



Digital Accessibility: It's All We Do

Making the Business Case for Accessibility

What you risk when ignoring accessibility and what you gain from embracing it



While the moral and ethical imperatives for accessibility are clear, many still find it difficult to internally justify spend on accessibility initiatives and establish urgency.

Nobody wants to purposely exclude people, many times they just fail to see the connection between accessibility and immediate goals, commitments, or priorities.

This resource provides an overview of the risks, benefits, and impact of accessibility across a range of broader business goals and functional areas which are critical to all organizations. Use this eBook as a framework to help you justify investing in a comprehensive and sustainable accessibility initiative with lasting impact.

In general, organizations face significant risks in terms of legal fees, negative brand impact, and lost revenue if their digital properties are inaccessible.

Therefore, the business case for implementing accessibility can be made in terms of reducing the risk associated with each of these areas as well as related benefits and improvements in them as well.

Accessibility is fundamentally the right thing to do and aligns with what organizations want to be: **inclusive and principled.**

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The ROI of Accessibility

Is there a measurable Return on Investment for accessibility? If so, how would you calculate it? And more importantly - does the business case for accessibility even matter?

The ROI of Accessibility can be calculated in simple terms by the total amount of increased revenue attributable to accessibility efforts or improvements divided by the total cost of accessibility solutions. In other words, the simple ROI calculation of: (Net Profit Attributed to Accessibility) / (Total Investment or Spend on Accessibility).

The important thing is that, despite evidence of positive effects on revenue generating areas of the business, some may still only view accessibility investments as a development or compliance cost. However, that doesn't change the fact this is a legal requirement.

The ROI for accessibility truly hinges on manner or approach behind the initiative. Minimum action or spend is mandatory, but to see a return it must be done *well*. This means exploring ways to capitalize on accessibility investments instead of seeking to minimize them.

This eBook covers many of the tangible benefits accessibility can bring to the broader business that can go beyond a simple ROI calculation.

Return on Investment Summary

Net Profit

- ✓ New contracts gained at least in part from accessibility compliance, VPAT's or usability differentiation
- ✓ New business attributed to UX benefits from inclusive design and accessibility practices



Total Investment

Internal development time, cost of consultants and new hires, specialized software, training, and expert-led audits.



"[Looking] at accessibility regulations for the built [physical] environment...Were there business cases that justified the cost of fitting new and existing buildings for accessibility? While there were probably numerous impact assessments done, I'm not aware of any [...]because business case justification is not relevant when dealing with civil rights issues."

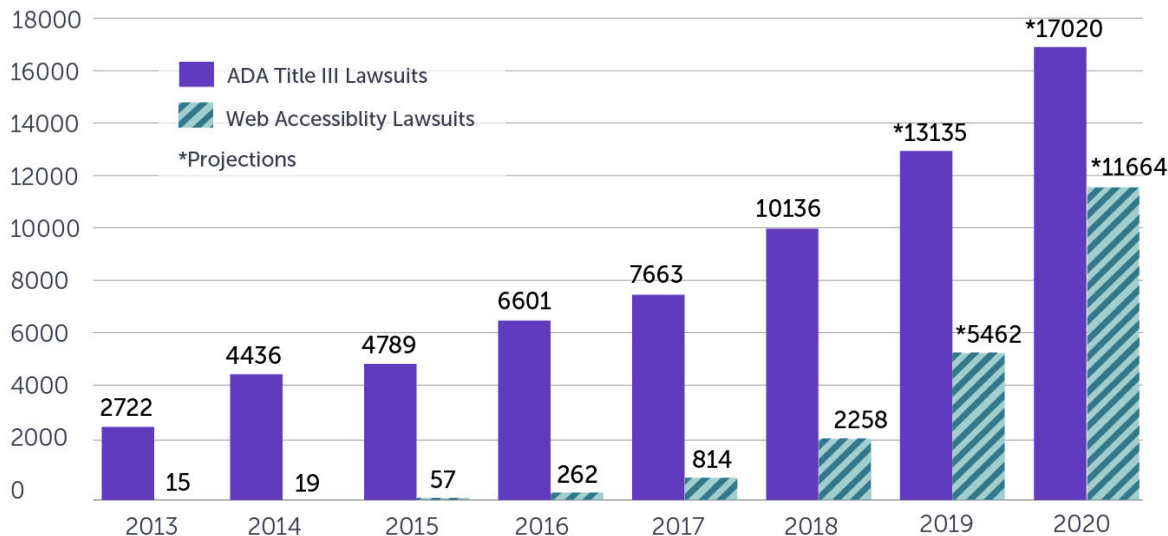
- Jeff Kline, author of Strategic IT Accessibility, [guest blogging for LevelAccess.com](https://www.levelaccess.com/blog/guest-blogging-for-level-access-com-2012), 2012

Legal Risk: Avoiding Lawsuits and Protecting Your Roadmap

Settlement terms are rarely just limited to financial compensation - accessibility lawsuits can force organizations to immediately deploy fixes and retrofits at the expense of pre-existing plans and ongoing development.

