BASDA
The Voice of UK Business Software

www.basda.org

A Guide to Accessibility and Inclusive Design

Intended audience – This guide is aimed at both commercial and technical owners along with those responsible for supporting and executing such strategies, including marketing, product management, business/systems analysis, product architecture, product development and product strategy.

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In a perfect world all businesses would have embedded accessibility and inclusive design, be actively promoting its importance and creating physical and digital products that can be utilised by everyone. Unfortunately, this is not the case – yet.

Whilst many businesses are compliant with The Equality Act 2010 in terms of diversity and inclusion within their workforce and culture, they have yet to embrace it fully within their software products and other digital assets.

A lack of knowledge, understanding and support are often barriers in prioritising accessibility and inclusive design, resulting ultimately in isolating a significant proportion of the population not only in the UK but also potential global customers and their end users.

The Purple Pound refers to the spending power of disabled households which is defined as a household in which at least one of the members have reported a disability. The Purple Pound equates to £274bn a year to the UK economy but yet very few businesses have direct strategies to tap into this consumer market.

With driving forces like **The Valuable 500** and **#WeThe15** bringing the importance of accessibility and inclusive design to the forefront more than ever before, now is the time for all businesses (including business software development businesses) to act and get on board this journey to make it a more inclusive world.

Designing software products that are fully accessible is the key contribution that you can make. But more than that, understanding how, as a business, you can develop and promote a culture that embraces digital accessibility and inclusivity will bring potentially vast long-term benefits to your end customer as well as your organisation.

This guide will provide early adopter guidance on:

- Creating a business case to spearhead accessibility within your own business and future products (including website).
- Considerations that a business should take and the steps required to understand accessibility and inclusive design.
- What inclusive design involves and why it is important for all products and **all users**.
- Identifying and obtaining available support and resources to help your business on its accessibility and inclusive design journey.

Those who address inclusive design and so accessibility report a

35%

UPLIFT in **USABILITY** of their products **FOR ALL**.[5]

Disclaimer: We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. We will always make every attempt to ensure any PDFs or Word documents are accessible or will use alternate accessible formats. However, as a PDF document, this may not be fully accessible across all screen readers.

Why businesses should embrace inclusive design

Before delving into tips to help you understand accessibility and inclusive design for your business and a process to help incorporate accessibility, we are first examining the rationale behind why all businesses should invest in accessibility.

Although accessibility and inclusivity may already be considered in your business it possibly isn't at the forefront. Investing time, assets and capital into making accessibility a priority on your business agenda requires the development of a business case to help leadership and decision-makers understand the benefits and the risks of not addressing it as an initiative.

It is your responsibility to identify the pros and cons but the question you should really be asking yourself isn't, **can you afford to do it**, but **can you afford not to**, especially when the benefits can include:

- Driving innovation.
- Extending market reach.
- Minimising legal risk.
- Attracting talent.
- Increasing revenue and/or profits.
- Improving user experience including those without any accessibility issues.
- Increasing productivity.
- Demonstrating your ESG (Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance) commitment.
- Enhancing your brand.

15%

of the world's population is disabled[1]

The Purple Pound is worth over

£274 billion

a year in the UK alone[1]

75%

of disabled people say UK businesses digital products and services are not designed well enough for them.[1]

70%

of users will click away from a website which is inaccessible. The click-away-pound is estimated at a £17.1 billion loss for businesses.[2]

When developing your own business case for accessibility, the model on the next page identifies three clear categories of benefit: Commercial, Legal and Moral/Ethical.[6]

Commercial

- Boost profits – companies excelling at diversity and inclusive design are twice as likely to outperform competitors.
- Appeal to the broadest demographic possible.
- Meet the needs of a post-COVID hybrid/flexible working world.
- Encourage loyalty – customers stay with businesses and products that adapt with their lives.
- Attract new and untapped markets – customers migrate to easy to use, flexible products.
- Keep users in the journey – 70% of users abandon inaccessible sites (est £17bn loss).
- Increase in-product purchases – 86% of users would spend more with less barriers.
- Avoid resource intensive exceptions.
- Use inclusive design as a marketing tool.
- Avoid reputational damage.
- Attract great talent.
- Keep pace with competition and changing technologies.
- Being inclusive will also capture other demographics such as:
  - 30% of population with below average English/Maths skills.
  - 8% of population which don't have English as their first language.
  - 4.5% of the population are colour blind (1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women).

Legal

- Mitigate chance of legal action by complying with legislation. Notably:
  - **Equality Act 2010** applies to online and physical services. Section 20 requires service providers to 'take such steps as is reasonable' to ensure equal experience.
  - Equality and Human Rights Commission **Statutory Code of Practice** for "Services, public functions and associations" defines web products as services.
  - **The Public Sector Accessibility Regulations 2018** – impacts public sector only for now but as third party software increasingly replaces public sector functions could be expanded
  - HMRC Terms of Use requires web products to be built to at least **Web Content Accessibility Guidance** (WCAG 2.1) AA standard.

