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#WebinarWednesday:
Making Accessibility "Business As Usual" – How to Keep Up With And Exceed Accessibility Standards

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Making Accessibility "Business As Usual"

How to Keep Up With and Exceed Accessibility Standards

Nice to Meet You!

Coe Sherrard

MANAGING DIRECTOR, PUBLIC SERVICES

Coe is a leader in CapTech's Public Services practice, supporting strategy and client delivery in Colorado and the Mountain West. He specializes in leading client teams through complex business and technology transformations.

Virginia Booth

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, USER EXPERIENCE

Virginia has nearly 15 years of experience in UX across industries including financial services, retail and healthcare. Passionate about making the web a better place, she incorporates Accessibility into each step of her teams' process, from design through development.

Matt Leahy, CPWA

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Matt is an impactful design leader with over 10 years of experience in UX/UI design, front-end development, and web accessibility. He works adeptly with team members and clients across the project lifecycle to drive best practice design and development practices and ensure inclusive outcomes for all users.

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Let's build inclusive experiences together.

CapTech provides comprehensive design and development services, with a specialization in digital accessibility, to clients across the public and private sectors. We blend deep accessibility subject matter expertise with a comprehensive set of capabilities in areas like user experience, visual design, web and native app development, data visualization, organizational change management, and more.

CX

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We partner with our clients to provide customer-centric solutions that meet demands while finding ways to enhance experience, seize new business opportunities, and reduce waste.

SI

SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

We surround your ideal consumer with captivating design and powerful orchestration while delivering flexible, scalable systems that meet your needs as well as your customers' needs.

DA

DATA + ANALYTICS

We find the right approach to enable you to identify important business trends and opportunities, understand and improve the customer experience, and make reliable decisions.

MC

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

We empower and mobilize your teams, preparing them to facilitate success, whether it be a business process, an IT service tool, or a program governance strategy for quality assurance.

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Agenda:
Making Accessibility "Business As Usual"

01 **Why Accessibility?**
Important core concepts and terminology

02 **What You Can Do Now**
How you can start making progress right away

03 **What You Can Do Soon**
How to effectively account for accessibility when you are ready for bigger changes

04 **How You Can Keep It Going**
Additional steps you can take to maintain and continually improve your accessibility

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Why Accessibility?

If you aren't intentionally including, you may be unintentionally excluding.

Accessibility takes true intention to ensure all people can participate in the experiences you offer.

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The Ripple Effects of an Inclusive Approach

Again and again, designs intended to help people with disabilities end up benefiting a much larger audience.

Image Source: https://americacomesalive.com/

Have you heard of the *curb cut effect*?

Curb cuts were first introduced to allow wheelchair users greater access to sidewalks. Of course, this ended up not helping just those in wheelchairs, but many able-bodies groups as well. If you've ever pulled a rolling suitcase, pushed a stroller, or rollerbladed, you've likely benefitted from a curb cut.

The same phenomenon has occurred with digital experiences, too. Take audio books, for example; first invented for blind readers, audio books are enjoyed by many sighted audiences as well, proving that when you address the needs of one group it has the potential to benefit a much larger audience.

Innovations focused on alleviating pain points for those with disabilities end up helping a much larger audience so often that there's a term for it: the *curb cut effect*.

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Accessibility Is Good for Government

SUPPORTS SEO BEST PRACTICES

Search engines move through the internet very similarly to assistive technology like screen readers. Google can't see, hear, or use a mouse, and thus relies on the site to be built and labeled in a way that the content can be programmatically understood and indexed.

INCREASES COMPLIANCE

HB21-1110 explicitly sets the legal expectation that all Colorado government digital experiences are WCAG 2.1 AA conformant. Section 508 applies to any programs or activities funded by federal agencies and states that they must be WCAG 2.0 AA conformant.

REDUCES LEGAL RISK

According to UsableNet, more than 4,600 digital accessibility lawsuits were filed in 2023 across state and federal courts. Over 900 of the target companies leveraged an accessibility widget or overlay, with many of the lawsuits listing the widgets as an accessibility barrier.

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Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) is the international set of standards for web accessibility published by the W3C. Almost all web accessibility litigation relies on WCAG to gauge accessibility conformance.

1 | PERCEIVABLE

Content is made available to the senses – sight, hearing, and touch.

2 | OPERABLE

Interface forms, controls, and navigation are operable.

3 | UNDERSTANDABLE

Information and functionality must be understandable.

4 | ROBUST

Content is compatible with user agents and assistive technologies.

Levels

Each criterion is assigned a level.

A — The lowest level. Addresses major barriers that would render the experience inaccessible to certain subsets of users.

AA — The most commonly targeted level. Ensures that the experience is usable and understandable for all users.