There are many ways to implement accessibility best practices in a seamless manner without completely derailing plans – making it the cost-effective choice to take action right away and begin building maturity over time.

- New technology and development on existing systems will only continue to introduce more risk into the organization.
- Litigation around digital accessibility will continue to increase – and not in the same way, including new areas of risk around mobile apps and internal systems for employees
- The proliferation of lawsuits relating to digital accessibility (graphed below) make it not a case of “if” but “when” organizations will get sued for inaccessible software.



Source: [Seyfarth Shaw LLP, ADA Title III](#)

Takeaway:

Take a proactive approach to accessibility to protect your plans and keep on time and on budget. Settlement terms are disruptive, expensive, and avoidable!

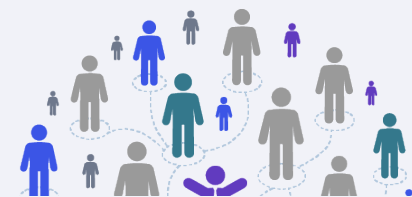
Brand Reputations at Stake

Accessibility belongs to Corporate Social Responsibility, and problems reflect poorly on brands.

Insights from [Click Away Pound's 2019 Report](#) (survey of consumers with disabilities)

- 69% of disabled customers with access needs will click away from a website that they find difficult to use.
- Over 75% of these customers will spend their money not necessarily on the website that offers the cheapest products, but where fewest barriers are placed in their way.

Most businesses will be unaware that they are losing income because more than 90% of customers who have difficulty using a site will not contact them.



The Network Effect

When blind consumers hear about an accessible site, “They will pass it on to ... one list server, and somebody else will pass it on to another,” says Jay Leventhal, editor of American Foundation for the Blind’s digital publication.

Takeaways:

- To avoid nasty surprises, organizations must account for all digital content, including corporate sites, apps, and even social media posts.
- Sites that don’t engineer the right experience lose more opportunities than they realize and are unaware of the impact – not just on users with disabilities, but their families, friends, and communities.

An Opportunity for Brand Differentiation

Inclusion is central to brand principles across the global landscape because it makes organizations stronger, and brands will gain from forming strong connections with their customers.

Millennials have the highest expectations for brands to take a stand on values... nearly seven in 10 US Millennials actively consider company values when making a purchase...

- [Forrester Research, 2018](#)

Accessibility is a core value at Apple and something we view as a basic human right.

Sarah Herrlinger,
Director of Global Accessibility Policy
and Initiatives, Apple

Takeaways:

- Increase the level of accessibility awareness within the organization by illustrating how it ties to brand values around inclusion
- Ensure accessibility and ease of use for key user flows or purchase paths so that it benefits everyone and drives conversions
- Deliver a great user experience that differentiates in a competitive market, builds positive brand association, and positions your organization as a leader

A Superior Experience Differentiates Brands

The customer experience is everything when it comes to connecting and building relationships with your market. Improving the accessibility and usability of sites for all users enhances user experience and improve customer acquisition, satisfaction, and loyalty.



"The primary touchpoint between you and your clientele is often digital... design has become a key differentiator in the battle for customers' hearts and minds."

- Leah Buley, Harvard Business Review

Achieve Market Differentiation and Increase Revenue

Improving accessibility and usability can boost customer acquisition, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Win More Deals

- Ensure software has the necessary VPAT™ (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template) or Support Statement to secure market access, and ensure your organization has an Accessibility Policy that covers your products.

Differentiate Based on Accessibility and Compliance

- Encourage prospects to add accessibility to their own buying criteria for a competitive advantage
- Stress a forward-thinking, inclusive culture to prospective customers – that you invest in the best user experience possible

Market Risk and Opportunity

Access the global public sector marketplace, don't miss out on B2B or Government contracts by missing a VPAT!

