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Oral History Conversation with Ms. Torrie Dunlap

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This is an oral history conversation on social enterprise between students in business ethics at the University of San Diego and Miss Torrie Dunlap, C.E.O.

Of Kids Included Together. Torrie, before we begin this conversation proper and just by a way of introduction to scholars who will be listening to the record of this conversation could you give us a brief overview of what Kids Included Together does and the social impact it seeks to achieve?

Yes I can Kids Included Together teaches people and organizations how to include children with disabilities in their schools and community based programs so we are trying to raise the social profile...
of children with disabilities and reduce

the stigma that children with disabilities and their families face in society and

provide benefits to all children and all of society where kids with or without disabilities live, learn, and play together.

Torrie, thank you for coming and sharing your time with us. Could you please take us back to what your childhood was like? And were there specific childhood experiences you that you might be able to connect to the kind of work you’re doing right now with Kid Included Together.

Yes. Let’s see. My childhood was a pretty typical middle class suburban childhood. One thing that I think was significant was that when I grew up kids with disabilities got on a different bus and went to
a completely different school so I had
really no exposure to and no experience with

kids who were different than me in my
school upbringing so then when I and I was

always involved in the arts and dance
and theater and when I was in college

I was doing some choreography and teaching

a lot of dance to kids and I was
hired to be a choreographer for

a show choir and. At the show choir auditions
my kind of first day of working with

them

a seventh grader came in to audition for
the show choir who had used this prosthetic

for one of her arms and she sang
beautifully she was wonderful she could dance

she had been taking dance her whole life she
was just so so talented and she had this

prosthetic arm. I wanted her in the
show choir and when the artistic team
met to discuss all the auditioners and who would get in the show choir and who wouldn’t the show choir director did not want to cast this seventh grader and I just couldn’t believe it she could sing she could dance she could do everything we were asking she has smiles for days and I just cannot see why she wouldn’t be able to do it and the show choir director didn’t want her in because her prosthetic wouldn’t completely straighten so she couldn’t have the perfectly straight arms. There were times that they would do lifts and things like that and she said I think show choir just might be an activity that you need two arms for and I felt like a gut punch. I just...that seems so wrong to me. I had no idea kind of why it seemed wrong to me but it just seemed like this is
a really big problem and so I advocated for her and the show choir director gave in

but she made a rule

that she would have to wear her prosthetic every time she came to a practice or was involved in the show choir at all because you know it's not that comfortable. Sometimes she would take it off and someday she wouldn't wear it

but she made a rule

that she had to wear it all the time. and that,

I didn't really think about that as a defining experience

until much later when I look back on it and realize that was

the first time I saw and kind of understood the discrimination that young people
with disabilities can face and how they can be excluded and so I think that that kind of was a pivotal moment for me when I became later on exposed to kids included together in the work of kids included together that I realized the the link back to that initial experience I had. So kinda just jumping forward to you, working at Kids Included together so we were watching some of your TED talks they delivered at SDSU and you describe your initial decision to get involved with kids included together as a leap of faith. Could you take us back to that moment when you made that decision and what made it a leap of faith and just how was that compared to your
previous career of changing kids with all abilities and

just along the lines, was there maybe a person or

a moment or conversation that ultimately mad you decide to work for KIT?

Yeah, we call it KIT. It's ok to call it KIT.

So I like I said I had been involved in
the arts growing up I had done tons of

dance and theater I supported myself through
college teaching dance and directing

musicals and arts education was my thing
in college I studied theater for young

audiences and I just thought that that's
what I was going to do is. Is is teach the

arts and you know make the world more
creative for kids and I've always known that

my purpose is to make the world

a better place for kids and I really
thought I was going to do it through arts
education. I had this experience where

00:05:34.490 --> 00:05:38.770
a young man with Down Syndrome took one of my acting classes and it changed my

00:05:38.780 --> 00:05:44.610
worldview it changed his life it changed my life it changed all of the students in

00:05:44.620 --> 00:05:49.080
our class it then transformed the whole theater that became more inclusive and

00:05:49.090 --> 00:05:53.660
people became more accepting of each other and just the business skyrocketed

00:05:53.670 --> 00:05:55.800
because everybody knew that this was

00:05:55.810 --> 00:05:59.250
a place where you would go and people would be accepted and it just was this