AAA — The most stringent level. Meeting this level is very rare and usually not possible for all content.

Versions

WCAG is updated periodically to keep up with changes to technology and user behavior. New versions typically include all previously existing criteria.

2.0 — Released in 2008.

2.1 — Released in 2018. Includes all 2.0 criteria.

2.2 — The current standard, released in October 2023. Includes all 2.0 and 2.1 criteria, except for 4.1.1 Parsing.

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YOU MIGHT BE THINKING

↓

"Well this sure seems complicated!"

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What You Can Do Now

1. Set a goal (and share it!)

2. Understand your current state

3. Provide training and resources

4. Start adopting best practices when creating new content

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1. Set a Goal

Pull together point people across core areas of your organization to participate while you align on your accessibility target.

- Understand the laws and regulations that apply to your space.

- Determine who will be responsible and accountable for driving and maintaining your accessibility targets and what they will need in order to be successful.

- Identify what is feasible to accomplish in the next quarter, 6 months, year, few years.

- Communicate this to your organization with an Accessibility Policy or Commitment.

What to include in your Accessibility Commitment:

✓ **Goals** – Targeted WCAG conformance level (e.g. WCAG 2.2 AA) and planned timelines for achieving conformance

✓ **Approach** – Measures being taken to monitor and improve accessibility

✓ **Timing** – Roadmap with key milestones you aim to achieve

✓ **Contacts** - Contact information for reporting accessibility issues or seeking assistance

2. Understand Current State

Complete a comprehensive audit of your website

Determine a representative sample of pages on your site that include all distinct functional components and content types on which to perform a combination of automated and manual testing. The results of these tests are compiled in a report often with notes on severity / priority and remediation suggestions.

Automated Tools:

- SiteImprove
- Axe DevTools by Deque
- WAVE by WebAIM

Request accessibility documentation from vendors

Reach out to any vendors that supply plugins, tools, etc. used on your site and ask about their accessibility policies and statements. Request an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) – commonly in the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) format – on their current level of conformance.

Publish an Accessibility Statement on your website

Your statement may be very simple at first, but you can add more detail as you learn more through audits and remediation.

Make sure to include information on your current conformance status from your site audit as well as how to contact your organization with feedback or to report barriers.

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3. Provide Training and Resources

There are a lot of great and free digital accessibility resources available out there – including on Colorado's OIT site!

Start with training on core concepts for everyone in your organization as well as some role-specific based training for those who are part of building and maintaining your site. If you start tracking the types of issues that appear in testing reports, you can identify potential gaps in your team's current skillset and look for targeted resources or bring in an accessibility expert to provide training tailored to your organization.

Some resources we recommend to get started:

- Colorado OIT Guide to Accessible Web Services
- The World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Fundamentals
- WebAIM.org
- Deque University's On-Demand Courses

Role-Based Training

	Accessibility Fundamentals	Designing for Accessibility	Accessible Development	Accessibility Testing and Remediation	Creating Accessible Content	Accessible Documents	Accessibility Strategy & Operations
Designers	Required	Required	Recommended		Recommended	Recommended	
Front-End and Mobile Developers	Required	Recommended	Required	Required		Recommended	
Content Authors	Required	Recommended			Required	Required	
Quality Assurance, Business Analysts, etc.	Required	Recommended	Recommended	Required		Recommended	
Project Managers	Required			Recommended		Recommended	
Management and Leadership	Required					Recommended	Required
All Others	Required					Recommended	

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4. Start Adopting Best Practices when Creating New Content

Even if the design and code of your website are perfectly executed, the overall accessibility of the experience still depends on your content following some important accessibility best practices.

With some simple training and reinforcement, these standards are easy for any content author to follow. Adopt them now, and you'll be better positioned to maintain accessibility as your website grows.

Best Practices for Content Authors

✔ Always define alternate text on informative images that describes the purpose or content of the image.

✔ Avoid images of text whenever possible.

✔ Include captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions as appropriate on all audio or video content.

✔ Write page titles, headings, and link text that are unique and informative.

✔ Use headings, lists, and tables for their intended purpose only and not to drive how the content appears on the page.

✔ Write in simple, plain language.

✔ Avoid using sensory cues in copy. For example, "required steps are colored red."

03

What You Can Do Soon

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1. Incorporate accessibility into the design process

2. Represent accessibility in development requirements

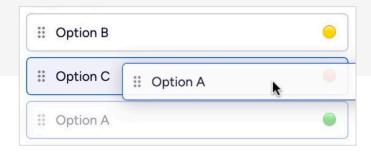3. Select the right technology

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Get Ahead of Issues Early

Some WCAG criteria can be remediated relatively easily after development, but many fundamentally impact the design in ways that can be more disruptive to address later on. For example:
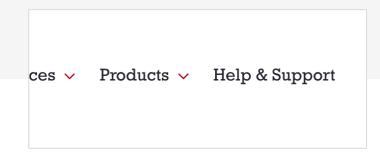

Accessible Use Of Color

WCAG requires that text, important graphics and interactive elements must have strong contrast and that color alone isn't used to convey meaning without labeling or visual indicators.