A VPAT is a document you provide to your potential buyers that lists accessibility criteria, level of conformance, and how your product meets it. This is a required component of many federal contract proposals for Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Takeaways:

- Incorporate accessibility best practices into your operations and ensure you are providing the best UX possible
- Create products that are easily functional for all users and offer good experiences

Good Design Helps Brands Stand Out, and Accessibility is Good Design

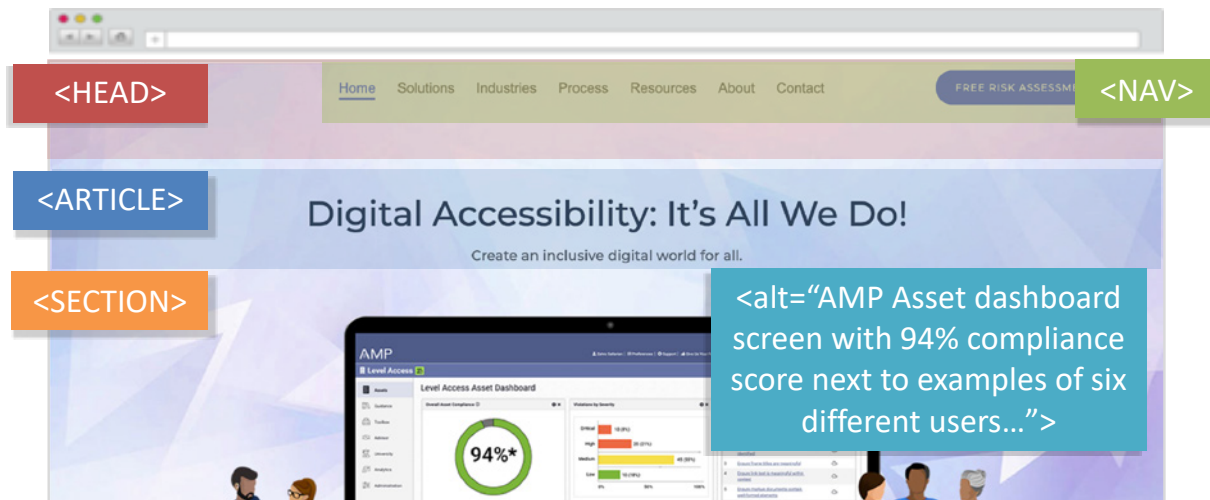
"If you ask customers to describe what it's like to interact with your brand, you always want to hear words like "accessible," "fun," and "easy" – words [about] the quality of their experiences. There's a reason why customer experience (CX) has become a top priority among forward-thinking brands: Great experiences make users feel valued and empowered, and this generates trust and commitment."

- Samantha Paxson for Forbes, March 2019

Beautiful and Functional: The Power of Accessible Web Design

Accessibility enriches web content and can strengthen SEO, conversion, and the overall user experience.

Accessible sites are generally more usable to everyone – including people with disabilities, older people, people with low literacy, people who are not fluent in the language of the site, people with low bandwidth connections to the internet, people with older technologies, and new and infrequent web users – thus increasing the customer base and number of people who can successfully use your site.



"Accessible components like navigational menus are beneficial for everyone: People with limited attention or short term memory benefit from clear and distinct menus with easily identifiable states..."

There are additional benefits to a good, accessible page structure, beyond those experienced by people with disabilities. As an example, search engines can use the data to better index the content of a page." [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#)

Takeaways:

Integrate accessibility considerations into the overall design process to address unseen biases



"A valuable by-product [of accessibility] is better usability for everyone."

- Microsoft Universal Windows Platform documentation

Conclusion

Given the scope of operations of most major organizations today, there is potential for significant damages if accessibility is not addressed right away. Businesses who wait to act will be unaware of both the positive ripple effects they are missing out on as well as the barriers they are creating until faced with a complaint.

To successfully build the business case for accessibility, it is important to first focus on educating stakeholders on the legal requirements, fundamental challenges, and risks of not acting instead of proving the ROI. After communicating the need to act, it is then better to use the other ways that accessibility can benefit organizations as a justification for doing it well – and investing in a full, ongoing initiative versus the perceived bare minimum.

Accessibility can typically tie into other core operations or missions of the business, but the real case for acting on accessibility is that it's the law – and the right thing to do.

“Many organizations are waking up to the fact that embracing accessibility leads to multiple benefits – reducing legal risks, strengthening brand presence, improving customer experience and colleague productivity.”

- Paul Smyth,
Head of Digital Accessibility, Barclays



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