00:05:59.540 --> 00:06:05.230
transformation that I just fell in love with and so I started to and that was

00:06:05.240 --> 00:06:09.360
because kids included together came in and helped me figure out how to do this and

00:06:09.370 --> 00:06:15.370
then helped our whole organization do this and so I just found that the best part

00:06:15.380 --> 00:06:17.360
of my day working at the theater was when
a parent would call and say I want to enroll my child in your theater program. Oh

they have autism is that OK and I felt myself just going yes every time and just being more excited about that then the art teaching the Arts be more excited about

finding ways to include all kinds of kids in what we were doing and so I started to get involved at Kit as a volunteer I went to all the trainings I just was a sponge and I soaked up everything they had to offer I volunteered I joined the board of directors I just was like completely in love with it and I realize every time I would drive home from doing something with kid I would have this huge smile on my face and I realize I think I had one of those moments where it was and I remember driving in my car on the five down from north county where the meeting was
down to my house with this huge grin on my face and feeling like this is what I'm supposed to be doing as just so clear to me this is what I have to do so I you know finish driving home and I talked to my husband and he said if this is what you want to do I think you should do it and so I talked to the executive director there and told her you know I really want to work for kit is there any way to make that happen and she said absolutely. And they they did what non-profits do they wrote a grant and they you know offered me a low paid part time position with no benefits and I kind of ditched my career that I had been working towards and went to school for and was really really invested in to take this part time job where the operations director every day when I came in
would say we can pay your salary for about six more weeks and I just like didn't care it didn't phase me I just knew that this was what was supposed to happen and I just felt like this is the path and now I feel like I'm on the right path. And that was yeah, that happened. I hope it happens all of you know that was that was in 2003.

So in the same TEDX talk, you pointed out that children with disabilities are among the world's most marginalized excluded children. KIds included together has addressed this issue by providing inclusion training programs and various inclusion resources which are geared towards parents, educators, volunteers, and the wider community - particularly towards helping them develop the right assumptions or mental models for thinking about children with disabilities. Could you tell us
a story about how kids included together transformed these people and how these people in turn make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities. So we teach adults who work with kids so we are not fixing the kids a lot of times when people bring us in they think that oh good you’re here to fix this kid who’s really driving me crazy and what they find out is we’re really there to fix them and we’re really there to fix the environment and that the kids are fine and that really it’s how we interact with them it’s the materials we provide it’s all of this it’s a social model way of thinking about disability so it’s that the you know the built environment in the social environment or what needs accommodations that’s
a that it’s a strength space
way of thinking about

00:09:35.670 --> 00:09:37.520
a child and what they bring rather than

00:09:37.530 --> 00:09:42.610
a deficit they’re not broken and need fixing
it’s everything around them that needs

00:09:42.620 --> 00:09:47.150
fixing so we can improve the lives of kids
with disabilities by really changing the

00:09:47.160 --> 00:09:53.860
world around them so in working with these
adults once we see shift their kind of

00:09:54.000 --> 00:10:00.850
mindset to thinking that way then they can
make huge changes in the lives of all

00:10:00.860 --> 00:10:05.570
the kids in their classroom because they
all become more successful so we see that

00:10:05.580 --> 00:10:11.450
happen you know time and time again and
in an example we were working with an

00:10:11.460 --> 00:10:17.030
afterschool program in Northern California
and they came to one of our kit training

00:10:17.040 --> 00:10:20.440
events and they were feeling pretty good
about themselves because they thought they

