

Accessibility as Inclusion, Not Compliance

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Accessibility is not merely about meeting the requirements of laws such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). It is fundamentally about ensuring that products, services, and environments are usable by all people, regardless of legal mandates.

Some Things to Consider:

- Accessibility is not a one-time effort.
- True inclusion requires continuous improvement and adaptation.
- Go beyond making things “legally compliant”
- Adopt a truly inclusive approach, considering the diverse ways to which individuals engage with the world.
- Provide equal opportunities for participation
- Ensure that people with disabilities do not have to “work around” barriers that others do not face.

Universal Design: Building for All from the Start

The principle of Universal Design emphasizes creating products and environments that are usable by as many people as possible.

Mistakes to Avoid:

- Treating accessibility as an afterthought or a “nice-to-have.”
- Universal Design anticipates the needs of a diverse range of individuals, and designs solutions that proactively address those needs.
- The goal is to create products or spaces that cater to multiple user groups without necessitating special adjustments.

Technology to Enhance Accessibility and Inclusion

Embrace digital accessibility tools to improve experiences for all users.

Mistakes to Avoid:

- Believing that technology alone can replace the insights gained from engaging with users who will benefit from these features.
- Technology can serve as a powerful ally in enhancing accessibility. This includes websites that automatically adjust for screen readers, mobile apps that offer customizable text sizes, or physical spaces that utilize motion-activated lighting.



User Feedback into the Design Process

Engagement of users with disabilities and other diverse needs to gain valuable insights.

Mistakes to Avoid:

- Assuming that designing for inclusion only requires thinking about what people need; it also necessitates listening to them.
- Engaging with users in real-world contexts is essential to creating truly inclusive designs.

Creating a Culture of Accessibility and Inclusion

Recognizing the value of making accessibility a priority in the regular activities and work is an crucial awareness and important consideration of accessibility and inclusion,

Things to consider:

- Accessibility consideration into every step of the process and in all decisions.
- A culture that values accessibility and inclusion is critical. Accessibility should be viewed as a mindset rather than just a checklist.
- Organizational commitment to accessibility can eliminate barrier to implementation to tools, techniques, and regulations has important roles for a barrier free environment.

Accessibility is a Journey, Not a Destination

The goal is to create an environment where everyone can participate fully and equally. It implies beyond basic legal requirements and design and incorporating with a broader audience in mind.

True accessibility means rethinking how we design, build, and deliver experiences that cater to the diverse needs of all users, including those with disabilities.

Accepting accessibility not as compliance rather as a commitment to inclusion, and environments that empower everyone, regardless of ability.