Usablenet
ROADMAP TO WEB ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

Accessibility is a basic rights issue, as the Internet, technology and smartphones transform our lives. Users living with disability should not be left out, and companies have a social, legal and increasingly, a business reason to ensure that their online services are built with access in mind. The good news is that making web and mobile sites and apps accessible is achievable. Here are the steps a company should take to get their Accessibility house in order.

ESTABLISH AN ACCESSIBILITY POLICY AND COMMUNICATE YOUR COMMITMENT

- First, establish a company-wide accessibility policy that outlines roles, efforts and timelines. A good guide is the example found in section 2 of the DOJ consent decree entered for H&R Block requiring Accessibility of websites and mobile apps under the ADA. The Accessibility Policy should cover all public-facing digital service delivery channels (desktop, mobile, apps at a minimum). The company-wide policy should be written with legal guidance with ADA knowledge.

- Add a page to your web/mobile site to display an accessibility statement. You should include easy access to email, and if possible, a toll-free phone number to call if a user has any difficulty.

- Require all third party development to follow similar accessibility efforts and add language to contracts to reflect that.

- Consider a board-level resolution to highlight and confirm the company wide importance of accessibility.

IMPLEMENT YOUR ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Once the Accessibility Policy is in place, the real work of following the policy needs to begin and continue. This will include identifying Accessibility team members (across the business), appointing an Accessibility coordinator (this can be a contractor), conducting a full audit of all the digital channels used, conducting user testing with disabled users when appropriate, reports that are maintained and updated on a regular basis, and documentation of fixes and efforts. Team training on accessibility should be included, if needed. Accessibility fixes can be done by internal or external teams.

MAINTAIN AND MONITOR YOUR ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE

Once a company has established an Accessibility Policy, has invested in efforts, contracted, hired for, and is in the process of implementing the policy over a fair timeline (12-24 months), they will be in a secure place against any legal action. Accessibility is an on-going effort. Building accessibility practice into new features and sites will remove much of the future costs of after the fact fixing. Maintaining awareness, processes and reports, in much the same way a company manages security, is key.

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If your organization needs support to meet the web accessibility requirements, please email accessibility@usablenet.com. We can help!