00:10:20.450 --> 00:10:21.130
were including
a twelve year old in their afterschool program who had autism and they felt like they were doing a great thing because they were including this young man the with autism and they but what they were the way they were including him was every day after school he would come in and the kids would play and he would sit down at a table that they had set aside for him and he would do coloring pages every day until his mom picked him up sitting at the table by himself and they said well this is just what he wants to do he's likes to be by himself he wants to do the coloring sheets and he's not bothering anybody it's working great so they came to the kid training they changed their mindset. they learned more kind. Skills they went
back and applied them to their afterschool program and one afternoon his mother came in to pick him up and she went to the table where he always is doing his coloring pages and he wasn't there and she started to get kind of upset and afraid about where he would be because he'd been going there for years and you know he's been at that table so she looked around and she looked the first staff person to say where's my son and through the sliding glass doors out into the yard she saw him playing Foursquare with three other kids and she immediately burst into tears because she said she had never seen her child play with other kids before that is the first time she had seen him play with other kids and the you know the staff ran up to her they weren't sure why she was so upset and when she told them that they
said oh yeah we went to this kid training
and we learned how to engage him and we
taught the other kids how to engage him and
he's really been enjoying playing with
the other kids and you know, that's
a transformative experience for that
family who now sees their child in
a different way it's
a transformative for the other kids
in the program who now view him
a different way and and all of that really
came from changing our thinking about it
and also learning some new skills and
how to help kids engage with each other
because sometimes it's not natural when
kids communicate think act talk in ways
that are different from other kids.
Those methods they used to train the
people who are at these training sessions
are those ones that developed over time

00:12:28.120 --> 00:12:34.730
or is it something that you guys collaborate on and try to figure out the best way

00:12:34.770 --> 00:12:41.310
to inform them or how to decide
what the best method is to teach them.

00:12:43.290 --> 00:12:43.940
Yeah we have

00:12:43.950 --> 00:12:49.610
a training curriculum that we have developed
and it's based on you know research

00:12:49.650 --> 00:12:54.960
and it's based on the practical experience
of our trainers who are who have

00:12:55.000 --> 00:12:59.200
education backgrounds who have recreational
therapy backgrounds occupational

00:12:59.210 --> 00:13:05.900
therapy social work backgrounds and
they have created this kind of

00:13:05.910 --> 00:13:11.720
training curriculum to teach people how
to make accommodations and modifications

00:13:11.730 --> 00:13:14.240
and provide supports and use that

00:13:14.520 --> 00:13:19.400
strength based way of thinking about
kids that gives them the tools

00:13:19.410 --> 00:13:24.560
that they need to do this. So it's things 
like you know making instructions more 

00:13:24.570 --> 00:13:25.890 
visual because 

00:13:26.120 --> 00:13:30.160 
a lot of kids aren't going to necessarily 
pick up your instructions from your voice 

00:13:30.340 --> 00:13:34.340 
they may need to see it and then within 
making things more visual there's 

00:13:34.350 --> 00:13:38.470 
a whole bunch of different ways we could 
do that we could have you know visual 

00:13:38.480 --> 00:13:42.920 
charts where we put pictures of things and 
we ask ids who are less verbal to just 

00:13:42.930 --> 00:13:47.880 
point to what they need or their choices 
or we may do an object schedule where we 

00:13:47.890 --> 00:13:54.110 
where we hold up something as we say that reinforces 
the language so you know if you say get 

00:13:54.120 --> 00:13:59.670 
your coat to child who may not communicate 
the same way that you do that might not 

00:13:59.680 --> 00:14:00.930 
mean much but if you hold 

00:14:00.940 --> 00:14:05.650 
a coat while you're saying grab your coat 
that makes it more accessible to all the
kids in the room and so if there's a child who's not paying attention

a lot of times maybe they're getting in trouble because they're not following directions. Well they haven't really been able to understand what the directions are.

so you can feel you know you can find a different way to provide access for them they can be more successful in the environment so it's like it's it's shaping the way they think from a more medical model to a more social model way of thinking and then providing really specific strategies about types of accommodation. Is that they might make to help more kids be more successful in the in the class or the group if that makes sense and ways of
communicating with family is and you know a lot of behavior supports

a lot of that and if you guys have ever worked in a summer camp that

a lot of the challenges like getting the kids to follow the rules and behave and

work as a group and there's

a lot of techniques we can teach. That help kids who have very challenging behavior

but also support all the kids in the groups that the whole thing is better and more cohesive.

So just going back to when you first started your time as a part-time coordinator at KIT, what were some of the experiences and interactions that you had that inspired you to be more involved with the organization and to grow in terms of your involvement to the point of becoming CEO? And- well, I can ask that later. It's a big question.

Yeah I feel like I go way down the path and I'm not sure I answered your
question so feel free to redirect me. When I first started I think there was a very strong C.E.O.

