

The Journey of John Kirkwood

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hello. I'm Ray Zardetto and welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio here on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. Our program today is sponsored by the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services.

And today's show is going to focus on the journey of John Kirkwood. John Kirkwood worked for the City of New York for fourteen years, first as an environmental engineer and then as a new media strategist. He developed New York City's first major website and was instrumental in launching websites for the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Health and the Administration for Children's Services. And at the same time he started his own internet company which he called City Mouse and he was beginning to build a healthy clientele of nonprofit companies and other clients. And then in 1996, without warning, it all changed radically for John Kirkwood. So John, why don't we start?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: 2006.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm sorry. 2006, I'm sorry. Why don't you pick it up from there?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: That's alright. Yes, 2006.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes, in 2006, I suffered from an aneurysm and stroke that, uh, reset my brain in a lot of ways, uh, reset my visual orientation, reset the way that I taste, the way that I smell and the way that I access and use memory. And I went through years of rehabilitation to get back to a point where I could begin to function again in society. And, uh, my new mission is to increase the awareness of disabilities online and, uh, start a company that is focused around accessibility of online services.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm just curious, when you go back and you look at 2006 and what happened, I mean, did you have any inkling, any indication that, you know, you might be in for such a severe condition?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Not from my memory.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: However, a friend of mine did tell me the day before that I had told him that I had the worst headache of my life and I had it for a day or so.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: So it did seem that the aneurysm had started to, um, affect how my brain was feeling.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. But generally, there was no prior indication that something like this was going to happen and so just radically change your life.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Absolutely. Right.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. So you went through, um, -- I think you said you were in a coma for a while?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And you went through multiple years of rehabilitation, right?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: That's correct. Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um, the rehabilitation, was it both physical and mental?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And was it also, to some degree, emotional and psychological?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Absolutely.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. So it was really the gamete of everything that makes John Kirkwood, John Kirkwood.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um, could you tell us just a little bit about, um, going through that, the evolution of your thinking from the time, you know, you realized what had happened and then you started on this long road back? Um, you know, how do you deal with something like that knowing that you have a long road ahead of you and it's, you know, it came out of nowhere and you have got to do this?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Um, through a fantastic support network of friends and family. I couldn't have done it without them to really know who I was as a person. Everything had been changed

for me other than my persona, and that was concerns of friends and family around me, if John Kirkwood was still John Kirkwood. And the way that I could adapt to my new environment, my new visual environment, my new smells, new tastes, the aspect of dealing with memory issues that couldn't get me from one hour to the next or one day to the next. It was the continuity of the people around me that kept me the same person, I feel.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Was there any one in particular who helped you through this or that you, you know, you really leaned on heavily during this time?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: I would say that my parents were the major people that I leaned on then and still, as they might attest to, lean on now. (Laughter).

>> RAY ZARDETTO: So, how old were you when this happened?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: I was 36.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: 36. And at that point you were working for the City of New York, plus you had your own company, City Mouse, that we talked about.

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: That is correct.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we will talk about City Mouse again in a little bit more because you certainly, uh, resuscitated that. But when you went through the rehabilitation, at what point were you able to say, you know, I can see light at the end of the tunnel and now I have got to start thinking about what am I going to with myself as I emerge from rehabilitation here and

become John Kirkwood again?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: I think I was in a program called Phase Two at Mount Sinai, which was a rehabilitation program for people with very severe brain injuries that were working to get their life back together. And it was through that that I figured out how to manage memory, how to spatially navigate even from my apartment up to Mount Sinai Hospital and get back on a schedule, on a daily schedule and get into a routine of life that I felt like I could then bridge the gap to incorporate into society again. And it was really through that program.

