Online Accessibility and Inclusion **Toolkit**

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Believing in Accessibility for All

The Power of Inclusion

Being inclusive is the right thing to do. Making your website accessible helps everyone in society. It also has a large number of powerful business benefits, so digital inclusion is a journey that every organization should be on and at Recite Me we want to help you.

This toolkit deep-dives into the key areas of inclusion to support businesses on their accessibility journey. Actioning an improvement today makes your business more accessible than yesterday, and every small change can make a huge difference in someone's life.

Current estimates that **1 in 5 people have a disability that could affect how they access online content**. This is a huge number of people who may be unable to complete everyday tasks online that many of us take for granted such as banking, shopping or applying for a new job.

I am dyslexic, and know first-hand how difficult it can be to navigate the digital world when websites have not been designed with the needs of a diverse audience in mind.

Our toolkit has been developed for use across all sectors to help break down digital barriers for employees, customers, and the wider online community. This educational resource includes practical tips and guidance on how to provide an inclusive online experience.

We have partnered with specialists in the disability space to ensure the toolkit provides you with as much value as possible.

I truly hope you find this toolkit useful and that it is able to support you on your digital inclusion journey. Should you require any further support in breaking down digital barriers for employees, customers or your wider online audience please get in touch with our friendly team here.

Ross Linnett
Recite Me Founder & CEO

Setting the Scene

Making the online world accessible benefits individuals, businesses, and entire societies. But how much do you really know about web accessibility? While many of us may be aware that we fall short when addressing accessibility, most don't know the actual impact that it has in real life.

A Global View of Access Needs

Over 1 Billion people live with some form of disability (WHO).

Over 2.2 Billion people have a visual impairment (WHO).

Around 20% of the population have a learning difficulty (*Based on average of other percentages).

Approximately 17% of the world speak English (Babbel).

Online Accessibility

- **Only 1 in 10** people have access to the assistive technology they need (WHO).

- **69% of disabled people** leave a website with barriers (Click Away Pound).

- Disabled people are **over 50% more likely** to face barriers online than non-disabled people (Scope's Big Hack program).

- **78% of disabled people** say that having access to digital technologies is helpful or very helpful (Scope's Big Hack program).

Believing in Accessibility for All

Recruitment and Workplace Accessibility

- **1 in 3 job seekers** think online job applications are suitably accessible for disabled people (RIDI).

- Disabled people **apply for 60% more jobs** than non-disabled people when job searching (The Independent).

- Diverse companies enjoy **2.3 times higher cash flow** per employee (Deloitte).

- Companies that embrace best practices for employing and supporting people with disabilities outperform their peers with **higher revenue by 28%** (Accenture).

The Importance of Being an Inclusive Brand

86% of users with access needs would **spend more online** if websites were accessible (Click Away Pound).

70% of young millennials would choose a brand over a competitor, if it demonstrates inclusivity (Accenture).

83% of users with access needs limit their shopping to sites they know are barrier-free (Click Away Pound).

52% of all online consumers consider a company's values when making a purchase (Forbes).

How to get Started with Digital Inclusion

Someone with a disability or access needs must be able to experience the online world with the same successful outcome as those without disabilities. Digital inclusion is the process of making digital products like websites, mobile apps, and other online tools available to everyone.

Usability + Accessibility = Inclusion

Providing a website that is designed around a good user experience and is built to an accessibility standard is the perfect blend to provide an inclusive digital platform.

Everyone should be able to view your website regardless of their access needs or the assistive technology they use. A site that is built with accessibility in mind and has additional support to boost usability creates an inclusive experience.

Usability

When talking about website usability, we refer to the quality of a user's experience, taking into account effectiveness, efficiency, and overall satisfaction. Websites developed with user-centered design achieve higher usability scores, drive more effective user journeys, and result in more positive outcomes.

By taking usability into account at each stage of the design process, web developers can create content that is useful, engaging, and suitable for their target audience, helping to maximize user satisfaction. Websites with high usability scores present information and choices clearly and concisely, using coherent and intuitive design, and content displays properly across various devices and browsers.

Assistive technology supports the broadest possible range of website visitors by providing tools that enable everyone to customize their online experience to suit their individual needs.

Believing in Accessibility for All

Accessibility

Websites built with accessibility in mind allow a diverse audience to explore content with their own support technologies, without barriers that prevent access or present interaction issues. Although the word accessibility has many connotations within the context of the online world, it is generally measured by the website's build and which level of accessibility conformance it adheres to.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are the gold standard in international accessibility, providing clear and detailed instructions for maximizing online inclusion. However, it is essential to note that website accessibility is an ongoing process and will need to be continually addressed as content is modified and updated.

Inclusion

Digital inclusion refers to the ability of all individuals and communities to access and consume website content and information without barriers - regardless of disabilities or access needs. This can only be achieved when the core principles of usability and accessibility is carefully considered and continually addressed.

Inclusive websites offer many benefits and allow a diverse range of online visitors to access your content more easily, making your products and services available to a much broader spectrum of the market.
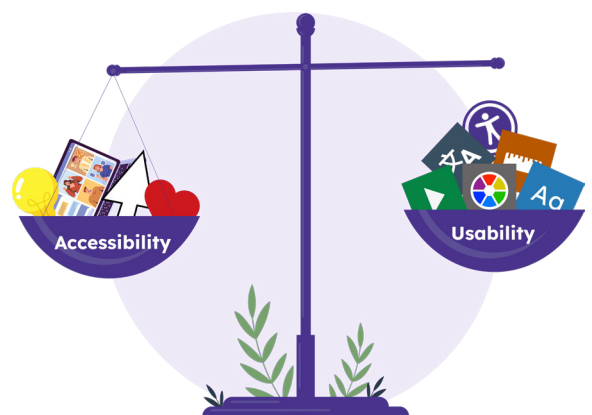
What Makes a Website Usable?

Website usability is a key metric in creating an inclusive online environment. Usability considers both the website user interface and the overall website user experience.

Website User Experience - The quality of the interaction visitors get when navigating through a site and how they feel about how easy it is to use.

Website User Interface - The point of human-computer interaction and communication on a website, including display screens, keyboards, a mouse, the appearance of a desktop, and more.

Overall usability is determined by how easily visitors can interact with your website and accomplish the tasks they set out to do. A website with a high usability score will generate more positive user experiences and achieve user satisfaction more often. To create a website with superior usability, developers must keep the user experience in mind while designing user interfaces.

Like accessibility, usability isn't a one-time effort or check box. It's a journey that requires research, testing, regular updates, and fine-tuning for continuous improvement. There are many ways to improve website usability, including increasing the focus placed upon:

- Clear and intuitive navigation

- Concise content

- The strategic use of visuals

Every journey starts with a first step. Check out our **10 Website Design Tips for an Inclusive Website** to get started.

What is WCAG?

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are a set of international standards that define how to make a website build more accessible against certain criteria.

While web accessibility laws and policies vary around the world, the vast majority of digital accessibility policies refers to WCAG as the best guidelines for maximizing accessibility efforts. The guidelines were developed and released in 1999 by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and are updated periodically to reflect updates in technologies and best practices.

To make websites and other digital content accessible to people with disabilities, it is essential to understand WCAG 2.1. The guidelines and success criteria are organized around four key principles which set the foundation for anyone to access and use web content. By applying these principles, web designers and content creators can work toward making content more accessible to users with a range of abilities.

