-apparent

1 in 5 identify as neurodivergent

Sources: World Health Organization; Microsoft accessibility research

Our principles

Accountability

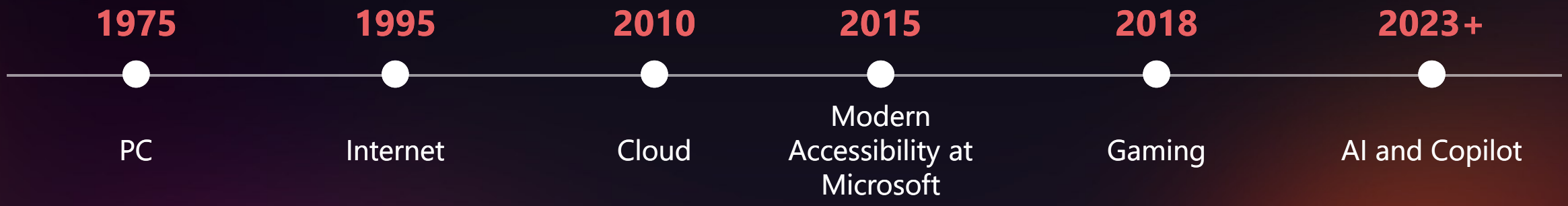
Innovation

Partnership


Policy
Technology
People
Partnerships
Disability community
Customers & Partners
Employees
The world
6,000
Digital Inventory