And during that phase I started inquiring about the aspect of whether disability owned businesses were looked, uh, at in the resource pool like women owned businesses or minority owned businesses and none of them had heard of that. So after a bit of digging at the new program for certification of disability owned businesses, uh, came to light to me and I wanted to get involved with that. So I think that, um, the whole process of recovery kind of integrated into me trying to start myself back up independently as a sort of business owner.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Would it be fair to say that had you not had the aneurysm and the stroke, that the questions you asked, digging you did, about disability owned businesses, you probably would have never gotten around to doing something like that?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: I would one hundred percent agree with that, that I would not have.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. Was there a particular person, a discussion, a thing that really, you know, turned that light on for you as you determined that you were going to do that?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: Um, I think it was the -- could potentially have been vocational services for the state that I started to meet with about getting back into the work world.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: And not sure exactly how that thread got completed as far as getting to the stage that I am now with certifying my business.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Did you, as you were getting through the rehabilitation, did you have confidence that you would be able to get back out into the work world and function?

>> MR. JOHN KIRKWOOD: I had one very strong moment that indicated otherwise to me. I remember going to the hospital and having engineering and design, graphic design background, I was a very visual person and one of the things that I did was visually display information. And I was walking down the street and I looked up at the sign and I was going to therapy and it was like, pots, pots, pots, pots, why are they selling pots here, and big red pots, octagonal red pots? That's what -- oh. And I sat down and I realized I was reading backwards and it was a stop sign. And at that point in time I really

wondered how am I going to work ever again if my visual perception is there that I can't even recognize a stop sign?

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hmm. Wow. You know, I think, um, this probably would be a good time to take a little break. What I'd like to do when we come back, for the next segment of the program, is just talk for a couple of minutes, calibrate about where you are right now relative to your function and start talking about your company, City Mouse, what it was before 2006 and what it's been since then. So how about we tackle that right after our first break?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Good. We can take our first break, it's a short one. When we come back, we will talk more with John Kirkwood and his journey. This is Ray Zardetto and stay with us on Disabilities At Work Radio.

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Welcome back.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. One of our program sponsors today is the Kessler Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled through the rehabilitation research done by the Kessler Foundation Research Center and through the work of the Kessler Program Center which helps prepare the disabled for the demands of the workplace.

And on Disabilities At Work Radio today our guest is John Kirkwood, founder of the internet company City Mouse, but who had a long journey in getting from where he was to re-owning again his company City Mouse.

So, John, I want to get back to your story, you talked about the rehabilitation, your realization of what obstacles you still had to overcome. And I'm just wondering if you can kind of calibrate for us now exactly where you are in terms of now that you are back out on the workforce, you know, how your brain does function, how things work for you, what's different for you now than it was before everything happened in 2006?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes, well, speaking to how things are different, um, I think the major thing that I got an understanding of through the years of therapy was how I was able to commit things to memory and to manage tasks. I found

that the aspect of multitasking and taking on the workload that I used to take on is virtually impossible for me without any compensatory strategies. And those compensatory strategies include recording conversations, they include taking notes of what my current status of projects are, they include diligent scheduling of items, project management, having an assistant that helps me keep to timelines.

I cannot work the way that I used to without having these extra pieces in place, and that is something that I needed to learn. It was easy to just jump into something and then think, oh, wow, actually I'm not going to be able to find this place, but I'm going to, because my spatial navigation is off. And I used to orient around something that was on the left side of the street and I can't see to the left when I'm going down the street, so I might have missed it.

So, I have to really prepare for situations that I didn't have to prepare for before, where I could just think things through my mind and preparation for, say, a meeting I was going to and by the time I would get to that meeting I would be fully prepared. Now if I'm going to a meeting, I have to prepare for getting to the meeting. It's a whole different story and it takes a lot of energy.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hmm.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: And that's something other people might not even understand by looking at me, because I walk with a cane,

and I often wear sunglasses, but they are just visual things, they are not because I have an issue with mobility other than the issue of potentially running into someone on the street.

So, it's, uh, it's something that I have learned to compensate for, but I know that it's a lot of things that other people would say, well, that's only going to take you a short time, why don't you do that and run over there and grab that and come back. That's something that, out of the blue, will derail my whole schedule of what I need to do that day.