In place at the time and she was one of these terrific leaders where she was really challenged you to perform at a really high level her expectations were really high - even though this was like a tiny organization of the time for employees and not much money and you know they could only pay me for six more weeks because they didn't know if the money was going to be there so it was really a grassroots startup, but this leader had this huge vision for what KIT could be and she had these incredibly high expectations but she provided you all the support you needed to meet those
expectations so it was just such

00:16:19.020 --> 00:16:24.420
a good model of leadership for me and I
just thrived. And so you know I started my

00:16:24.430 --> 00:16:28.140
job there on July first
and I had already been as

00:16:28.150 --> 00:16:33.270
a volunteer chairing the national conference
that was going to come up in September

00:16:33.440 --> 00:16:34.550
so I had been working on that as

00:16:34.560 --> 00:16:38.920
a volunteer so I was going to be part of
my job and so she said, "You know what,

00:16:39.260 --> 00:16:42.240
we're having this conference in September
and all these you know three hundred

00:16:42.250 --> 00:16:46.040
people from around the country are going
to come to San Diego to experience KIT, we

00:16:46.050 --> 00:16:47.090
need a book. We need like

00:16:47.100 --> 00:16:51.790
a training manual to sell and give people
at the conference and we need that by

00:16:51.800 --> 00:16:57.890
September" -this is like July one- so I said
OK I'll write that so I spent, you know, the
the whole summer like writing this hundred twenty page training manual to kind of codify all of that thinking curriculum knowledge base that we had at the time and turn it into this published book that we would be able to distribute at a conference in like two months and we pulled it off. But it was because she held this really high expectation and I knew that she would provide me what I needed to do it so I felt like motivated and inspired by it I didn't feel like there's no way we're going to do that, you know, I'm only part-time and I just started. I just felt like we can do this and I think that that spirit has been baked into the D.N.A. of the organization that the vision is huge and that we have everything we need and we're the people that are here to get this done. And I think that stemmed, that
started with her leadership. Did I answer your question? You had a second part of that I’m not sure I got. --Well, yeah, I mean, this is kind of transitioning from that: so when you were there at the beginning and kind of growing to the point of becoming CEO, did you have a vision for the organization at the time and how did that change and grow with the more time that you spent at KIT. Or did it? Did you want to maintain sort of this high standard of being a C.E.O., and just running the organization? And then how did your previous roles and experiences contribute to those ideas to drive and to scale up the social enterprise?

So, I’m going to start kind of at the end of that but, I never saw myself and never was really interested in becoming the C.E.O.
of this organization that sort of happened and I'm glad that it did because it's been great and it feels like it was supposed to happen but it was not something I wanted. So we had this wonderful C.E.O.

that I mentioned I worked under her for nine years. I grew to lead all the programatic parts of the organization, so we expanded our training from just San Diego to a more national focus. I built our first E-Learning programs when kind of nobody was doing it. You know, we were pioneers in a lot of things. I would say we had an app before Oprah did, like we were really on the pushing the cutting edge of learning programs and I was really leading that and I loved doing that. We had we had projects going in Oregon and Florida and North
Carolina and we were just really growing our footprint in the programs. I was not paying attention at all to the business side or the fundraising side because I never saw myself in that role so I just sorta ignored it, focused on my thing, did my thing really well. So when our C.E.O.

said she was going to retire, she gave us about eighteen months notice that she was going to do this, she came to me and said, "You know I'm planning on retiring and I think you should take the role." And I said no. My dream is to change the world.

My dream has never been to run a business. I don't want to manage, do the lease, figure out phones, like all these things I had in my head that were like boring business stuff. I don't do any of that stuff, I want to do I want to change the world. And so I did not pursue the position,
and the board asked me to be on the selection committee, and I helped hire the next CEO.

00:20:16.030 --> 00:20:22.570
And it wasn’t until I saw that, so that was kind of an interim situation where

00:20:22.700 --> 00:20:27.680
the C.E.O.

00:20:23.230 --> 00:20:27.680
that was hired only lasted about nine months, and over that nine months, I really kind of grew into it, I really looked at that. And part of it was I didn’t think I

00:20:31.530 --> 00:20:33.870
could be the same kind of C.E.O.

00:20:33.880 --> 00:20:38.070
or fall that fill the shoes of the woman that I had worked under. She had a very different style than me.

