A Complete Guide to Digital ADA Compliance

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility focuses on creating digital spaces that allow people with all types of disabilities to learn from, engage with, and contribute to the internet without barriers.

Categories of Disability

Visual
Blindness, low vision, color-blindness

Auditory
Deafness and hard-of-hearing

Motor
Inability to use a mouse, slow response time, limited fine motor control

Cognitive
Learning disabilities, distractibility, inability to remember or focus on large amounts of information

Why It Matters

The internet has connected the world and changed the way human beings communicate and interact, but a huge population of people has been left behind due to inaccessible website design leaving individuals with disabilities with a limited user experience.

ADA-Compliance from a Legal Perspective

Over the years, several laws have been put in place to prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities on the internet. Each law has a different set of standards that must be followed to create an inclusive digital presence—and avoid a lawsuit!

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The American Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination against and requires accommodations for people with disabilities in public spaces. It has since been amended to include digital accommodations, making measurable improvements in daily life experiences for people with disabilities.

Section 508

Section 508 was passed in 1998 as an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requiring federal agencies to design websites and other technology in a way that allows people with disabilities the same user experience as a non-disabled person.

Creating an ADA-Compliant Digital Presence:

- Is an ethical business practice
- Increases your search engine ranking
- Increases the potential size of your website's audience by millions

Creating An Accessible Digital Presence

Keeping current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) at the forefront of our website design and frequently running website accessibility scans helps us ensure that everyone who visits our clients' websites feels welcomed and has a rewarding experience.

What You Can Do to Ensure ADA Compliance

Add Closed Captioning to All Video Clips

Whether your videos are for your website, social media, emails, etc., including closed captions ensures that hearing-impaired viewers can experience the full narration, music, and other audio information included in your content.

Transcribe All Audio Clips

Similar to including subtitles in videos, transcribing audio clips allows those with auditory disabilities to fully experience your message.

Ensure Graphics Take Color Contrast and Font Size Into Consideration

People with visual impairments may not be able to read ads or images with low color contrast or unclear text. Make sure all marketing graphics follow color contrast guidelines and use simple fonts that are large enough to read easily.

Utilize Descriptive Text Links

Instead of using call-to-action verbiage for links, such as "learn more" or "click here, " the linked text should describe where the link is going.

Use Headings and Subheadings in Content

Content should be structured in a way that is easy to follow, utilizing proper headings and subheadings to organize information.

Make Label Content Requiring User Input

All content requiring user input should include labels and instructions.

Present Text Outside of Images

All text should be presented as real text, not just within graphics or images.

Ensure PDFs are Accessible

Utilize Adobe Acrobat Pro's Accessibility Checker to verify that all of your PDFs meet ADA standards.

Include Image Descriptions and Alt Text

Add alt text and image descriptions to any content that is not detailed in the standard text, including on social media. This should include 8-12 words describing what is happening in a graphic, chart, or image so a screen reader can convert the information.

Tips for Adding Alt Text

- Alt text should be 125 characters or less, or about 8-12 words.

- Leave "image of…" or "picture of.." out of the description.

- End alt text with a period so the screen reader will pause after the last word.

- Use dashes for acronyms such as "U-S-A" instead of "USA"

- Describe the image as if you were telling someone what it looks like over the phone.

Social Media Accessibility Settings:

- **Twitter** – Profile > Settings and privacy > Accessibility > Compose image descriptions

- **Instagram** – Instagram adds automatic alt text using object recognition technology, but you can create your own. On the "Write a caption…" screen, click Advanced Settings (at the bottom) > Write Alt Text (under Accessibility)

- **Facebook** – Facebook also uses automatic alt text, but you can write your own when you want to provide a better description

Helpful Accessibility Tools

» **NVDA Screen Reader**
https://www.nvaccess.org/download/

» **Kapwing Subtitle Generator**
https://www.kapwing.com/subtitles

» **WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker**
https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

» **Color Safe's Color Palette Generator**
http://colorsafe.co/

» **HeadingsMap Hierarchy Visualizing Tool**

Chrome:

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/headingsmap/flbjommegcjonpdmenkdiocclhjacmbi?hl=en

Mozilla Firefox:

https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/headingsmap/