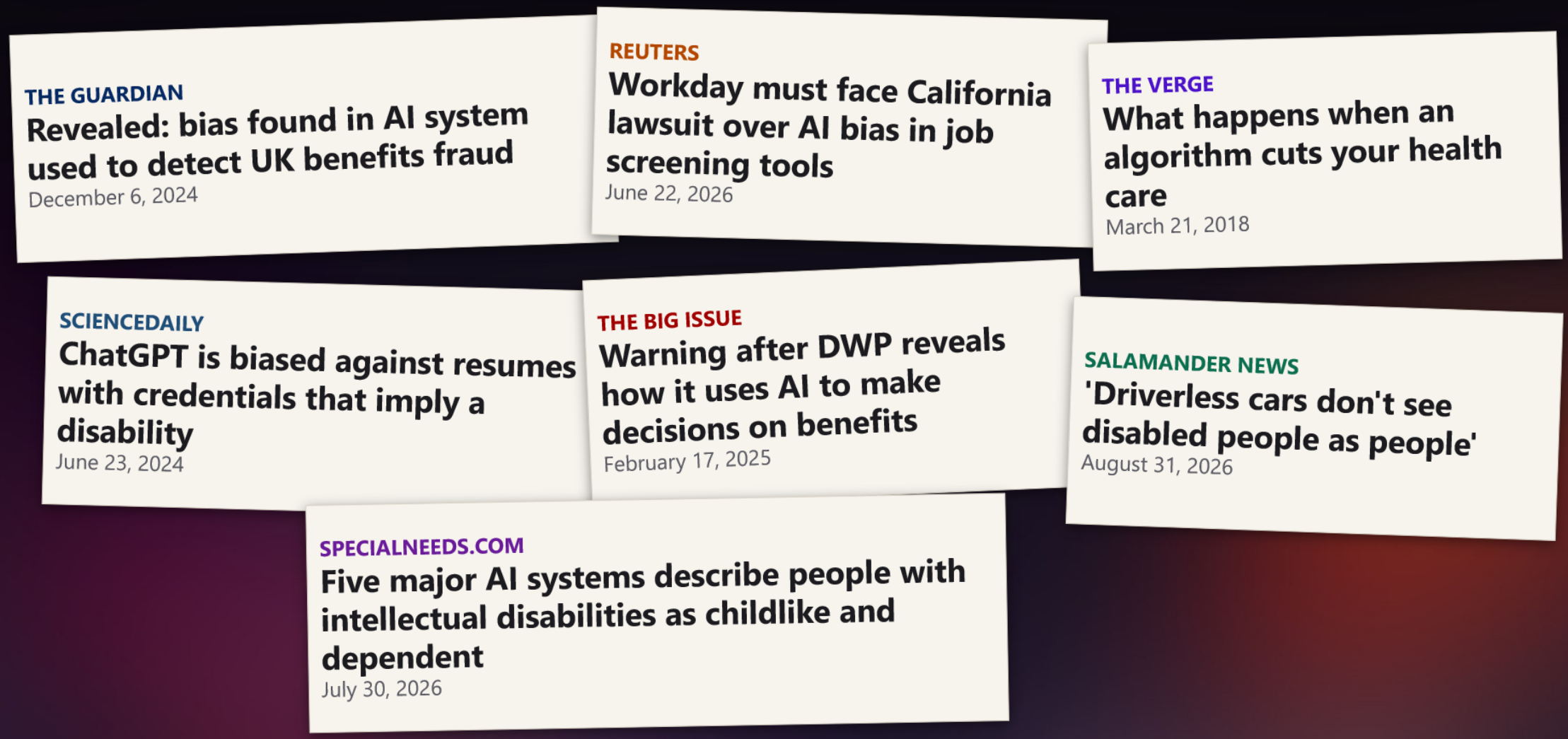
Our commitment to accessibility

Every technology wave has opened new doors and created new barriers



The headlines are already here

The impacts of inaccessible AI are real, people are voicing it, and we're listening.





32%

In 2003, Forrester Research found 57% of people to benefit from Accessibility

Microsoft x Forrester Research:

72% of EU citizens believe they would benefit from AT today

FORRESTER

Oh, The Things We Can Do To

How Assistive Technology Is Unlocking Human Potentia
In The Era Of AI

A FORRESTER CONSULTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER COMMISSIONED BY MICROSOFT,



FORRESTER

**The Expanding Role Of Assist
Technology In Brazil**

A FORRESTER CONSULTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY COMMIS
MICROSOFT, MAY 2026



FORRESTER

**The Expanding Role Of Assistive
Technology In The European Union**

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**nding Role Of Assistive
gy In The United States**

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY COMMISSIONED BY



g For Everyone

Of Assistive Technology In Today's Tech-Driven World

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER COMMISSIONED BY MICROSOFT, MAY 2026



The AI era

How do we make sure AI isn't creating a more inaccessible world?

4%

Models train on a web where only about 4% of sites are fully accessible

17x

Disability objects appear 17x less in training data, driving up to 28% lower recognition accuracy

Speed

AI multiplies everything: more content, more code, and more barriers unless accessibility is built in

Sources: WebAIM Million; AI dataset representation research

The AI economy

Microsoft's AI economy agenda: infrastructure, skilling and broad diffusion of AI

"AI has the potential to become the most useful tool for people ever invented.“

Brad Smith, Vice Chair and President, Microsoft

The accessible AI economy

An economy where people with disabilities can use AI, build AI, lead with AI, and share fully in the value AI creates.

01 Use

AI products, agents and models are **accessible** by design and trained on data that represents disability

02 Build

AI works as assistive technology and a productivity partner, **unlocking talent and independence**

03 Benefit

Equitable access to AI jobs, AI-intensive companies, leadership, entrepreneurship and capital

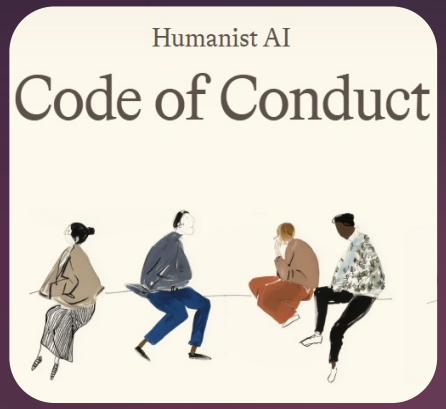
AI must work for all 1.3 billion people with disabilities.