So, that might answer your question or it might not, but that gives you an idea of what I have been going through, I think.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: No, I think it does. I think it's also very enlightening for our audience to know that because as you know many of the people listening to this program have to deal with their own challenges and disabilities, and I think it's good for them to know that people who have, you know, made it through, who have found ways to overcome the obstacles have overcome obstacles probably just as great, just as challenging as the ones that they face every day.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: If not, more so.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. So I think it's good to get a grounding like that before we start talking about the business aspect of your career and everything so people kind of know that. But, anyway, why don't you talk about City Mouse for a

couple of minutes? Why did you originally found City Mouse in its first iteration some years ago?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I founded it because I saw the need for website development companies. This was very much the early days of the internet. I created the first website for the city of New York called NYC Link and a lot of government agencies needed help in creating their online initiatives.

I have always been, uh, one that worked and wanted to work in public service and, and worked for the greater good I have always hoped. And I found that there were some non-profits out there that didn't have, uh, the proper services online and they wanted to, uh, create better services. So that's why I created my company to begin with.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And, about, I don't know if you -- how far long City Mouse had come by the time you had your aneurysm in 2006, but about how many clients at that point where you --.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I only had a few different clients.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. So it would be fair to characterize it as building the business, you were in a phase of building the business at that point?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes. Um, I had split attention; I guess, at that point, a psychological term I know at this point, where I was doing the government work and also City Mouse. I was never looking at City Mouse to sort of take over everything. It was always a way that I could do the other fun stuff for clients

that I wanted to work with.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm. So, I guess in some ways then there was already this existing synergy between City Mouse and what you envisioned it to be and what you decided you wanted to do as you got through rehabilitation then?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Why don't you talk a little bit about City Mouse today and some of the things you do. I know when you look at some of the things that you have or some of the information that you have on the website and that we have talked about. You really want to put a focus now, from what I understand, with City Mouse, on communications for persons with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act and many of the other things related to people with disabilities.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That's correct. Yes. I want to have the primary focus of City Mouse to, uh, reach out to qualified disabled people to, to execute its services of making communications that are accessible to all. And I think that that is an underserved community from what I have seen. I have seen how the internet development has evolved over time and often it zips into flashing bells and whistles and those sort of applications are not ones that are accessible to all. They might look fancy if you have got the fastest computer or the greatest browser and flash player on it and it's developed by some young designer who is a great designer, but they are

probably not concerned with making the website ADA compliant. And that is something that I'm going to focus around, is to make websites that are ADA compliant and make them open to all, really.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: What are some of the characteristics that would be involved in making it ADA compliant, the websites?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes, some of the characteristics are proper tagging of images so that an image that cannot be seen by someone who is visually impaired will have proper descriptions of the images. That navigation of the website is, uh, is made so that compensatory technologies can move around the screen and get to the buttons that they need to press, that there is not extraneous codes, say, about the color and shape of bullets when that is information that a screen reader would pick up, but someone that is not visually impaired wouldn't see. So there can be things that are in the code that end up making it very messy for other people.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I'm just curious, I don't know if you know the answer to this, but what percentage of websites in existence are ADA compliant at this point? Do you have any idea?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: No, I do not.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm going to guess it's fairly, fairly minimal though.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I think it is. And it's difficult to even

standardize on what ADA compliance, quote/unquote ADA compliance is, because compensatory technologies evolve as well.

So, um, I think that there has got to be -- there is a standardizing body that, that can give you information about that and, uh, there are multi ways that one can make a site ADA compliant, but this is all evolving.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. I'm just wondering also, um, do you have any consulting role with any government agencies, whether it's still the City of New York or anything with regard to making their sites more ADA compliant?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Not at this point in time.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. Would you like to though?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes. I think I would.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I think it would be, it sounds like it would be something that would be helpful for any number of agencies and, and levels of government, not just New York City, but statewide, even federal. So, maybe that's something that needs to be looked into.