The following guidelines provide the basic goals that designers and content creators should work toward to make content more accessible to users with different disabilities. For each guideline, testable success criteria are provided to allow WCAG 2.1 to be used where requirements and conformance testing are necessary such as in design specifications and regulations.
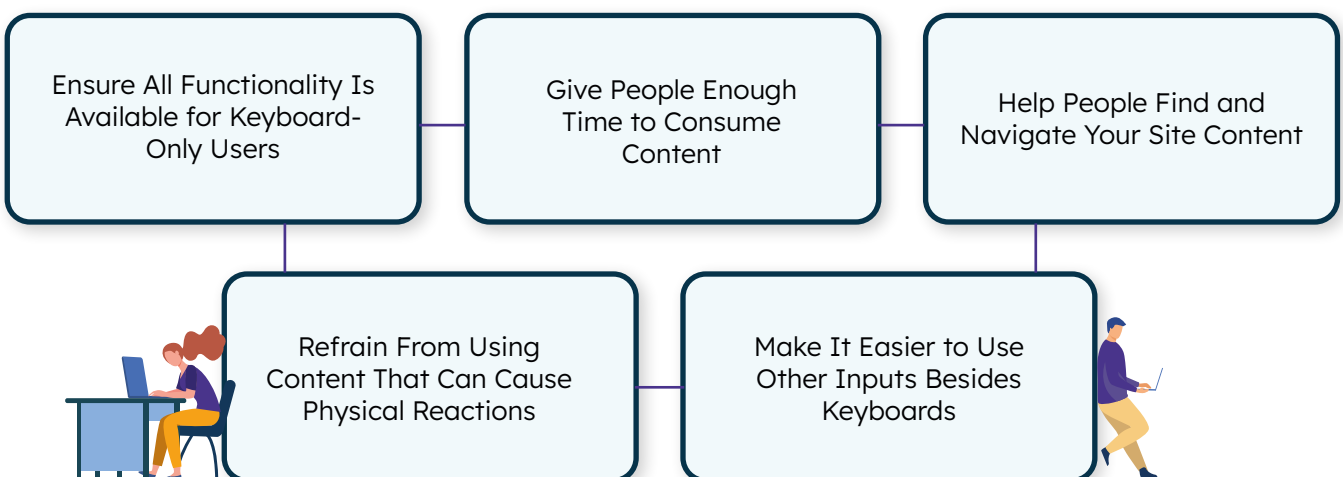
Perceivable

Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive. This means accounting for sensory differences in vision, sound, and touch so that users can comprehend and consume the information in a way that is perceivable to them. To ensure all users can recognize and understand online content, a website should:

Provide Text Alternatives for Non-Text Content	**Provide Captions and Other Alternatives for Multimedia**	**Present Content in Different Ways Without Losing Meaning**	**Make It Easy to See and Hear Content**

Operable

User interface and navigation components on a website must be usable by all. This means eliminating general design barriers and functions that limit input methods or result in time constraints. To meet operability requirements, a website should:

- Ensure All Functionality Is Available for Keyboard-Only Users
- Give People Enough Time to Consume Content
- Help People Find and Navigate Your Site Content
- Refrain From Using Content That Can Cause Physical Reactions
- Make It Easier to Use Other Inputs Besides Keyboards

Understandable

Information and the operation of the user interface must be understandable by users and assistive technology without additional effort.

| Use simple language to make content readable and understandable | Ensure content appears in a predictable manner | Help people prevent and fix mistakes |

Robust

To maximize accessibility, websites should be standards-compliant and able to function using all applicable technologies, including assistive software. Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted by a wide variety of tools, including browsers, browser extensions, media players, screen readers, and other applications.

Testable Success Criteria

For each of the guidelines above, WCAG 2.1 provides testable success criteria that can be used across all functions, from design specifications to purchasing and contractual agreements. Three levels of conformance have been defined to meet the needs of different groups and various circumstances. Level AA is typically the minimum reference point when discussing 'making a website accessible.'

- **Level A:** The most basic level of accessibility, comprising criteria that should be easy to achieve without much impact on website design or structure. For Level A conformance, a web page must satisfy all Level A Success Criteria or a conforming alternate version.

- **Level AA:** WCAG AA compliance is a legal requirement for certain sites and includes additional criteria to Level A. For Level AA conformance, a web page must satisfy all Level AA Success Criteria or a conforming alternate version.

- **Level AAA:** With even more benchmarks set above Level AA, this is the most comprehensive standard of accessibility compliance. For a website to achieve this rating, it must comply with every listed Level AAA success criterion or a conforming alternate version.

Believing in Accessibility for All

The Costs of Inaccessible Websites

Online accessibility is as much about building a compliant website as it is about providing friction-free user experience. It has been reported that 97.8% of websites have Level AA failures, meaning that many organizations are at risk of not complying with accessibility legislation. Real-world impacts of this include:

1 Falling foul of local and accessibility legislation.

2 Providing poor user experiences that create barriers within online journeys.

3 Risking negative brand sentiment and possible reputational damage.

**4** A downturn in website performance and negative SEO impact.

How to Write an Accessibility Statement for Your Website

What is an Accessibility Statement and Why is it Important?

A web accessibility statement declares the levels of accessibility a website aims to achieve.

It signals to website visitors that your business is dedicated to providing equal access to information for everyone. People will appreciate the open acknowledgment that accessibility is a crucial motivation for the company.
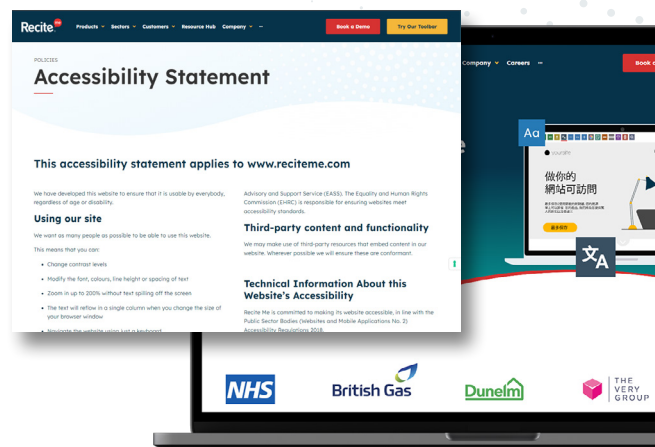
What to Include in an Accessibility Statement?

Writing an accessibility statement doesn't have to be complicated. You can update it at any time to reflect changes and improvements. We recommend that you state clearly:

Any additional accessibility tools that are available

The level of accessibility that is currently available

Any limitations or areas that are inaccessible

Contact information for reporting accessibility difficulties

Future accessibility goals and developments

Where to place the Accessibility Statement

Many companies hide their accessibility statements away in a difficult-to-find location on their website, but this is not recommended. Visibility is vital, so your accessibility statement should be included on the footer of every page alongside the links to your privacy policy, security policy, terms of service etc. This way it is easily accessible.

Need some help getting started? You can access the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) free web accessibility statement generator here.

Believing in Accessibility for All

10 Website Design Tips for an Inclusive Website

Building an inclusive website is all about providing all users of your site with the same level of user experience. Check out our top tips below for designing and building an inclusive website.

1. **Choose a CMS that supports accessibility**

   Use a content management system (CMS) that supports all users and simultaneously creates processes for website development and maintenance that are effective and easy to manage. Ensure that page layouts, themes, widgets, plugins, and other aspects are compatible with web accessibility standards.

2. **Color contrast**

   When color pairings have insufficient contrast, text can be difficult or impossible for many users to read. According to the W3C, the ideal contrast ratio between text and background should be at least 4.5:1. Helpful tools such as WebAIM's Contrast Checker allow you to enter hex codes to determine whether the color combination passes.