Bringing it to life

Three principles guide how we build the accessible AI economy

Using AI

AI products, agents and models are accessible by design and trained on data that represents disability



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Building with AI

AI works as assistive technology and a productivity partner, unlocking talent and independence



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Benefiting from AI

Equitable access to AI jobs, AI-intensive companies, leadership, entrepreneurship and capital

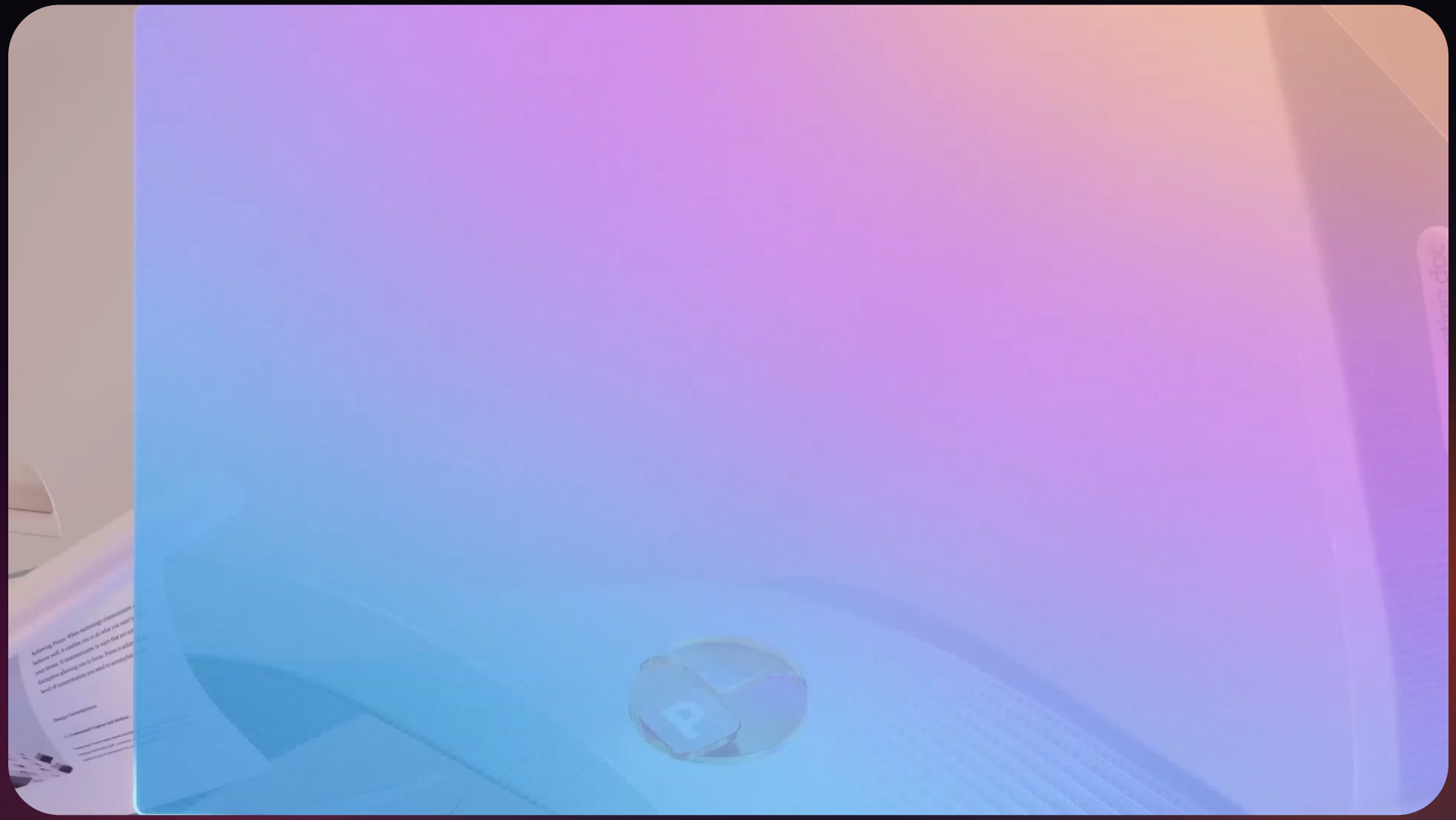


What we can all do

Everyone in this room can take one action this quarter.

01	**Leaders**	Put disability into AI talent, promotion and leadership pipelines
02	**Builders**	Build accessible AI from day one, include disability data, and test for representation harms
03	**Organizations**	Buy accessible, require it from suppliers, and offer AI as a workplace accommodation
04	**Everyone**	Take Accessibility 101, share free AI skilling, and partner with disability-led organizations

This is my Copilot



Thank you

aka.ms/Accessibility