I want to talk a little bit more about City Mouse and everything with you when we come back, John. We are going to take another break, and I want to talk about City Mouse from the standpoint of some of the folks you work with and its place or its place in the entire people with disabilities workplace environment.

But, first, let me thank Karasch and Associates, an ASL Interpreter Referral Services, for their generosity in making our Disabilities At Work Radio program accessible to the deaf and the hard of hearing. Transcripts of our program will be available on our website, Disabilitiesatwork.org, one week following each episode.

And as long as we are talking about our website, um, let me ask you or invite you to please check out our new newsletter. It started this year. It's posted on the website. It's called Disabilities At Work Radio, and it's free. And it provides a lot of information about many of the topics we discuss on the program, and it's also a great source of information about the issues surrounding employment of people with disabilities. So check it out at Disabilitiesatwork.org.

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We will be back with John Kirkwood in just a moment. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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Welcome back.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we are back on VoiceAmerica's business network and this is Disabilities At Work Radio. I'm Ray Zardetto and today's show is sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services, part of the State of New Jersey's Division of Human Services. And the division focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live lives more independently in their communities.

My guest today, John Kirkwood, former employee of the City of New York and the once and current president and owner and founder of City Mouse, an internet consulting company.

John was, a few years back, felled by, but not stopped by, a brain aneurysm and a stroke, but after years of rehabilitation, John is back behind the wheel at City Mouse, which is where we left off the conversation before the last break.

John, one of the things that you touched on very quickly in the last segment was the fact that your business was disability certified and I assume that was by the USBLN, the Business Leadership Network?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That is correct.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Why don't you talk a little bit about what that is and then why you think it's important that businesses

like yours be certified in that way. What does it mean to the business community at large?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes. I got certified by the USBLN, the U.S. Business Leadership Network, in 2010. And, uh, it is a certification process that is moving to promote businesses that are owned by people with disabilities and meant to get them into the vendor streams of various large businesses throughout the country. Um, and with that certification I'm hoping to be able to approach new clients and be able to market the company in ways that I might not be able to do just as a singular resource.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And the certification you get from the USBLN suggests, or says, that you are a majority owned or a majority disability owned business, is that correct?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That is correct.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um, why is that important to the business community do you think, the business community at large?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Well, I think that the whole aspect of the certification of minority owned businesses, women owned businesses, and now disability owned businesses, uh, gives these businesses an entry into a vendor stream that maybe they wouldn't have been seen so easily.

Also, the support of this network can show how successful these businesses are, um, that there is a reputation that is at play here where people want to show that they are

able to do the things that they are showing, that they are promoting. And to get the support of this network allows, allows the small business community to get into these vendor streams.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And so if I work for a company or corporation, and part of my strategy or part of the goals we set out is to do more business with some either minority owned, women owned or disability owned businesses, looking for this certification is something I can use to help me find some of these suppliers that way, is that right?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That's correct, yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Um, I also notice that as you reconstituted your business in the last couple of years that you have been getting some outside help mentoring, uh, mentoring support and everything from, I think, it's Columbia University, is that correct?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That is correct, yes.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Why don't you -- is that something that they do in general, do you know? Is that part of a program that they offer to a lot of businesses?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That is a general program for, uh, for graduates of Columbia University, definitely. I'm not sure what the outreach is for that mentorship program. And also there is the program from La Guardia Community College that is they are a small business development center that is integrated

by, I think it's the State University of New York and the U.S. Small Business Administration. So that is an open program that, I think, any up and coming business can seek the services from.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And the Columbia mentoring or mentorship program that you just mentioned, um, what exactly does that do for you?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yeah, that gives me access to some business minded engineering alumni that have successful businesses out there to allow my company to have an understanding of what the markets are and what is around building a successful business. So it's -- I'm in the beginning steps of the process with them and we have been going through the business plan and how we are going to approach different markets with my services.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm just curious, is the program or the mentors in the program, are they faculty from Columbia, or do they bring in businesspeople?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I think they are engineering faculty, and businesspeople, actually.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: It's both, so. And it's open to graduates of Columbia?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: This is my understanding, yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And so lucky you, you are a graduate of Columbia, right?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: For this program, definitely. (Laughter).