Example 1
Example 2
Example 3

Incorrect Examples
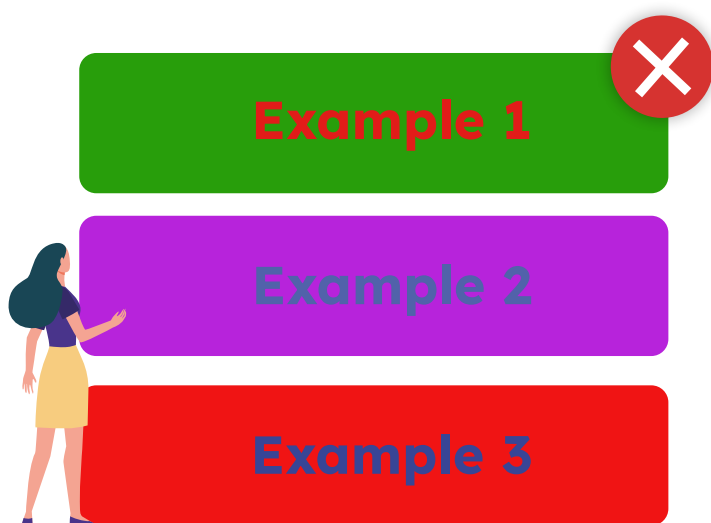
Example 1
Example 2
Example 3

Correct Examples

3. Use headings to structure content

Those who use screen readers often scan a web page using headers to hear an overview of the key information. If a web page doesn't use headers, this method of skimming is almost impossible.

You should only use one H1 per page, usually for the page title. This can be followed by H2 tags for subheadings, which can be nested further with H3 and H4 tags. H tags should always be used in order, so avoid using an H4 directly after an H2, etc.

H1

H2

H3

4. Use descriptive links

Screen reader users often utilize keyboard shortcuts to list all the links on a page so they can navigate more efficiently. Non-descriptive hyperlink text like 'click here' and 'read more' can be confusing when a screen reader reads them out of context. A descriptive link should make sense when read out alone and should clearly indicate where the link goes or what will happen when it is clicked.

Download our 2022 Accessibility Report

5. Design inclusive forms

Online forms represent some of the most complicated interactions a user can have with a website. So, designing accessible forms can significantly improve user experience. Some key points to remember include:

- Provide a clear relationship between labels and their corresponding fields.
- Avoid using placeholders as labels because they are hidden from screen readers.
- Provide alternatives to inaccessible content such as date pickers, and provide a text field where the date can be entered manually.
- Provide options to extend time limits for form completion.

6. Support keyboard navigation

For people with motor disabilities and vision impairments, keyboard navigation is essential. The main goal of keyboard navigation is to give users the ability to select every interactive element on a web page by using the tab key. The easiest way to test this is by visiting one of your web pages and observing how easy or difficult the process is.

7. ALT Text

ALT text is the short written description that accompanies each image. If no ALT text is provided, a screen reader would only be able to say "image" or perhaps read the file name. Good ALT text should be specific and convey the content and purpose of each image.

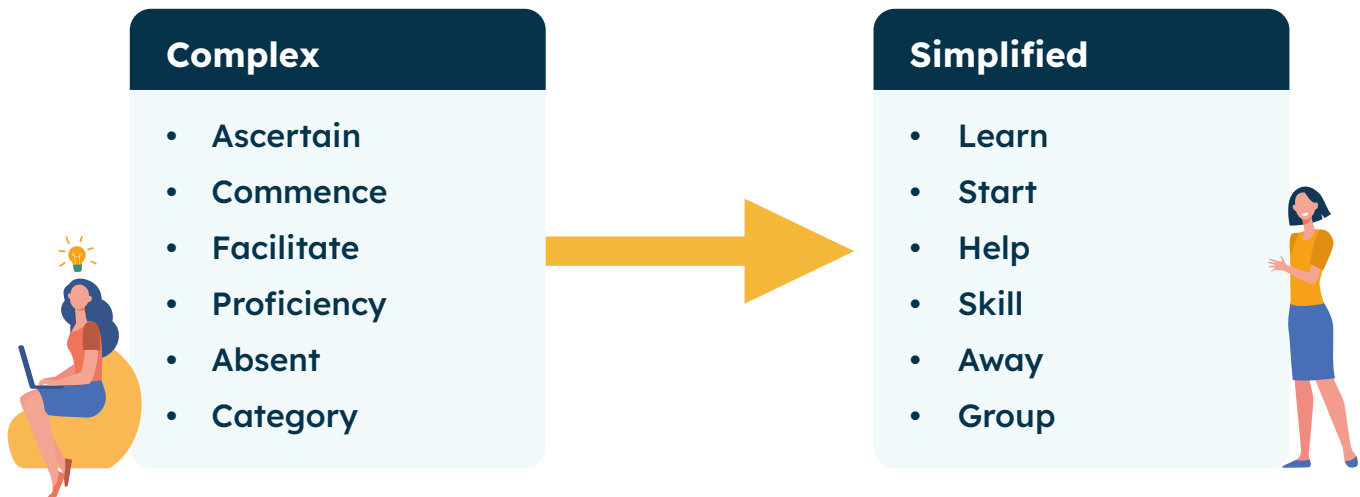### 8. Do not use color alone to convey meaning

Users with vision deficits will have trouble perceiving content if only color is used to indicate differences. Instead, use visual attributes such as shapes, iconography, text, contrast, and spacing to make information accessible.

9. Keep your copywriting simple

One of the easiest ways to create accessible copy is to write in plain, easy-to-understand language. There is no need to use jargon, flowery adjectives, or complex metaphors. The copy you use should be consistent, clear, and concise.

Complex	Simplified
• Ascertain	• Learn
• Commence	• Start
• Facilitate	• Help
• Proficiency	• Skill
• Absent	• Away
• Category	• Group

10. Implement assistive technology

What makes a website truly inclusive is giving people as many choices as possible to customize and consume the information in a way that is tailored to their individual needs. That's where Recite Me assistive technology comes in. Our assistive toolbar supports a diverse range of internet users by providing tools to create a fully customizable experience. **Turn to page 35** to find out more about the Recite Me assistive toolbar.
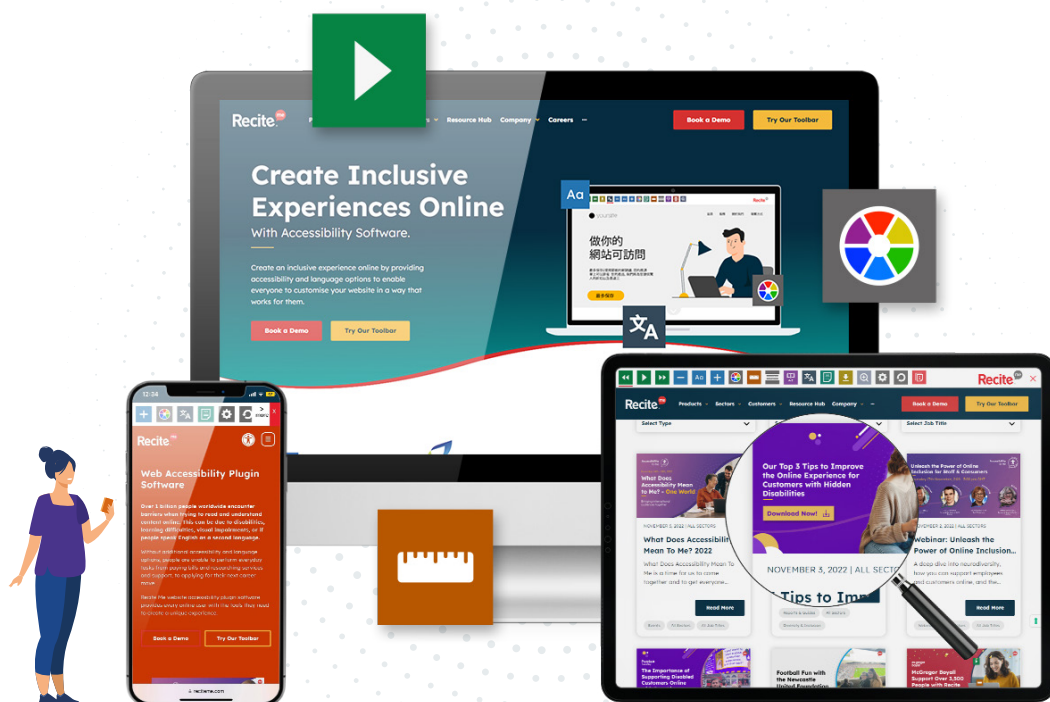
Advice from the Experts

Mike Adams - Purple

Get to Know Mike

Mike Adams is the CEO of Purple. With over 25 years of experience in the field of disability, Mike is working to change the conversation about disability by making it a commercial and social impact opportunity for businesses.