00:20:38.080 --> 00:20:43.070
And also I think we went through a lot of transformative growth at that time, we quadrupled in size kind of overnight,

00:20:47.830 --> 00:20:52.810
it was really challenging, and I think over that nine months I figured out, you know,

00:20:53.890 --> 00:20:57.750
I don’t think that there’s anybody else that wants to do this, and I think I’m the
Oral History Conversation with Torrie Dunlap

25 April 2018

00:20:57.760 --> 00:21:02.720
person that’s supposed to do it I think
I'll figure it out. So the board appointed

00:21:02.730 --> 00:21:03.880
me interim C.E.O.

00:21:03.890 --> 00:21:08.250
and then three months later I took
the role permanently. But that was

00:21:08.260 --> 00:21:14.440
a transformative moment for me because I
wasn’t ready to do it before. But now it

00:21:14.450 --> 00:21:19.370
just seems really dumb because I just
have loved it every single day of the six

00:21:19.380 --> 00:21:21.640
years that I’ve been doing it,
and it just seems like

00:21:22.410 --> 00:21:27.220
a no brainer at this point. It just seems
like, duh, why wasn’t this my plan from day one?

00:21:27.230 --> 00:21:33.160
It never was and even when it was like,
fell into my lap, was like no thanks. But I learned

00:21:33.410 --> 00:21:36.990
a lot and I’ve learned that you know I can
back fill the things that I don’t want

00:21:37.000 --> 00:21:40.680
to do if I don’t want to do the business-y stuff,
I can hire somebody to do that you know
that you can I can change the world better from this platform than I could have as

the program director and that wasn't clear to me before. --It's kind of cool making that

connection of you driving in your car and saying that "this is what I want to do," and then getting to this point.

---Yeah, it's weird, I mean I have a lot of intuition, but there's a,

I had a moment also where I kind of- it hit me that I was supposed to be the C.E.O.

And that was in an airport in Dallas, and I was coming back from

a trip with my h,usband and it really just kind of shook me and I decide I can feel it, and I go through that airport all the time now and I always remember it exactly

that same spot where I'm dragging my suitcase it's this very visceral thing and I

said to my husband, like, "I have to tell you something. We need to sit down right now."
And he said, "OK OK, let's go find a restaurant." So we go sit down I tell him, "I think I'm supposed to be the C.E.O. of KIT, and I think I can do it." And it was just this, like I can feel it even when I tell that story, it's just feels like, I don't know it's like something was downloaded from above that I was supposed to do that and it just made, it all clicked in and made sense in that moment and then I had kind of the confidence and the desire to really do it and I just hadn't had that before, even though I love the organization I loved as you and I was working really hard. I didn't really see myself there until I did and then like the whole thing fell into place. Yeah it's kind of it's kind of weird but. But that's the that's the real story.
Kind of jumping in a different direction

a lot of your website and literature about the programs place heavy emphasis on community betterment through inclusion could you share

a specific story related to your own experiences this solidified your belief in the connection between inclusion and a strong community. Yes I mean I think that where I really experienced this is working in the in my theater programs so I was the education director at San Diego junior theater in Balboa Park for a lot of years and this is where I had this experience with a ten year old who had Down's syndrome in my classroom and I really struggled at first to include him in what we were doing he you know didn’t know how to read
he communicated. You know he was difficult to understand in his speech he had.

a lot of behavior things and it just I really at first struggled to figure out how to make this work and I and his mom said you should call kids included together in the help you and they came in and what I saw develop between him and the students when I did.

a better job of supporting and including him and making him successful in the class.

like this warmth happened you know this. Just this community developed just this really rich experience of this isn't just about playing theater games and acting out scenes this is about understanding each other's humanity and for ten year olds to get that experience and for us to go through that together was just
like such

00:24:48.710 --> 00:24:55.680
a bond and it showed me how
inclusive communities are richer

00:24:55.780 --> 00:25:02.050
warmer more creative more joyful
like just everything was amped up

00:25:02.350 --> 00:25:07.330
because everyone who is in there felt
comfortable and safe to be who they were and

00:25:07.340 --> 00:25:13.850
to show up as they were it kind
of unleashed this, I don't know, just

00:25:13.860 --> 00:25:19.620
positivity in every person in the classroom
and it just was so transformative I