Multiple Modes Of Operation

Functionality that relies specifically on the use of a pointer – for example, content displayed only on hover or features that rely exclusively on drag-and-drop functionality – exclude many users and violate WCAG.

Consistent Navigation And Help

WCAG specifies that primary navigation elements and help mechanisms must appear in a consistent order and location across an experience.

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1. Incorporate Accessibility Into the Design Process

To ensure that accessibility can be achieved efficiently and effectively with the best possible end-product, incorporate accessibility considerations into the earliest stages of the design process.

Evaluate designs for measurable criteria

Equip your design teams with tools to check for relevant accessibility standards like color contrast, text formatting, and touch target size.

Provide checklists for your designers

A quick Google search will return many design checklists that translate the most important WCAG concepts into actionable considerations.

Consider different user abilities and input types

Not every user has (or uses) a mouse. Always consider the different ways that a user may interact with your site including mouse, touch, keyboard, voice, etc.
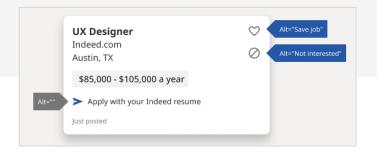
Strive for the highest standard of usability

Recent WCAG versions have begun to incorporate more criteria to ensure usability, particularly for users with cognitive disabilities.

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2. Represent Accessibility In Development Requirements

Ensuring that accessibility criteria can be addressed proactively during initial development can greatly mitigate the number of issues that have to be identified and corrected down the line.

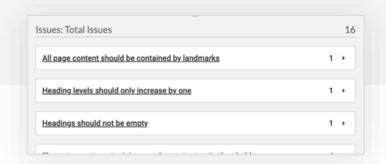## Annotate accessibility information in design documents

Annotations provide helpful instruction to developers that can prevent accessibility issues that have to be corrected later.

Include accessibility when writing acceptance criteria

Accessibility considerations, such as focus order or accessible labeling, should always be included alongside other criteria to ensure that developers are always considering accessibility in their work.

Incorporate accessibility testing into QA processes

No new content or features should be published without standard accessibility testing. This should include some basic manual testing to compliment functional QA already being performed.

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3. Select the Right Technology

The third-party tools you use to support your website – such as your Content Management System (CMS), plugins, media players, etc. – must also meet standards for the overall experience to be accessible.

When evaluating new technology:

- Look on their website or in your contract for documentation of their accessibility support.

- If you can't find accessibility documentation, request an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR), commonly in the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) format.

- If you're able, perform your own accessibility assessment of the technology to ensure it meets your standards.

- For CMS solutions, you can also inquire whether the platform meets the W3C's Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG).

Excerpt From Sample ACR

Criteria	Conformance Level	Remarks and Expl
2.5.2 Pointer Cancellation (Level A 2.1 only) For functionality that can be operated using a single pointer, at least one of the following is true: • **No Down-Event:** The down-event of the pointer is not used to execute any part of the function; • **Abort or Undo:** Completion of the function is on the up-event, and a mechanism is available to abort the function before completion or to undo the function after completion; • **Up Reversal:** The up-event reverses any outcome of the preceding down-event; • **Essential:** Completing the function on the down-event is essential.	Supports	The site functions that use a single completed when the user releases
2.5.3 Label in Name (Level A 2.1 only) For user interface components with labels that include text or images of text, the name contains the text that is presented visually.	Supports	The accessible name of each user i that includes a visible text label co label text.
2.5.4 Motion Actuation (Level A 2.1 only) Functionality that can be operated by device motion or user motion can also be operated by user interface components and responding to the motion can be disabled to prevent accidental actuation, except when: • **Supported Interface:** The motion is used to operate functionality through an accessibility supported interface; • **Essential:** The motion is essential for the function and doing so would invalidate the activity.	Not Applicable	The site does not have functionalit motion or user motion.
3.1.1 Language of Page (Level A) The default human language of each Web page can be programmatically determined.	Supports	The default language of the site's v using the lang attribute in the html
3.2.1 On Focus (Level A) When any user interface component receives focus, it does not initiate a change of context.	Supports	The site's components do not initia context when focused.
3.2.2 On Input (Level A) Changing the setting of any user interface component does not automatically cause a change of context unless the user has been advised of the behavior before using the component.	Supports	Changes of context do not occur au input.