As a disabled person himself, Mike has turned his life experience, knowledge, and expertise into Purple, which provides a range of consultancy and training services to support organizations across the private, public, and voluntary sectors.

This year, Mike was listed in the Shaw Trust Disability Power 100 list of the most influential disabled people and co-authored "Leading from the Front" – a seminar report with KPMG to equip Boards on disability. One of his proudest achievements was being awarded his OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) for his services to disability in 2012.

Purple sees disability as both a huge commercial opportunity and an increasingly significant social impact issue.

"**Purple** is an organization that is changing the disability conversation. Traditionally, disability has been seen as an issue of charity, about vulnerable people, welfare, and the responsibility of the government. What Purple is doing is shifting this dial and saying, disability is about value. It is about contribution. Whether that's as a disabled customer or as an employee, it is about community and quite frankly, it is about the opportunity." **Mike Adams, CEO**

The Size of the Disabled Market

When the topic of disability arises, many organizations immediately think of wheelchair accessibility. This isn't entirely illogical, given that the wheelchair has become the international symbol of disability. However, there's much more to disability than lifts and ramps. In fact, of the **61 million disabled people in the US** (around 27% of the population), only 5% of those are wheelchair users.

The big issue Mike spends a lot of time talking about is mental health. Thankfully, attitudes towards mental health improved exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is now much more awareness of neurodiversity, including autism and Asperger's, dyslexia, learning disabilities, and even long-term health conditions like cancer.

83% of disabled people acquired their disability in their lifetime.

80% of disabled people have hidden impairments

The global Purple Dollar has risen to $16.5 trillion

12 million people are color-blind in the US alone

The Inequality Between Disabled and Non-Disabled Customers Explained

Mike's mission, and the mission of Purple, is to change the disability conversation from disadvantage and inequality to one about potential and value. That means the disability conversation needs to shift away from whether or not a disabled person wants to work. Like all groups of society, there will be those that wish to and those that can't, and those that are not looking.

Here are some stats to help bring into focus some misconceptions about people with disabilities, their cost of living, access to employment, and more:

The gap between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people in employment is 33% (46% disabled to 79% non-disabled).

Disabled people spend an average of $620 a month on costs directly associated with their disability. This includes transport, specialized equipment, and carers.

Disabled people are twice as likely as other citizens to have no recognized qualifications, and over one-third of all those without any formal qualifications are disabled.

At every level of qualification, disabled people are nearly 3 times more likely to be without a job but want to work.

Disability increases the likelihood of disadvantages in social activities, income, housing, and employment.

Disabled people's living costs are 25% higher than non-disabled people.

How Supporting Disabled Customers can Positively Impact an Organization

The immense spending power of people with disabilities is often talked about. However, only 10% of businesses have a targeted strategy to access the disabled market. Companies that do focus on inclusion unlock new markets and, in turn, drive quality experiences for disabled people. So, it's a win-win.

Evidence shows that disabled customers are more loyal to brands. So, once a company knows what disabled consumers want and work to provide it, they are likely to attract and retain customers that stay with the company for much longer than the average time.

Advice for Improving the Online Experience for Disabled Customers

When an organization comes to Purple looking to become a more disability-inclusive business, they are initially asked three questions:

1. How do we make our built environment more accessible
2. How do we make our online digital technology more accessible
3. How do we engage our staff and bring them on this journey?

Purple then takes the organization on this journey focusing on the built environment, the online environment, and its people.

When disabled people are asked the same questions, their answer is "do something". Just do something. You've got to start somewhere, and the good news is that most organizations are probably already doing more than they think.

When it comes to digital accessibility, organizations can start by looking at their website thoroughly. Do you have a site map, for example? One piece of advice Mike always gives to organizations is to unplug the mouse and see how far they can navigate through their own website. This is an essential baseline indication of how accessible it is.

Organizations can also provide disability training for customer-facing staff, including training on hidden disability awareness, like the sunflower lanyard. Many organizations have their front line teams learn hello and goodbye in British Sign Language, which can make a huge difference.

There's so much that companies can do, some of which are absolutely free. However, whatever investments are made, Purple always encourages businesses to see it as an investment, not a cost. Purple works alongside multiple companies and partner organizations to set in motion real changes that make a real difference over time.

Amanda Kirby - DO-IT Solutions

Get to Know Amanda

Amanda is the founder and CEO of Do-IT Solutions, a tech for good company that provides tools, training, and consultancy in the area of neurodiversity and wellbeing.

Amanda has firsthand experience, as she sees herself as a neurodivergent as well as being a parent of neurodivergent children and grandchildren. Amanda's passion for making changes in society and showcasing the talents of neurodivergent children and adults, especially in a work setting, has been her driving factor for over 30 years.

Amanda is an emeritus professor at the University of South Wales and an honorary professor at Cardiff University. She has both clinical and research experience and coordinated a neurodiversity-related transdisciplinary clinical and research team (which she also founded) for 20 years. She is a qualified GP and has a PhD relating to emerging adulthood and neurodiversity.

Amanda has been on several government advisory boards, is the current chair of the ADHD Foundation, and works closely with many other charities within the disability arena, including Dyslexia Scotland.

She has written 9 books and published more than 100 research papers. Her latest book, published in 2021:'Neurodiversity at Work, Drive Innovation, Performance and Productivity with a Neurodiverse Workforce', won the Business Book Awards 2022 for EDI.

She has a new book on Neurodiversity in Education coming out in early 2023.
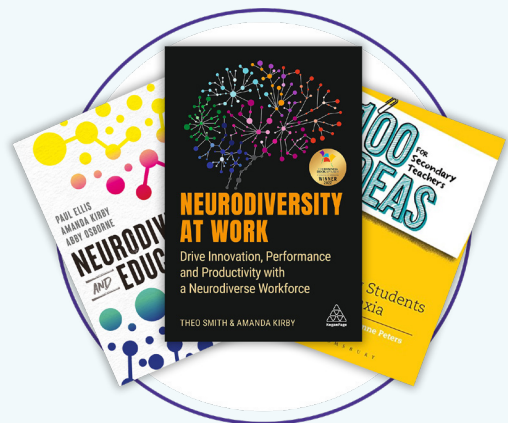
What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is the way we think, move, process, communicate and act differently. We are all neurodiverse but some people have neurodivergent traits or conditions that move away from the social norm.

