



Creating Digital Equity & Compliant Accessibility

What is Digital Equity and Accessibility?

Digital equity helps to ensure all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Meanwhile, accessibility refers to the practice of ensuring that products, services, information, and technologies are designed and implemented in a way that allows all individuals to access and use them with equal ease and effectiveness. It involves removing obstacles and providing accommodations to ensure inclusivity, making sure that everyone, regardless of their situation or abilities, can participate fully and independently in our digital world.

Accessibility goes beyond mere compliance; it embodies the spirit of inclusivity. Every day, individuals with disabilities encounter digital barriers, hindering their access to online information and services. As user advocates, it is both our moral and professional duty to consider all users, ensuring they enjoy seamless and intuitive online experiences.

Understanding the Landscape

According to the World Health Organization, 15% of the world's population experiences disability, a number expected to rise. In the United States alone, around 25% of adults live with a disability, not accounting for situational limitations. Temporary and situational constraints can affect anyone; sudden injuries, slow or intermittent internet connections, or even noisy environments can create barriers to overcome.

15%

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Understanding the diversity and frequency of these common circumstances is a vital first step in understanding the effects of accessibility and creating a road to digital equity.

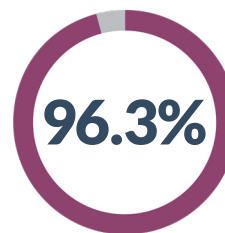




Diverse disabilities require diverse solutions, and fortunately, regulatory frameworks exist to provide initial guidelines and best practices.

- **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d)** mandates that agencies provide individuals with disabilities equal access to electronic information and data, comparable to those without disabilities, except in cases of undue burden.
- **WCAG 2.1/2.2** outlines how to make web content more accessible to people with various disabilities, encompassing visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological impairments.

Despite extant accessibility standards, many struggle to meet them. A 2023 analysis by WebAIM reveals that a staggering 96.3% of websites have not met WCAG 2.0 standards, with common failures including low-contrast text, missing alternative text for images, and empty links.



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Aside from the moral imperative, companies miss out on opportunities when they overlook 15 to 25 percent of the population. This percentage is projected to rise “due to demographic trends and increases in chronic health conditions” according to the World Health Organization. In fact, “almost everyone is likely to experience some form of disability – temporary or permanent – at some point in life”, potentially prohibiting or inhibiting the ability to conduct and/or navigate basic essential digital tasks.

Laws exist to help users with disabilities, but accessible features enhance the experience for a broader audience, yielding benefits for all.



BENEFITS OF DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusive design fosters a more user-friendly and accommodating digital environment. By considering diverse needs and abilities, you create a better online experience for everyone. Here are just some of the ways that prioritizing accessibility can improve your product:



INCREASED OUTREACH
Inclusivity extends your reach to a wider, more diverse audience.



LEGAL COMPLIANCE
Abiding by Section 508 mitigates legal risks since “between 2019 and 2022, the number of website accessibility lawsuits filed in federal courts increased between 12 and 14% annually” according to Audioeye.
- <https://www.audioeye.com/post/2022-was-another-record-year-for-website-accessibility/#:~:text=Between%202019%20and%202022%2C%20the,between%2012%20and%2014%25%20annually.>



COST-EFFICIENCY
Proactive accessibility reduces rework costs, since inaccessible products will likely need to be redone to meet Section 508 standards.



USER SATISFACTION
Offering an easy and enjoyable experience fosters user loyalty.
- *Havas' Meaningful Brands study shows us that customers prefer companies that align with their values. Brands that prioritize accessibility generate higher Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).*



TALENT RETENTION
Attract and retain a diverse workforce. A 2021 CNBC/SurveyMonkey Workforce Survey showed that nearly 80% of workers want to work for a company that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.



INNOVATION
Drive industry-wide innovation through accessibility standards.



SEARCH OPTIMIZATION
Accessibility helps search engine algorithms understand the content better and improves searchability.