ACR sample provided by Deque (https://www.deque.com/vpat/)

How You Can Keep It Going

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1. Remember it's about more than just guidelines

2. Assess your website on a regular basis

3. Seek input from uses with disabilities

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1. Remember It's About More Than Just Guidelines

WCAG conformance is not a comprehensive measure of accessibility. There are many accessibility considerations that have real impact on users but aren't currently represented by criteria. Continue to push beyond baseline WCAG requirements and explore additional accessibility best practices that you can implement. You'll not only be better positioned to meet new requirements, you'll also create a more richly accessible experience for all of your users.

Did you know? When WCAG is updated, most new criteria are just formalizing best practices that are already well known. For example, in WCAG 2.2:

2.5.7 Dragging Movements – Restricts functionality that relies on pointer-based dragging motions, a known challenge for users with limited motor control. WCAG 2.1 already restricted more complex pointer gestures.

2.5.8 Target Size (Minimum) – Specifies minimum size and spacing for touch targets. Target size was already a AAA criterion in WCAG 2.1, and Apple and others have recommended target size minimums for many years.

3.3.8 Accessible Authentication – Limits the use of cognitive function tests (like solving a puzzle or transcribing a code) in authentication flows. Formalizes established best practices for designing for cognitive disabilities.

2. Assess Your Website on a Regular Basis

Audit and Remediation

When first starting out, it's likely that a dedicated accessibility audit and remediation effort will be required to achieve an initial baseline of compliance and establish a strong foundation.

Ongoing Updates and Monitoring

Ensure that all updates made to your website – from the publication of new content to the implementation of new features – have appropriate accessibility checks and testing performed.

In between updates, monitor accessibility with an automated scanning tool like Google Lighthouse or axe Monitor and address minor issues as they arise.

Annual Assessment

Establish a regular cadence – annually, if possible – for performing site-wide accessibility checks and assessing the overall compliance of your website. Update your accessibility statement at this time.

3. Seek Input From Users With Disabilities

While accessibility efforts often rely heavily on standards like WCAG, we should remember that accessibility is ultimately about real people interacting with your website or app.

Provide Feedback Channels on Your Website

Provide a prominent and accessible place on your website, separate of general website feedback or contact requests, where users can report accessibility issues.

Monitor and reply to these requests promptly and use them to inform your accessibility roadmap.

Include Users With Disabilities in Research and Testing

The only guaranteed way to know if a new design will work for users with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities is to hear directly from those users.

You can recruit participants with disabilities by contacting organizations in your area that serve these communities – for example, the Colorado Center for the Blind – or use a recruitment tool like Fable.

Add Users With Disabilities to Your Organization

The best way to create truly inclusive experiences is to include individuals with this lived experience on your team as active participants in the design and development process.

While this can take time to achieve, you can take the first steps by working to improve the accessibility of your workplace to accommodate a more diverse team.

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Wrap Up

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Making Accessibility "Business as Usual"

Start Now
Lay the Foundation for Bigger Improvements

1. Set a goal
2. Understand current state
3. Provide training and resources
4. Start adopting best practices when creating new content

Start Soon
Work Toward Achieving Compliance

1. Lay the foundation in your experience design
2. Incorporate accessibility into the design process
3. Represent accessibility in development requirements
4. Select the right technology partners

Keep it Going
Maintain and Continually Enhance Accessibility

1. Remember it's about more than just guidelines
2. Assess your website on a regular basis
3. Seek input from uses with disabilities

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Whether you're kicking off a new website build or uploading minutes from a quarterly meeting, the best time to start incorporating accessibility into your process is now.

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Our Accessibility Services

Through design, development, testing, and training, CapTech can help you ensure your websites, apps, and other digital experiences are usable to everyone across the wide spectrum of physical, cognitive, and sensory abilities.

Design & Development

- Requirements gathering
- User story authoring
- User experience and visual design
- Accessibility annotations for design to development handoff
- Full manual and automated testing and review
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) conformance documentation

Operations & Training

- Cross-functional training and oversight
- Best practice reviews
- Implementation recommendations
- Embedding in existing teams
- Workstream and process structuring
- QA spot-checking

Accessibility Audits & Remediation

- Full manual and automated testing and review
- WCAG conformance documentation
- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) completion
- Accessibility statement authoring
- Accessibility remediation strategy

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Thank you!

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Thank you for joining us on #WebinarWednesday to learn more about the services and products our suppliers offer and how you can work with SIPA!

We would appreciate any feedback you might have regarding the webinar and ask that you please fill out the survey at the end.

THANK YOU!

Q & A
Please use the chat or raise your hand and unmute to ask questions/make comments.

Have remaining questions? Get in touch!

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