Neurodivergent traits can be strengths such as being exceptional creatively, sporty or being particularly adept at maths or writing. They can also be challenges, as I've often been associated with conditions like dyslexia, dyspraxia (also known as developmental and coordination disorder), dyscalculia, ADHD, developmental language disorder, and autism spectrum disorders. This isn't an exclusive list, as other cognitive challenges and conditions can be included under the neurodivergent umbrella too, including cerebral palsy and fetal alcohol syndrome disorder.
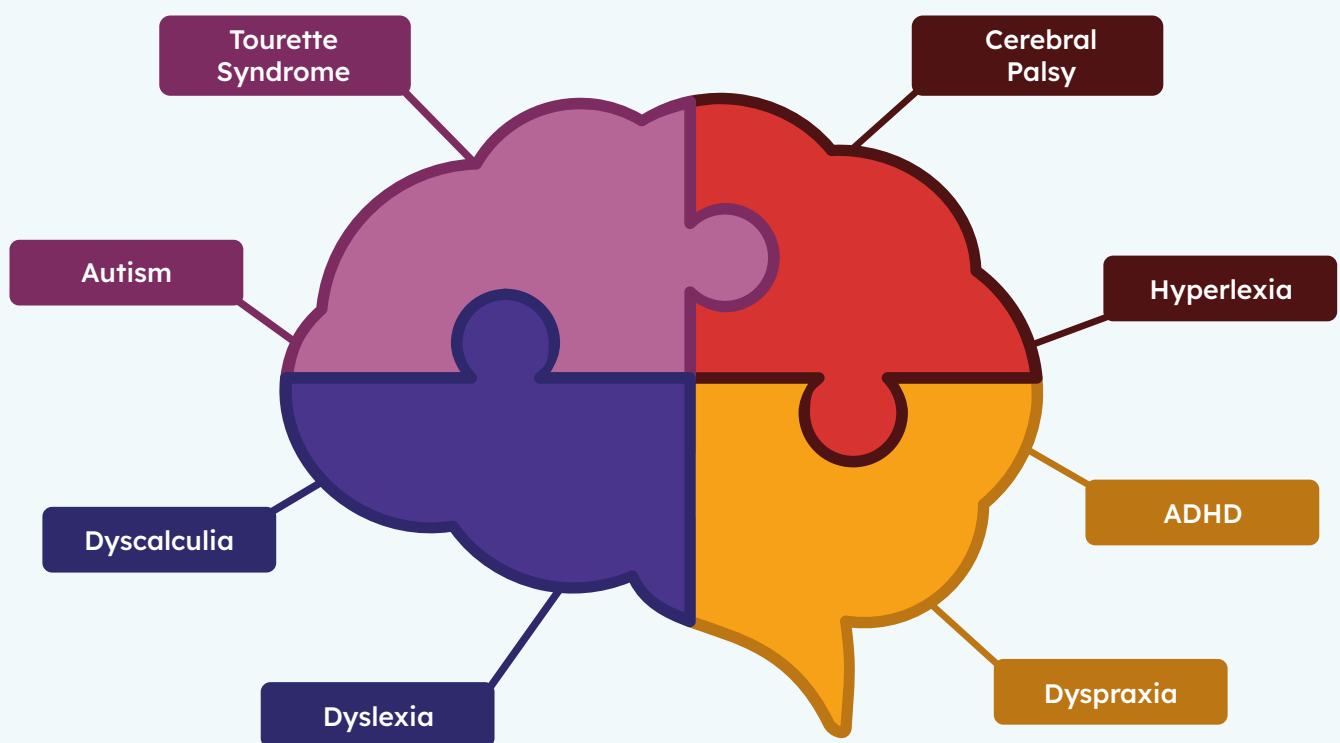
How a Neurodiverse Supportive Workplace can Positively Impact an Organization

A neurodiverse supportive workplace must start by considering how to be inclusive in all of its practices and processes. That means allowing people to feel safe and respected in having open conversations about their strengths and challenges, and how they can be optimally productive. For this process to be effective, line managers must be comfortable having conversations about neurodiversity, rather than avoiding talking with the people they work with in case they get it wrong.

How to Unlock Neurodiverse Talent Through Your D&I Strategy

Positive change begins with the senior leadership team to ensure buy-in from the top and ensure processes and policies are inclusive at every level of the organization. D&I strategies should be applied as part of a universal design throughout all stages of the employee life cycle - starting with the way individuals apply for jobs, all through recruitment, interview, selection, onboarding processes, and beyond.

It's equally important that we continue ensuring that people have the right adjustments to perform in their jobs. Adopting a universal design ensures that organizations make anticipated adjustments on the assumption there will be neurodivergent employees in the workplace, rather than waiting for people to disclose or share that they are neurodivergent.

Advice for Ensuring an Inclusive Online Experience

Always start by considering that you will be engaging with someone neurodivergent when designing your online experiences, including web access and virtual meetings. Thinking about this upfront means you are thinking 'Universal Design'.

Believing in Accessibility for All

Inclusive Recruitment and Workplaces

Online inclusion should be a vital consideration for every organization because modern recruitment, and company processes rely heavily on digital technology. Plus, today's workforce is the most diverse it's ever been, and remote working is increasingly popular, so organizations must take care to ensure workers can access websites, intranets, and documents from anywhere.

What is Inclusive Recruitment?

Inclusive recruitment covers the entire candidate experience from discovery and attraction right through to application, onboarding and beyond. It is the process of being able to offer a barrier-free experience where everyone is able to embrace and fulfill the recruitment journey on a level playing field.

Why is Inclusion Important?

Researching a new career or applying for a job online are not easy tasks for everyone. As many as 1 billion people worldwide have a disability which means they'll encounter obstacles. However, digital barriers are not only a problem in recruitment. They exist at every stage of the employee lifecycle:

Attraction

If your website isn't accessible, the number of potential applicants that see vacancy listings and job descriptions are limited, meaning you're missing out on talent.

Application

Accessibility barriers prevent many applicants from filling out application forms and completing online skills assessments.

Onboarding

If employees are not given the tools and technology they need from the start, they receive a poor first impression and will not develop a trusting and loyal mindset.

Development

Without incorporating policies, processes, and technology to improve diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion, the workforce will be less productive.

Retention

Inclusive technology is an essential consideration as modern-day businesses rely on websites, apps, and software to help their staff get things done.

What are the Benefits of Being Inclusive?

Many companies shy away from making digital accessibility adjustments as they perceive them to be complex, expensive, or simply too difficult to work around. Yet the average cost of making an accommodation for a disabled employee is just a few hundred pounds/dollars - and organization's can reap the many rewards associated with inclusion:

Improved innovation thanks to the wider perspective you gain by having a more diverse team

Acquiring high-quality staff who are skilled, hardworking and loyal

Improved staff morale

Drawing from the widest pool of talent available

Reduced staff turnover rates overall

Demonstrating fairness in the workplace

There is also growing evidence that improved inclusion leads to increased revenue and profits

Showing customers and other businesses that you are committed to equality

5 Tips for Providing an Inclusive Recruitment Journey

1 **Write inclusive job descriptions**

A job description should use plain language to define the job and the requirements clearly. You should avoid using gender-based language terms as well as industry jargon. Someone from outside your organization should be easily able to understand what is needed.

2 **Expand where you advertise job openings**

Using different places for seeking new employees opens up the chance of recruiting a more diverse population. A great way to extend your candidate search is to simply post your openings on more diverse job boards and social media pages.

3 **Allow for reasonable adjustments**

Check whether the interviewee needs any reasonable adjustments ahead of the interview, then make sure these are actioned and communicated with the candidate. Examples of reasonable adjustments include providing more time to complete assessments and offering an online interview rather than a telephone one so subtitles can be enabled.

Provide inclusive recruitment training

Training for interviewers is one of the best ways to ensure you are providing an inclusive interview experience. It is vital for educating your hiring panel on how to address biases and how to maintain a more objective standpoint. Also, training your interview panel will provide candidates with a better experience.

Diverse interview teams

A diverse hiring panel helps you avoid hiring based on shared biases and help see candidates from different perspectives. It can also make candidates from under-represented groups feel more comfortable performing in front of a panel where they are represented. Additionally, it is also the perfect example of 'practice what you preach' if your organization claims to be committed to D&I.

Inclusive Communications

The Importance of Inclusive Communications

Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand. It is about recognizing that both your internal and external audiences are made up of different people. Making small changes in the way you communicate can have a significant impact on whether everyone can understand your online content.

Your online communications may look great, but you will never achieve optimum results if they aren't accessible to people with varied access needs. Providing inclusive communications ensures your brand connects with the largest possible audience.

Whenever you communicate with your employees or external audience, you are making a statement about the values and ethos of your organization. If your brand communications make part of your audience feel excluded, it will negatively impact the attraction and retention of talent and your brand's overall value.