PROFIT MAXIMIZATION
Accessible design improves the experience for all users, leading to increased revenue and sales.
- *Tesco is a multinational grocery and general merchandise retailer, and according to data from Tesco PLC Annual Review, <http://Tesco.com> sales went from £52 million in 2000 to £235 million in 2001, after having built accessibility into all its online services.*

Embracing digital accessibility not only fosters a more inclusive and user-friendly online environment but also yields a range of key advantages. At Moser, we understand the value of accessibility and its importance as part of the user experience. We use this knowledge to pursue the best solutions for reaching your business goals.



MOSER'S COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

At Moser, we know that the user's experience directly impacts a product's success, from customer satisfaction and retention to brand image and market competitiveness.

School for the Blind:

In many of the projects undertaken by Moser, a glaring gap was observed – a deficiency in firsthand knowledge regarding how individuals with visual impairments engage with applications. This included their interactions with screen readers, braille readers, and the challenges posed by inaccessible applications. Moser recognized this as an opportunity to bridge this knowledge gap and embarked on a mission to forge a meaningful partnership with a local school.

This strategic collaboration was designed to impart firsthand knowledge and insights to Moser's leadership, designers, developers, and product owners. During this collaborative effort, Moser initiated a comprehensive usability research exercise, engaging directly with users who rely on accessible technologies. Through this endeavor, a profound understanding emerged, shedding light on the real-world impact of applications on these individuals and the significant barriers that inaccessibility can pose to those who depend on them.

This partnership not only enhanced Moser's understanding but also underscored its commitment to ensuring that its projects are not just functional but genuinely accessible, thereby contributing to a more inclusive digital landscape.

Court of Appeals Project:

Moser conducted a comprehensive accessibility assessment of a state court website, employing a multifaceted approach that encompassed automated testing, manual inspection, and user interviews. This holistic methodology was instrumental in facilitating a meticulous evaluation of the application.

Despite the website's initial shortcomings in both automated and manual assessments, it stood out that user complaints were few and far between, including from a visually impaired individual. Upon conducting a user interview, it came to light that this particular user had developed an intricate understanding of the system and devised personalized workarounds over time. This revelation underscored the paramount importance of framing precise inquiries and deciphering user responses to ensure the applications true accessibility.

In pursuit of enhancing accessibility for a broad spectrum of users, Moser fostered a collaborative partnership with the client to refine the website's design. Adhering to the principles of universal design and to WCAG and Section 508 guidelines, we designed a solution that not only streamlined the process for users but also ensured that development complexity was low so that it wouldn't impact their budget.

To guarantee that the website was fully compliant with Section 508 and WCAG standards post-development, Moser conducted a secondary audit with both automated and manual testing, confirming the absence of any problems old or new.

State Benefits Portal:

Moser inherited an application plagued by well-documented WCAG and Section 508 compliance issues. In order to break this cycle, Moser mobilized scrum teams consisting of a product owner, developers, scrum masters, quality assurance, and designers to ensure accessibility was integrated seamlessly from the conceptualization phase through deployment.

To guarantee accessibility, Moser implemented a range of effective strategies. Developers were equipped with new tools that enabled them to conduct spot tests on newly developed features, enabling immediate identification and rectification of accessibility issues. A comprehensive QA suite was also introduced, incorporating accessibility assessments as an integral part of the quality assurance process.

Moser also prioritized accessibility in the design phase by verifying color contrast ratios and adhering to universal design principles. Furthermore, Moser fostered a culture of accessibility by affording employees opportunities to pursue certifications in accessibility from renowned organizations such as W3C and Section 508. This multifaceted approach reflects Moser's commitment to eradicating accessibility barriers and fostering a more inclusive digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

Digital accessibility is not just a moral obligation; it's a strategic imperative. By embracing inclusivity, organizations can expand their user base, mitigate legal risks, and foster innovation. Moser's dedication to accessibility exemplifies its commitment to creating a digital world that accommodates all users, regardless of their abilities. It's time to unlock the power of accessibility for a brighter, more inclusive digital future. Choose Moser to be your partner in creating accessible and user-friendly digital experiences for all.

Contact [Moser Consulting](#) today to schedule your Accessibility Audit.



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