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And the other program you mentioned, which is which is part of La Guardia Community College; what exactly does that provide?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: There is a business development center, I think, let's see, it's called New York Designs and it provides an incubator for businesses that they can bounce ideas off other people with start-up businesses within this office space and use their facilities and work with the resources that the other small companies have available to them as well.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hmm. Okay. I'm curious, at this point now a few years that you have been at this again since you have reconstituted City Mouse and are going in, did you think you would be this far along as you are right now?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: (Laughter). I think I can say yes and no and they would both be right.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: (Laughter).

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: (Laughter). You know, it's very difficult for me to judge my own progress. And from the input that I'm getting from people around me, I'm going to go with no.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Well, you can look at this as you have more opportunities ahead of you, that's all.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Right.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: You have a couple of other employees at City Mouse?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I have a full-time assistant that is helping

me out with keeping me on track of things, as I said before. And I have a business partner that I used to work with in the past to help me re-launch things as well. So we are very much our start-up stage and we are looking to expand the number of people working for us at City Mouse and around the ethos, as I said before.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I think you expressed an interest as you talked about expanding the business that a lot of the people you want to hire would be people with disabilities.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Most definitely.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. Let's talk about that for a few minutes, um, you know, and what kind of capacities and in what way would you go about doing it, um, just your overall thinking with regard to that.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: My thinking is that, um, people that would know the best on how well internet sites are working in regards to compliance with the Disability Act or just in regards to usability, uh, would be the disability community. So, therefore, I would really like to bring people in that, uh, have been using the internet for a while and that see the, uh, the missteps that are out there, the things that do work, the things that don't work, and how they can be resolved. And, uh, that's where I feel like I can really reach out to the disability community as far as employment is concerned and moving City Mouse forward in that direction.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And, by the way, where is City Mouse located? Is it in New York City?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Um, I'd like to talk some more about the implications of your decisions to try and move the ball forward in terms of hiring people with disabilities and talk a little bit more philosophically with you about people with disabilities and the workplace. And then, you know, what you would advise them, what you would advise potential employers of them. Um, I think that would be very interesting, but we have to take one more break first before we can do that. So if you would stay with us, John, we are going to take this break, and we will be back in just a moment.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio I'm Ray Zardetto speaking on today's program with John Kirkwood.

And, John, we were talking just a few minutes ago about your interest in bringing people with disabilities into City Mouse, your internet consulting and development company. And we talked a little bit about how you might go about doing that. I'm curious; you've described and discussed in detail your own disabilities and I know some of them may be more obvious and some of them may be hidden, and I'm wondering, from your standpoint, if somebody who is listening to the program today has his or her own disabilities to deal with, um, how do you -- how would you advise them, relative to dealing that disability if they are looking for a job. And then I also want to ask you how you think they should deal with the disability if they are already in the workplace and it's kind of a hidden disability. Do you think they should make it known to their coworkers and their bosses or should they not?

So let's take these one at a time, I guess. What would you say to somebody who is managing or trying to work with their own disabilities and looking for a job right now?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: I think that there are resources out there that specifically cater to people looking for employment that have a disability. I also think that there is a big effort to

show, uh, what the advantages are of hiring people with disabilities. I was definitely at some interesting conferences around the hiring practices of some large businesses of people with disabilities and one of the things that they have really shown is that the job satisfaction and the satisfaction of the workers for people with disabilities is generally higher than people without disabilities. So, that aspect of focusing on the positive rather than, uh, the perceived inability to do something is what, I think, can really move things forward.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: What do you find is the single biggest obstacle, um, that you think there is in terms of hiring managers, human resource professionals who are looking at or thinking about hiring people with disabilities?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: My feeling on that is that there is a problem with perception and that somehow it's going to be more difficult to work with someone with a disability or that the company might not have the procedures in place to properly comply with regulations or laws around people with disabilities. But I'm kind of guessing on this one.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. I know it's more from your own perception of it, but that's what I'm interested in here.