Integrating inclusion into your communications strategy equips your organization much better for success. This is true across all industries, whether the primary goal of your business is commerce, academia, or recruitment.

How to Address Disability & Accessibility Language

The right way to refer to someone with a disability is a continuous debate. Yet, there are some proactive ways we can address disability and accessibility language that strikes the right balance between accuracy and positivity.

People First Language

People-first language is the most widely accepted language for referring to persons with disabilities. This language type emphasizes the person, not the disability, by placing a reference to the person before the reference to the disability, for example, 'persons with disabilities'.

If in doubt, always ask an individual how they would like to be addressed. People with disabilities have different preferences when referring to their disability. Some people see their disability as an essential part of who they are so may use their disability first.

Addressing Stereotypes

Disability is more common than you think. One billion people worldwide have a disability, making the disabled market the largest minority group in the world. Whether we see it or not, disability is a common part of everyday life, and diversity among communities is the norm. For this reason, people with disabilities should not be referred to as 'inspirational' or 'brave'. These words are patronizing and insinuate that an individual with a disability is 'different' in a negative way.

Avoid labeling people, and don't mention a person's disability if it isn't relevant. Instead, focus on the requirements of individuals and reflect on how you can provide support. That doesn't mean that conversations about disability shouldn't take place at all, however. Talking openly and respectfully about disability-related issues, particularly in the workplace, is a positive step that increases inclusion.

Neurodiversity and Neurodivergent

Neurodiversity refers to variations in the human brain and cognition. For example, sociability, learning, attention, and other mental functions. Individuals are often mistakenly described as 'Neurodiverse'. However, this is not the correct term.

The correct descriptor for an individual is 'Neurodivergent'. The term simply describes a person whose neurology (mind) differs from someone who is neurotypical. It is, however, valid to use the term neurodiversity when referring to a group of people. For example, 'We are a neurodiverse team'.

If in doubt, it's always best practice to ask the individual how they would like to be described to avoid any forms of stereotyping or negative connotations.

Inclusive Multimedia Communications

Visual content is compelling, and it can have a significant impact on how we perceive the brand and content. The types of media you choose to use must be accessible and inclusive to ensure as many people can understand your brand and communications.

Inclusive Imagery

Using inclusive imagery shows people they are acknowledged, understood, and respected. It's not enough to pick photos that encapsulate the idea you're going for. If your images tell the wrong story about the people behind the brand, the people they serve, or the people they want to work for them, website visitors won't feel like your company is for them.

Diverse imagery includes people of different races, gender identities, socio-economic statuses, ages, disabilities, sexual orientation, size, culture, and more.

| Gender | Sexual Orientation | Body Type | Abilities | Age |
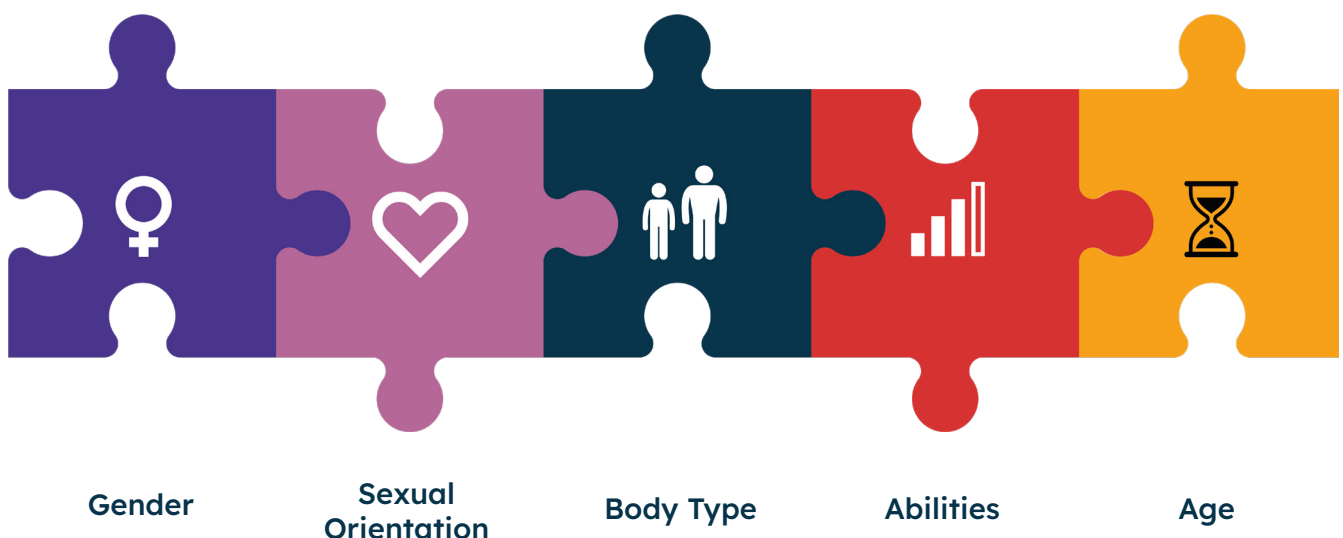
Use ALT Text for Images

ALT text is the short description accompanying each image. If no ALT text is provided, a screen reader would only be able to say "image" or perhaps read the file name. Good ALT text should be specific and convey the content and purpose of each image.

ALT Text Example:

"Football player in all blue uniform about to kick the ball placed on the pitch in a fully attended sports arena."

Video Subtitles

More than 1.5 billion globally live with hearing loss (WHO). Adding written transcriptions to audio content like videos and podcasts are therefore essential in making your media messages inclusive.

Fast Flashing Effects

Videos with flashing or strobing effects or fast-moving graphics can cause seizures, known as photosensitive epilepsy. Photosensitivity can also cause headaches, nausea and dizziness.

Top Tip!

Use Camel Case Hashtags on Social Media

Camel Case capitalization is when you capitalize the first letter of words or phrases in your hashtags. Using Camel Case prevents screen readers from getting confused and helps readers distinguish between different words in your hashtags.

#AccessibilityToMe
#OneWorld
#ScreenReader

How to write an inclusive piece of content

When writing any piece of content, you always consider your audience carefully. To give as many people as possible hassle-free access to your content, you'll need to address language, formatting and structure.

Language:

- Give the page a clear title
- Explain your points clearly
- Compliment abbreviations with the full definition when using the word for the first time

Structure:

- Use Headings properly, H1 tags for titles, and H2-6 tags for headings & subheadings
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Split up bulky text with bullet points
- Ensure you align the text to the left
- Provide full descriptions instead of footnotes

Format:

- Give all links discernible names
- Use dyslexia-friendly fonts – i.e. sans serif fonts like Arial or Helvetica
- Use a minimum text size of 12
- Provide ALT text for all images
- Avoid blocks of capitals or italic text
- Publish in HTML format
- Only use underlining for links

Accessibility Solutions

Recite Me offers a range of on-demand accessibility solutions that support you in conforming to WCAG standards and ensure that your website is user-friendly for individuals with disabilities, situational challenges and language support, through customizable options.

Why Create Inclusive Online Experiences?

In today's world, everything we do is online, from booking holidays and shopping, to looking after finances. Every website user deserves an inclusive online experience to be able to navigate and consume content hassle free.
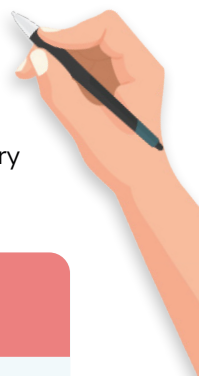
The Right Thing to do

Everyone should have the opportunity to be able to access online content. Make your website inclusive to all by supporting people who are neurodiverse, visually impaired, speak English as a second language or of old age.

The Smart Thing to do

Make your business available to a wider audience and enhance the user experience on your website. Providing accessibility technology increases web traffic, engagement and ultimately leads to more uptake and sales conversions.