00:25:19.630 --> 00:25:25.590
just thought this is what every every
classroom every summer camp every child care

00:25:25.600 --> 00:25:31.350
every group of people should feel like and
we can do that if we try to erase these

00:25:31.360 --> 00:25:35.550
barriers between people and if we try to
see ourselves as more like them we are

00:25:35.560 --> 00:25:39.900
different and I think that first experience
was really just so transformative for

00:25:39.910 --> 00:25:44.900
me and now working you know all these years
at KIT and we coach all these organizations

through this I just see that happen for
thousands and thousands of people now who

have that same experience of what inclusion
really offers. You think that you're

doing this nice thing for this ten year
old who has Down syndrome that's not what

it's about it's about you it's about all
the other kids in the class it's about the

group as

a whole you know it's making your life and
your experience better and the research

shows that kids with disabilities do
benefit but kids without disabilities benefit

even more from being inclusive environments
so I think it's like the repetition of

that same experience of you know feeling

a community where everyone
is welcome and feels
a sense of belonging is super powerful and everyone can have it I think that’s what that’s what makes me kind of get up in the morning every day and kind of go at it again.

In 2013 you were selected as a social innovation fellow at Stanford’s graduate school business could you describe some of the experiences of relationships you have gained from that fellowship and how they have helped you succeed today. Right around that time so this is kind of a business model things kind of a shift but. Right around that time we were really early in KIT’s history we were a very traditional nonprofit where we raised money and we provided free programs and at a certain point I start when I became C.E.O.

in 2012 I started to think about the business model in
Oral History Conversation with Torrie Dunlap

00:27:10.970 --> 00:27:15.530
different ways and part of that was because
we were realizing that when we gave our

00:27:15.540 --> 00:27:21.370
programs away free to these organizations
that we were serving they were less

00:27:21.380 --> 00:27:25.270
invested you know if you don't pay for
something you think about it really

00:27:25.280 --> 00:27:29.260
differently than something that you have
paid for. So that was one thing and

00:27:29.270 --> 00:27:35.390
another thing is that we are really trying
to disrupt the charity model of thinking

00:27:35.400 --> 00:27:41.110
about disability so we realize that when
we are fund raising on the backs of

00:27:41.120 --> 00:27:44.990
children with disabilities and then going
to these programs and saying we'll bring

00:27:45.000 --> 00:27:50.280
you these free trainings we're actually
reinforcing that charity mindset so we

00:27:50.290 --> 00:27:51.420
really wanted to make

00:27:51.430 --> 00:27:57.870
a shift towards our business model reinforcing
our social mission and we knew we
could do that through a social enterprise model so my interest in the Stanford program and kind of what I have gained from it and the relationships that I’ve maintained and what I learned while I was there was really how to transform our traditional nonprofit to a social enterprise model that will help us scale more that is a powerful reinforcer for our mission and what I gained from that in the in the Stanford program there were fifty two other C.E.O.’s from other non-profits around the country and some internationally and so I gained an in-depth kind of view of all of their different business models and how many different ways there are to be a nonprofit and we kind of think of
nonprofits in one way but yet there’s

00:28:44.300 --> 00:28:47.310
a lot of different ways a lot
of different business models

00:28:47.510 --> 00:28:53.890
a lot of different ways of thinking
about how to, how to best operate your

00:28:53.900 --> 00:29:00.850
nonprofit for kind of maximum social
potentials, social return and kind

00:29:00.860 --> 00:29:05.640
of efficiency and effectiveness so I think
what it did was kind of expand this kind

00:29:05.650 --> 00:29:09.500
of it gave me the permission to
think about running our business in

00:29:09.510 --> 00:29:12.980
a really different way and so after that
I really started to do that and we have

00:29:12.990 --> 00:29:17.650
changed significantly since then. Whoa that’s impressive.
Yeah.