Real world legal action examples include:

- USA: UsableNet Inc. study found digital accessibility lawsuits up 20% 2020 from 2019.
- UK: Royal National Institute for the Blind two actions against companies not complying with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines – both settled.

Moral/Ethical

- Provide services that meet all customers needs.
- Be an advocate for equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Give all your users a voice (only 8% of users report poor experience).
- Build reputation – customer loyalty through ethical policy growing trend (halo effect).
- Boost brand image and loyalty.
- Help to embed a permanent cultural shift within the software industry.

"Value everybody, exclude nobody"

A business case will help you qualify and quantify the benefits of accessibility and inclusive design. As more businesses (and your competition) prioritise this on their agenda and product development cycle, the early adopters will reap the benefits as well as mitigate the potential legal and competition risk factors.

Understanding accessibility and inclusive design for your business

Identifying where a business should start can be the most challenging step. The following will help map out a path to how a business can incorporate accessibility and inclusive design into day-to-day processes:

Awareness and understanding

Ensure that the key stakeholders understand what accessibility is, why it is important and what position your business is currently at on this journey. **The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** covers a wide range of recommendations for making digital content more accessible and helps businesses understand how to achieve accessibility and inclusive design.

The Digital Accessibility Maturity Model (DAMM)[3] effectively allows a business to self assess where they are with regards to accessibility at a current point in time and provides a clear indication on how to move forward.

The DAMM model consists of a 5 x 5 grid with five dimensions:

- **Vision** – Does the business have a clearly stated vision about why and how it is adopting best practice in accessibility and inclusive design?
- **Leadership** – Is the business committed to investing in the people and resources needed to deliver its vision?
- **Processes** – Are accessibility and inclusive design activities embedded in every stage of the project development lifecycle?
- **Capability** – Does the business have the internal skills and resources to deliver its vision?
- **Procurement** – Does the business ensure that every purchasing decision contributes to its vision?

All of these dimensions are then ranked by the five levels:

- Level 1 – Informal
- Level 2 – Defined
- Level 3 – Repeatable
- Level 4 – Managed
- Level 5 – Optimal

Within each dimension a business can detail what activity they have at each level. See model on page 5.

The Digital Accessibility Maturity Model (DAMM)

Level 1 – INFORMAL

- Lack of policies and guidance on inclusive procurement.
- Minimal steps taken to ensure accessible procurement – legal compliance assumed.
- No staff trained on how to select accessible supply partners.

Level 2 – DEFINED

- Guidance provided on how to meet accessibility requirements in procurement processes.
- Accessibility requirements applied to procurement on an ad hoc basis.
- Lead staff trained on how to select accessible supply partners.

Level 3 – REPEATABLE

- Robust procurement process in use and mandated.
- Require executive sign-off for any non-compliant procurement.

Level 4 – MANAGED

- Procurement decisions routinely also include diverse user input in selecting a product/service.
- On-going monitoring of remaining levels of non-compliance within internal systems (and impact on employees) and external products (and associated cost/risk).
- Work with partners/suppliers to embed compliance in their products.

Level 5 – OPTIMAL

- Provide diverse user feedback to partner/suppliers to achieve best practice.
- Work together with partners/suppliers to promote best practice externally.

Leadership buy-in

Caroline Casey, Founder of The Valuable 500 has said *"If we do not have leaders at the top of their businesses, advocating and speaking to this as a strategic business imperative, it's not going to get done."*[4]

The formation of The Valuable 500 is an ideal example of how important leadership buy-in will ensure businesses embrace accessibility and inclusivity at all levels.

The influence of those companies who have committed to The Valuable 500 can be reflected in the influence that leadership and senior management can have in any business.

As a business it is important to understand that adding accessibility to your agenda may not always start at the top, for example, you may have an individual or a team who become your accessibility champions.

Champions will be the drivers of the process and be encouraged to bring any plans, strategies, ideas and implementation initiatives to the leadership team. However, without leadership buy-in you cannot guarantee that accessibility will filter through every aspect of a business whether that be internal culture, recruitment, products or online.

Planning and processes

By fully embracing the DAMM model, businesses can document a high-level map and understanding of the steps required to achieve individual accessibility goals. Every business may have a different goal and different timelines to achieve these goals. It is also key to consider the legal requirements your business has which we detailed above in our example business case.

Things to consider are:

- Identify what internal processes need to change to ensure that everyone is working to the same standards?
- Audit existing software products to understand whether it is commercially viable to retrofit them to bring them in line with accessibility standards or whether they should be left, and your business builds inclusive design into future releases and all new product software.
- Decide w hat education is needed across across your business to ensure that processes and implementation strategies are fully understood and achieved?