The Thing I Must to do

There are several international and regional laws plus many local regulations that stipulate how a website should be designed and built. Avoid negative customer sentiment and possible lawsuits by providing an inclusive experience online.

> "We are delighted to be launching this market-first technology to boots.com, helping customers to customize the site to suit their own needs. The launch of the Recite Me accessibility tools help those customers who find it more challenging to shop online to browse, shop and manage their accounts hassle free."
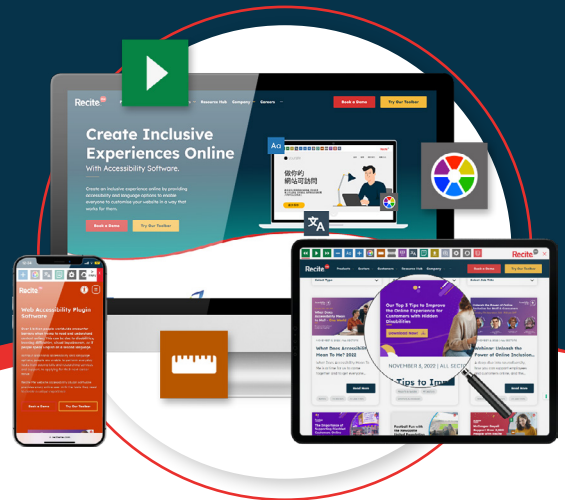
Paula Bobbett,
Director of E-Commerce at Boots UK
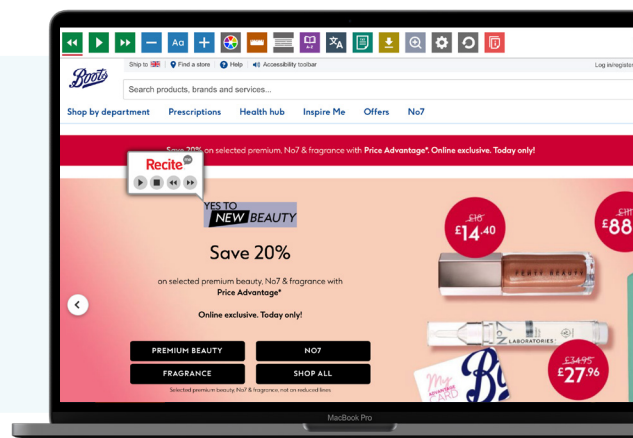
Recite Me Assistive Toolbar

The Recite Me cloud-based assistive toolbar makes your website digitally inclusive by allowing visitors to customize online content so that they can consume it in ways that work best for them.
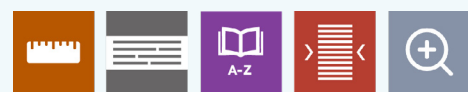

The Recite Me assistive toolbar gives website visitors total control when viewing online content. Our software provides a variety of tools that allow users to create a fully customizable experience by:

Screen Reader

Providing our screen reader will help website visitors to perceive and understand your digital content by reading aloud website text, which can be customized to suit the viewer.

Reading Aids

To simplify use and support your website visitors, the Recite Me web accessibility toolbar provides five main tools; ruler, screen mask, magnifier, margins, and a dictionary.

Styling and Customization

Recite Me assistive technology allows people to change the way a website looks. Users are able to customize the website's color scheme as well as the text, font style, size, color, and spacing.

Translation

Recite Me web accessibility technology quickly and easily translates all your web content into over 100 languages, including 65 text-to-speech voices.

Recite Me Toolbar Big Data

In the last 12 months, **over 5 million people** used the Recite Me toolbar to enhance their online experience.

At the beginning of 2022, Recite Me saw toolbar usage climb from 340,000 users per month to **500,000 users**.

To bridge the gap between accessibility and inclusion, many organizations now offer assistive technology to enable visitors to customize their online experience.

5 million people viewed over 30 million websites in a way that works best for their individual needs. On average, people viewed 6.11 web pages during their inclusive journey online. This is more than double the internet average pages viewed per session of 2.8.
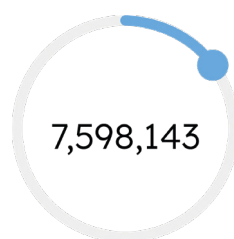
12 Months Overview

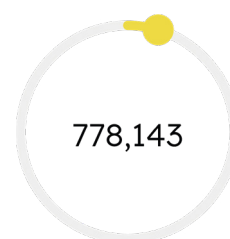In line with the drastic shift towards online, we noticed a significant increase in the demand for inclusive websites.

5,036,513 Toolbar launches	**30,770,524** Pages made inclusive	**6.11** Pages viewed per session
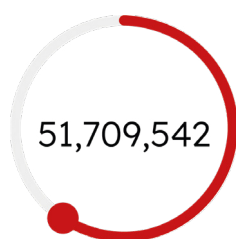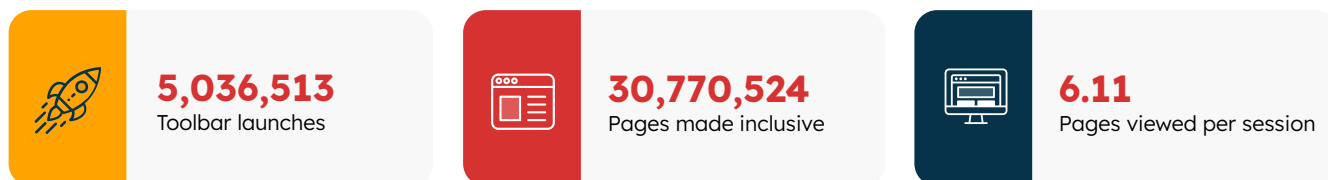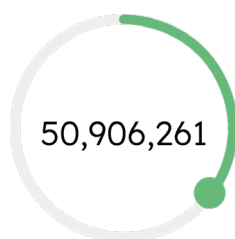
51,709,542	50,906,261	7,598,143	778,143
Screen Reader Launches	**Pages Translated**	**Styling Changes Made**	**Reading Aids Utilized**

Language	Clicks	Language	Clicks	Options	Clicks	Aids	Clicks
English	47,701,680	English Trad	8,576,036	Font Size 90%	427,295	Textmode	219,175
Danish	545,095	English US	3,131,165	Font Size 110%	403,024	Dictionary	104,028
French	529,501	Spanish	1,880,537	BKGD-color: R	355,375	Ruler	87,687
EN-AU	332,968	French	1,723,002	Screenmask-color: R	354,969	Screenmask	74,215
Audio DL	3,517	Welsh	591,285	Link-color: Reset	353,975	Magnifier	61,460

Believing in Accessibility for All

Website Accessibility WCAG Checker

Website accessibility and compliance made simple. Create a website that is built with accessibility in mind and to WCAG industry standards, with the help of the Recite Me Accessibility Checker.

Let's create a website that is accessible to everyone!

We all know that our websites need to be built to an accessible standard. But where do you start on this journey, how do you make our websites accessible, how do we make them compliant?

The world of accessibility and making your website compliant with a law or standard can be a confusing and daunting subject for many. The Recite Me Accessibility Checker is changing the way we address WCAG issues on our websites. The key is to simplify the process and tasks while supporting you with expert knowledge. Together you'll become an accessibility hero in no time!

Scan

Your accessibility journey starts here with a scan of your website covering WCAG 2.1 success criteria encompassing:

• Site performance overview
• Accessibility scoring
• Findings per rating
• Error breakdown

The scan report includes an overview of errors, the locations of errors, and a comprehensive list of actionable errors to fix and check.
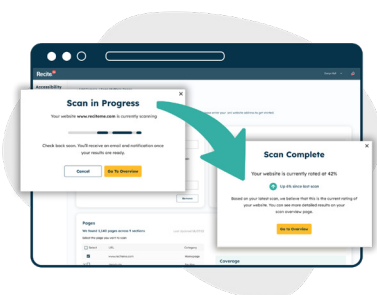
Fix and Check

Our software identifies areas of non-compliance and shows you what to fix and check and in what order for the biggest improvement against your efforts, investment, and time. Fixes are confirmed fails identified via an automated scan and checks are potential errors that a human needs to verify. For example, a computer can identify if an image on a website has an alt-tag attribute or not. However, human eye is needed to make sure that the alt tag text describes the image.

