



Website Accessibility: It Just Makes Good Business Sense

Business owners and their marketing teams put time and resources into determining how best to reach target audiences. From demographics data to identifying marketing channels and a deep understanding of pain points, a lot of effort goes into connecting with those most likely to make a purchase.

One area of connection that gets missed represents a major segment of the market. Companies that ignore website accessibility in their design are at risk of alienating up to a quarter of their potential customers.

In this white paper, the area of website accessibility will be discussed not only as a mark of a forward-facing business owner, but also from the perspective of a strategic marketing decision.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) indicates that about 54 million people in the United States have a disability. The CDC estimates that one in four adults, or 26% have some form of disability.

How is a Disability Defined?

The website for the American Disabilities Act (ADA) offers the following guidelines for identifying a person with a disability (PWD):

An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

Inclusive City Maker notes that physical impairment or mobility is the most frequently occurring disability, with one in seven adults in the U.S. experiencing difficulty in walking, climbing stairs, or generally getting around. Other disabilities commonly affecting Americans include vision impairment, hearing impairment and cognitive challenges.



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What is Website Accessibility?

Before entering a discussion about the benefits of website accessibility, it is essential to define and discuss the concept.

Website accessibility is an approach that seeks to prioritize inclusive access by all users and visitors, regardless of the individual's condition, ability, or circumstances. It proactively identifies and

eliminates any barriers that could potentially limit the use of a website due to limitations related to mobility, vision, hearing, cognition, or other areas.

It also means that all tools and technologies are designed so that people with disabilities can use them to understand, interact with, and navigate sites as well as contribute to them.

Why Accessibility is Important

The critical nature of website accessibility is multi-faceted, with many arguments supporting it as a priority for any business, including the following:

It's the Right Thing to Do. Companies can easily recognize that making their websites accessible is as basic a consideration as making a brick-and-mortar building accessible to people with disabilities. It allows all people to actively participate in society, and it sends a message that a company is interested in contributing as a member of the community that values all people.

It also signals to patrons, business partners and competitors that website accessibility is a valuable business goal, raising overall support and awareness for accessibility goals.

It's the Law. A business focusing on website accessibility is also taking measures to avoid violating the regulations associated with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It prohibits any discrimination against people with disabilities.

In addition, a company in violation of ADA can be sued by a user. These cases have been increasingly visible, raising business owners' awareness of the importance of prioritizing accessibility.

It Allows Companies to Reach Broader Audiences.

It simply makes good business sense to implement website accessibility measures. People with disabilities are often an overlooked segment of the market, leaving many companies without a way to connect with untapped revenue and potential growth. *Forbes* reports that in 2021, e-commerce retailers missed out on \$828 million in sales due to websites that were not accessible. With one in four adults identified as people with disabilities, companies cannot continue to de-prioritize accessibility.



Measuring Accessibility

Determining whether a site is accessible does not require any special tools. To examine accessibility, it is necessary to examine whether people with disabilities can navigate, view, hear and understand the website. This includes checking for several elements:

Image Alt Text: Wherever there is an image, the site should include a text description of the image, so that a vision-impaired person would not have their experience compromised by not being able to see the image.

Closed Captions and Transcripts: Any video on a website will include closed captions and transcripts that a hearing-impaired user would get the full benefit of the content.

Color Contrast: The contrast between the font and the background of any text on the website should allow those with low vision to easily read the text.

Navigation: A website that is accessible will have a menu and options navigable by voice and by keyboard. This allows people with disabilities related to mobility and vision to navigate the site through other methods than point-and-click.

The above list is simply a spot-check approach to determining whether a website is designed with accessibility in mind. It is not an exhaustive guide to website accessibility.



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Addressing Website Accessibility: What's Necessary for an Accessible Website

Addressing website accessibility may appear at first to be an overwhelming prospect for businesses, but there are tools available for defining the process. The Web Accessibility Initiative offers standards, strategies, and resources for organizations seeking to make their sites accessible.

Begin with Design.

Companies investing in a new website design may be tempted to tack on accessibility objectives at the end of the process. It is important to work alongside a web designer or web design team that is well-versed in accessibility and builds it into the plan from the beginning.

The navigation of the site should be clear and consistent, so that visitors can find their way in and out of different menus and options. Consistent styling and naming, as well as a combination of a search bar, menu bar, and the use of breadcrumbs can make it easier to navigate the site.

Choose Partners that Prioritize Accessibility.

From marketing teams to tools used to develop and distribute content, it is important to work with resources that embrace the importance of accessibility.

Use Available Guidelines.

The World Wide Web Consortium offers the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the current gold standard in website accessibility.

Structure Content for Accessibility.

When designing the website, it is important that HTML headings are correctly and logically used to make it simple for screen readers to navigate the site's content.

It's also critical to consider elements like dynamic content, and whether a keyboard-only user could get trapped in a page overlay. Taking steps like using alerts to signal when dynamic content is starting, making slideshows navigable by keyboard, and ensuring that videos do not use auto-play, can make content much more accessible.

Test and Improve.

Website accessibility measures will continue to evolve and improve, so it's important that business owners and their marketing teams frequently assess and improve their websites.



**Disability
touches 73%
of customers**



Conclusion

Website accessibility is not simply a moral decision for business owners. Nor is it only a legal priority. It is also a good business approach. With up to one-quarter of adults in the United States fitting the definition for people with disabilities, businesses run the risk of alienating a significant portion of their target audience by ignoring accessibility.

Likewise, website accessibility may offer a competitive edge. By prioritizing a site that is accessible and usable by all visitors, companies may win the loyalty of their customers. It also signals that the company is a forward-thinking member of the community that is supporting the ability of all members to participate in society.



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About SJC Marketing

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