00:29:19.980 --> 00:29:25.380
In class, we learned about how social
entrepreneurs must have unique abilities to

00:29:25.390 --> 00:29:30.990
deal with uncertainty whereas salaried
manager is mainly manage risk for KIT in

00:29:31.000 --> 00:29:35.200
particular you must’ve had to deal with the
uncertainty of getting people to accept

and want the models you’re offering them
how do you approach the process of

imparting those ideas and best practices
about inclusion to people who don’t yet

realise they need them, they need your
resources or help getting the desired

outcomes that you forsee. That has been
huge and since I have been with kit since

2003 I have seen

a really dramatic change in
people’s understanding of what we

offer in their understanding of inclusion.
You know in 2003 when

I was the program coordinator it was my
job to get this free training out to people

and I would just cold call you know
organization after organization and explain

what we do and people would say oh that
sounds really great but we don’t have any
of those kids in our program which is wrong, they did they just didn’t know it. And

so nobody really would take the free training they just you know it they they didn’t know they needed it they didn’t really understand where was it was nothing
to compare it to it’s not like we’re selling soccer balls for cheaper than you’re buying soccer balls use us, it wasn’t like that at all it was like this chasm of people

need it they don’t know they need it how are we going to get there was really really challenging and you know we we worked really hard at figuring that out we

found a really big customer who knew that they needed this in the U.S.

Military and in 2007 we started working with the Navy in 2010 we started working with all of the military branches around the
world and that helped us build some really significant infrastructure it helped us
really understand what people needed and how to give them what they needed and
there was just
a huge huge shift there but then we had to take what we learned we were kind of doing this R. And D.
In you know within that customer base now we need to take this to other customers
so then we tried Cold Calling all of the Y.M.C.A.
In the country and they were like that sounds great we don't really need that but they did then you know then I saw about two years ago
a really significant shift where people started to understand hey actually this is
a thing and it’s important we should be doing it or we need help and we need to

00:31:45.310 --> 00:31:51.890
start looking for it so I saw like the
push pull change and the demand start to

00:31:51.900 --> 00:31:54.310
really take root. And I think

00:31:54.320 --> 00:31:59.190
a lot of it now is pushed by this public
conversation around diversity and

00:31:59.200 --> 00:32:03.640
inclusion and so there’s just much more
conversation around it there’s much more

00:32:03.650 --> 00:32:08.790
interest it’s much easier for us to tie
what we’re doing to diversity equity

00:32:08.960 --> 00:32:14.420
clues in initiatives and so it’s now that
much easier but for the first fifteen

00:32:14.430 --> 00:32:19.140
years it was pretty hard to get people to
understand kind of what we were offering

00:32:19.150 --> 00:32:21.780
because we deliver our services in kind of

00:32:21.790 --> 00:32:27.330
a unique way to the people who aren’t used to and
it was something they didn’t understand

00:32:27.340 --> 00:32:29.970
why they needed when they thought they
could just tell those parents that they
weren’t able to serve their kids with autism or Down’s Syndrome or cerebral palsy

now they know that’s not ok and so now the demand has really shifted to

answer your question. What do you think was the catalyst that started that conversation

being brought more to the fore. That’s a really good question I think

a few things have happened I think one thing is that just the public awareness

around autism and the increasing numbers of autism diagnosis is in kids the you know there’s not that many more kids with autism than there were in decades past

but the awareness around it and the diagnosis around it is really increased and so people are just much more aware and I think that has really helped There’s a lot more understanding of you know the role that suspension
expulsion plays on kids and how they grow up and so that's causing a lot of organizations to really focus on more behavior support an intervention early so I think within our field there's a lot more understanding of. The diversity of kids' needs and then I think there's just you know we're having a really significant moment where we're really having to think about diversity and inclusion in our country and I think that is helping people think through this as well I think all of that that's kind of bubbling up politically in society is causing people to recognize that diversity exists and what is our responsibility in making sure that all people can access the programs and services we're offering So
I think that’s kind of

a catalyst as well. In these.

Allow me to close this set of questions with. Some people.

First, thank you for sharing all the insight of you work with us today.

It is really amazing!

Congratulations on your

Your achievements

and

particularly

for scaling up

scaling up KIT

from a local non-profit

to

a nationwide organization.
increase its presence internationally

I'm curious about

your experience with its international program

Can you tell us a story about

How

Cross-border cultural differences

Magnified KIT’s challenges

and.

how

you overcame

situations

that
conflicted with the organization mission and values

The international work that we have been doing this far has been a lot on U.S. Military bases in eleven different countries around the world so those are American kids on U.S.