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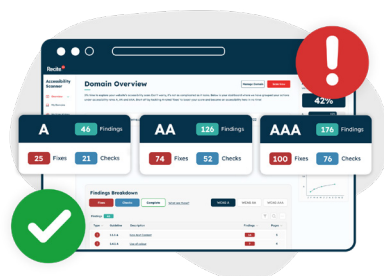
Track

Our compliance tracking service helps you manage your web accessibility improvements over time, make the most effective changes in the right order, and manage your fix queue. You can examine various elements of WCAG compliance by exploring different scans and download your website's accessibility score and report to track your positive journey.

Share

We give you all of the tools needed to demonstrate your commitment to developing an accessible website. You can share your accessibility report and score to showcase your digital inclusion goals and achievements via:

- Custom monthly reporting
- Ongoing engagement analysis
- Accessibility scoring
- Downloadable fix lists
- Access to the Recite Me Hub which features materials highlighting the depth of information behind your website's scan and results. Resources include FAQs, full breakdowns of testing methodologies, and 'how to' videos.

Start Your Web Accessibility Compliance Journey Today

Get to work on your online inclusion strategy today by working your way through these action points:

1. Contact our team for more advice about website compliance laws and regulations.
2. Learn more about the Recite Me Web Accessibility Checker.
3. Run a free check of your website for WCAG 2.1 AA compliance.
4. Schedule a free demonstration of our accessibility checker or assistive toolbar.

Believing in Accessibility for All
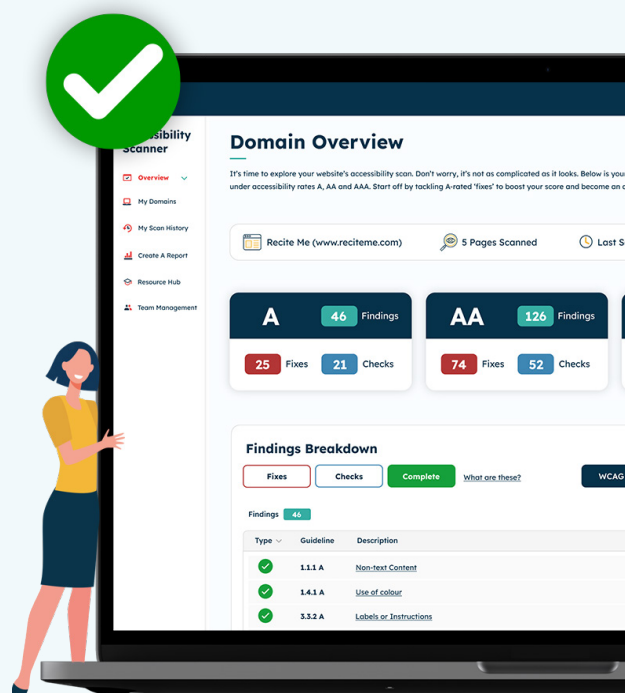
Takeaway and Actions

As we highlighted at the beginning of this toolkit, the path to digital inclusion is a journey. There are many different routes you can take to get there, and the first steps can often be the most daunting.

Not sure where to begin? Here are our top 5 takeaways and actions to help you on your digital inclusion journey.

1 Increase revenue and widen your audience

According to the ClickAway Pound report, 71% of consumers with disabilities click away from websites they find difficult to use, and 82% would spend more money if there were fewer barriers.

The value of 'click away' spent on barrier-free competitor sites is estimated to be around $8 trillion/£6.7 trillion annually. So, how do you attract and support 1 in every 5 people with physical, visual, auditory, cognitive, or neurological disabilities?

How do we attract and support diverse website visitors?
Creating an inclusive website will attract and support the 20% of the population who encounter online challenges. Providing an online platform that can be customized to suit individual needs allows users to understand the information in a unique barrier-free way.

Providing online information for a diverse range of people doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. Utilizing Assistive Technology is a cost-effective way of providing tools to support people with disabilities, learning difficulties, visual impairments, and those who speak English as a second language.

2 Enhance your brand reputation

How potential customers perceive your brand is an essential consideration in them choosing you over your competitor. Research shows that consumers favor brands that care about helping others. In a world where customers are increasingly value-driven, companies that actively promote inclusivity will gain a more positive brand identity. In short, if your company isn't viewed as being inclusive, your products and services will appear less authentic.

Creating an inclusive marketing message

Businesses with accessible websites demonstrate leadership by example. Your website is your shop window and should be at the forefront of your 'inclusive first' approach, providing everyone with content they can absorb in unique ways through inclusive tools and an accessible build.

You can further extend your inclusive practices by taking an omnichannel approach. By applying accessibility considerations to all online platforms, including social media profiles and customer service portals, you will diversify your content and provide a richer online experience for all your customers.

3 Attract and retain the best talent for your teams

One of the fundamental challenges the recruitment industry faces is taking into account the many and varied barriers that candidates face online. According to a RIDI (Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative) survey, only 1 in 3 Job seekers think online job applications are suitably accessible for disabled people, and as many as 75% of disabled job seekers feel their condition impacts their job search. To attract candidates from the widest pool of talent, offering equal opportunities and an inclusive candidate journey is essential.

Attract and support hidden talent

To tap into the biggest talent pool, you need an inclusive recruitment process from discovery and attraction through to application, onboarding, and beyond. Looking for individuals who best conform to your organization leads to bias and a homogeneous culture. By seeking out individuals with different traits and qualities, you create an inclusive culture while simultaneously developing more talented and innovative teams.

To attract the widest and most diverse pool of talent, you'll need to ensure leadership commitment from the top down, commit to making adjustments to onboarding and training programs, and continually work on collecting data to help you identify and action further diversity and inclusion opportunities. To effectively measure and continue to make progress, you'll need to set up metrics and inclusion KPIs so you can make data-driven, informed decisions based on real-world evidence.

4 Improve your website's performance

Making online content easier to read, focus on, and understand is the right thing to do, and providing more inclusive online experiences allows everyone to interact with your brand. Positive online experiences lead to better user engagement, lower bounce rates, longer website journeys, and improved conversion rates. Plus, accessibility factors are also becoming more and more prevalent in Google ranking algorithms, and most of the most common issues are easy and inexpensive to fix.

Adapt your website usability and build

Complying with the Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) is key to building an accessible website that champions all users and supports the use of 3rd party accessibility tools and software. Providing assistive technology allows users to overcome barriers by interacting with your content and digesting it in the way that works best for them. On-page translation and text-to-speech options make your website accessible for people who don't speak or read English as a first language.

5 Drive diversity and inclusive culture in your business

Statistics show that increased diversity results in more innovative teams. According to the Boston Consulting Group, companies with diverse management teams generate 19% more revenue than their less diverse counterparts. Furthermore, Accenture reports that companies that embrace best practices for employing and supporting people with disabilities see profit margin increases of over 30%. However, outcomes from diverse workforces go far beyond revenues and profit alone. Data shows diverse workplaces have lower staff turnover rates and better morale.

Create an inclusive culture in the workplace

To champion an inclusive culture and create a sense of belonging, its' essential that everyone's voice can be heard. Start by regularly gathering employee feedback across all organizational levels so you can continually improve and evolve. Offer multiple ways for employees to provide feedback, and ensure your internal communications are inclusive. By listening to the needs of employees, you can act on the findings, rather than forming a plan based on assumptions.

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