In a number of programs we have done over the last year we have talked to people who have disabilities that they manage in one way or another. Some of them are more obvious, some of them are more hidden. And a lot of times we get into

discussions about whether people who have disabilities that are more or less hidden, um, should they reveal them to their employers, should they, you know, reveal them to the coworkers or should they not? I don't know if you have any opinion or perspective on that.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yeah, um, from my personal perspective, I really feel like it's best to, to not try and hide something and to put it out on the table so that there is not a miscommunication in the future. I do it every day with just walking to meet someone potentially in a restaurant and telling them, look, I'm not going to be able to find -- I might not be able to find my way back to the table that we are at.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: So just could you keep that in mind or don't be insulted if I pass by you on the street and don't say anything. So, I might look like I could see someone, but the reality is, I have missed something.

So, if they know right off the bat that, ah, huh, this person doesn't necessarily know that I have done this, um, it's almost empowering for both people. They have the opportunity to almost be kind and say, hey, you know, I'm sorry, I was just -- you come over this way because of that over there. I'm like, oh, thank you. You know, it's, it's good for all people.

If it's up front, then I don't find that there are those miscommunications and, uh, I almost feel like people are more

psychologically open to you because you have told them a little something about yourself and I think it can make people feel more comfortable.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you find in dealing with people since your aneurysm that it works better if you kind of take the lead in that regard in terms of, um, setting the parameters of the discussion and what you can and can't say? I think a lot of times people are not sure what is the appropriate thing to do or say, you know, when they are talking to someone who has a disability. So do you find it's better if you kind of set the parameters right away up front?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Um, I find it best if I make the effort to communicate something to them, yes. Because then I think one can almost see an anxiety in someone's face when they are trying to figure out how to communicate something and they don't want to miscommunicate. I think that they might not have the tools to do it because it could be very difficult to understand what someone else's quote/unquote disability is.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. So getting back to City Mouse then, we will close out the program for the last few minutes again talking about your business, City Mouse. First of all, for those folks who might want to know, um, where can they find more information or get in touch with City Mouse?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: More information can be found on my website. The URL is CityMouse.com. C-i-t-y-M-o-u-s-e.com. And I can be

e-mailed any time at Kirkwood@CityMouse.com.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And that's K-i-r-k-w-o-o-d, Kirkwood.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Correct.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. So what are some of the projects City Mouse is looking at doing or currently involved in that are involved in what you talked about earlier, the supporting or getting the word out more on people with disabilities?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Well, that is very much in the incubation stage as I said. And the projects are going to be around working with companies to get their websites ADA compliant.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you also find, uh, that just doing any kind of general publicity, whether it's this show or other shows, any kind of general publicity about, um, people with disabilities and the kinds of successes, uh, that they can avail themselves of that that would help in terms of this campaign?

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Yes. And I would love to promote other businesses even on my website that are doing like businesses or are also disability owned businesses or have an interest in this, so.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Good. I think that would be a great thing. So, again, tell us, tell us the URL for City Mouse.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: It is CityMouse.com.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Get a hold of John Kirkwood and make it happen.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: That would be great.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. John, listen, I appreciate you coming on the show and being as hope and as frank as you have been about what happened to you and your long road back. And, you know, first I want to thank you for that and secondly offer my congratulations to your for what you have been able to do. It's a great story.

>> JOHN KIRKWOOD: Any time. Any time. It's an honor.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thank you. Let me also thank today our sponsors, the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services. And, finally, a thanks to Karasch and Associates, an ASL Interpreter Referral Service, for their generosity in making Disabilities At Work Radio accessible to the deaf and to the hard of hearing. Transcripts of our program will be available on our website Disabilitiesatwork.org a week following each episode.

I want to thank you all for being with us here today. Join us again next Wednesday at noon Eastern Time on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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