Military bases they are

a lot of times they do have local nationals who work on the base so in Italy there are Italians working on the base there are

a lot of kind of cultural. Assumptions and things that come into play when they're when they are working in a child care setting so

a lot of you know every culture has a different way of thinking about child rearing and child development and parenting

00:35:05.760 --> 00:35:09.340
00:35:12.090 --> 00:35:16.550
00:35:16.560 --> 00:35:22.070
00:35:22.080 --> 00:35:25.780
00:35:23.650 --> 00:35:25.800
00:35:25.800 --> 00:35:31.860
00:35:31.860 --> 00:35:34.580
00:35:34.590 --> 00:35:41.050
00:35:41.240 --> 00:35:43.560
00:35:43.830 --> 00:35:45.840
00:35:45.850 --> 00:35:50.740
00:35:51.100 --> 00:35:57.400
and those. Feelings and assumptions about what’s good for kids come into their

00:35:57.410 --> 00:35:59.150
roles working in

00:35:59.160 --> 00:36:03.560
a child care center alongside people from other cultures who may be American who

00:36:03.570 --> 00:36:06.550
may be stationed in Italy for instance and so

00:36:06.560 --> 00:36:11.680
a lot of the challenges that are faced in the program often have to do with these

00:36:12.000 --> 00:36:15.050
this variety of cultures kind of existing in the same place so

00:36:15.060 --> 00:36:19.500
a lot of our work is around helping people uncover what those assumptions are that

00:36:19.510 --> 00:36:25.630
they’re making and thinking about the families that are being served and how

00:36:26.430 --> 00:36:31.480
they can kind of all get on the same page as it relates to their expectations for

00:36:31.490 --> 00:36:34.820
the kids in the families so that that’s kind of where

00:36:34.830 --> 00:36:39.530
a lot of the international work
is currently. We have been doing

00:36:39.530 --> 00:36:45.530
a lot of work in Canada which isn't so
different from us culturally but they do but

00:36:46.470 --> 00:36:49.990
so that's happening and then the other
thing I would say on that is that we are

00:36:50.180 --> 00:36:54.780
part of the United Nations we are special
consultants to the Economic and Social

00:36:54.790 --> 00:37:00.930
Council and so we work on part of the
sustainable development goals and there's

00:37:00.940 --> 00:37:06.980
a pool specifically for inclusive
education. In other countries in many other

00:37:06.990 --> 00:37:12.300
countries children disabilities don't
even go to school so and they're not even

00:37:12.310 --> 00:37:16.100
really counted so nobody really knows how
many students with disabilities really

00:37:17.010 --> 00:37:17.690
even exist in

00:37:17.700 --> 00:37:22.710
a country and they don't even have the
opportunity to get to school let alone feel

00:37:22.720 --> 00:37:26.370
included once they get there they're not
even there so that is like the first step
in many countries is just to get people
to wrap their heads around the ideas that

students of disability can attend school
and that they should attend school and

what they need to do to make that happen
but first they need to find them and

a lot of families keep them
at home and they don’t get

a lot of exposure to the broader community
so that’s something that we really hope

to work on and we are kind of doing that
so far by being involved in the U.N.

And kind of exploring that avenue but we
haven’t done it we haven’t really done

a lot of it yet but that’s a that’s

a future goal I guess is that that level
of international work where we can really

provide more access to students to schools
for students with disabilities.
can start yeah. Change it's like changing
the way I think people think about

disability is one thing here it
would be a whole nother thing in

a country where people don’t think that
students with this or that told her

disability shouldn't even go to school that's

a whole nother level of changing people's
mindset

so yea!

sometimes, I feel like.

that's even out of our scope of understanding

yea!

I think disability

you know.

is that challenging abroad as well
Well!

I think we have a class coming in after.

Okay!

yea! I just want to wrap up and thank you again for coming in

Of course!

You have a very busy schedule and Rosecrans is a pain

(laugh)

Sorry about that!

So yea!

This is a wonderful, very productive interview

And then!

For you. I feel like I've gotten the great things you said America gets

and actually you have gotten an impact on me as well.
just sitting here
00:39:03.990 --> 00:39:04.490
Good!

00:39:04.890 --> 00:39:06.100
But yea thanks again

00:39:06.210 --> 00:39:06.981
course thank you all!

— End of Transcription —