Education

For many, accessible and inclusive design can completely disrupt and change a way that someone works or approaches a project. To expect someone to implement inclusive design overnight is impossible and requires upskilling and training to ensure that no matter where you are in a design process or what your position is within a business, you have the correct knowledge and skills to implement the required activity in a compliant manner.

Examples of training could include:

- Introductions to accessibility.
- How accessibility benefits your business.
- Accessible design for different roles e.g. product developers, marketers, software developers.
- How to write accessible content.

Investing in knowledge and bringing everyone on the same journey will allow your business to develop a culture which emphasises the importance of inclusive design to enhance your product reach and be actively used by as many people as possible.

"You don't know your users because you don't give them a voice."
ASSISTED NEEDS WORKING GROUP, HMRC

Implementation

At this stage, a business should be ready to begin implementing their strategy, plans, processes and goals to achieve their accessibility aims.

This could include:

- Ongoing upskilling and building expertise.
- Integrating goals into policy framework so that accessibility is built into every aspect of your business.
- Assigning and aligning your corporate goals with individual objectives and responsibilities across your business. Tracking the progress of these tasks will also allow you to identify when further support is needed.
- Evaluating and re-evaluating your progress at multiple stages along implementation to allow you to review progress and identify where changes and improvements can be made. Regular tracking can help you recognise areas where fixing issues can reduce risk and cost at an early stage.
- Tracking, reporting and communicating your progress, not only with senior leadership but business wide. Sharing the good and bad can maintain awareness and support.

Why inclusive design benefits all

It is still a misconception that accessible and inclusive design is purely to benefit those with a disability. Many impairments are not visible nor are they permanent.

The British Standards Institute (2005) defines inclusive design as *"The design of mainstream products and/or services that are accessible to, and usable by, as many people as reasonably possible, on a global basis, in a wide variety of situations and to the greatest extent possible without the need for special adaptation or specialised design."*

Inclusive design aims to ensure that products or services are useful, easy to use and engaging to as many people as possible. Someone trying to use their mobile phone with one hand, working in a loud busy office or working on a device affected by glare from sunshine will all benefit from considerations taken from inclusive design.

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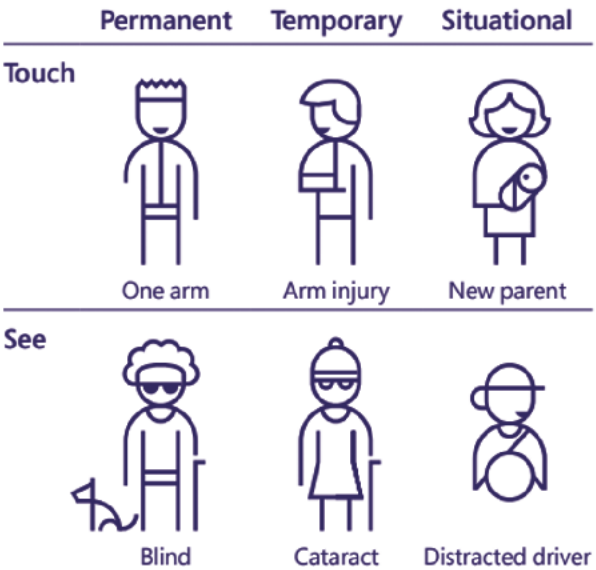


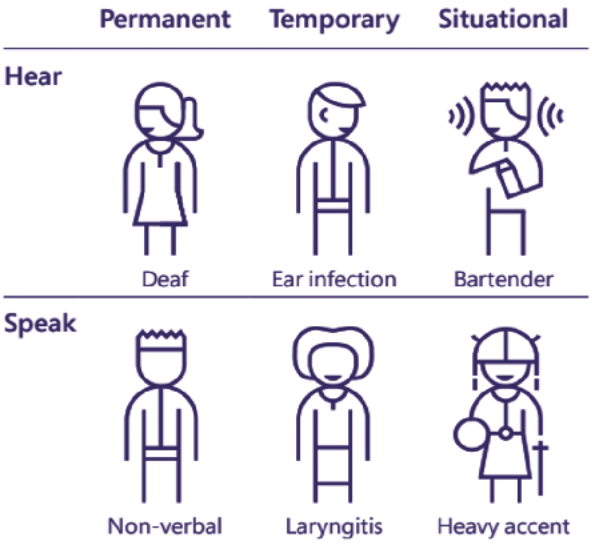


Image: Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit

When scoping out your business case for accessibility and inclusivity, audits and user testing will provide you with valuable data and insight into how your customer service, software, website, apps and other products perform in real time. Any user testing should utilise a diverse audience with varying scenario-based questions to produce an accurate gauge of performance of your products from an accessibility and inclusivity standpoint.

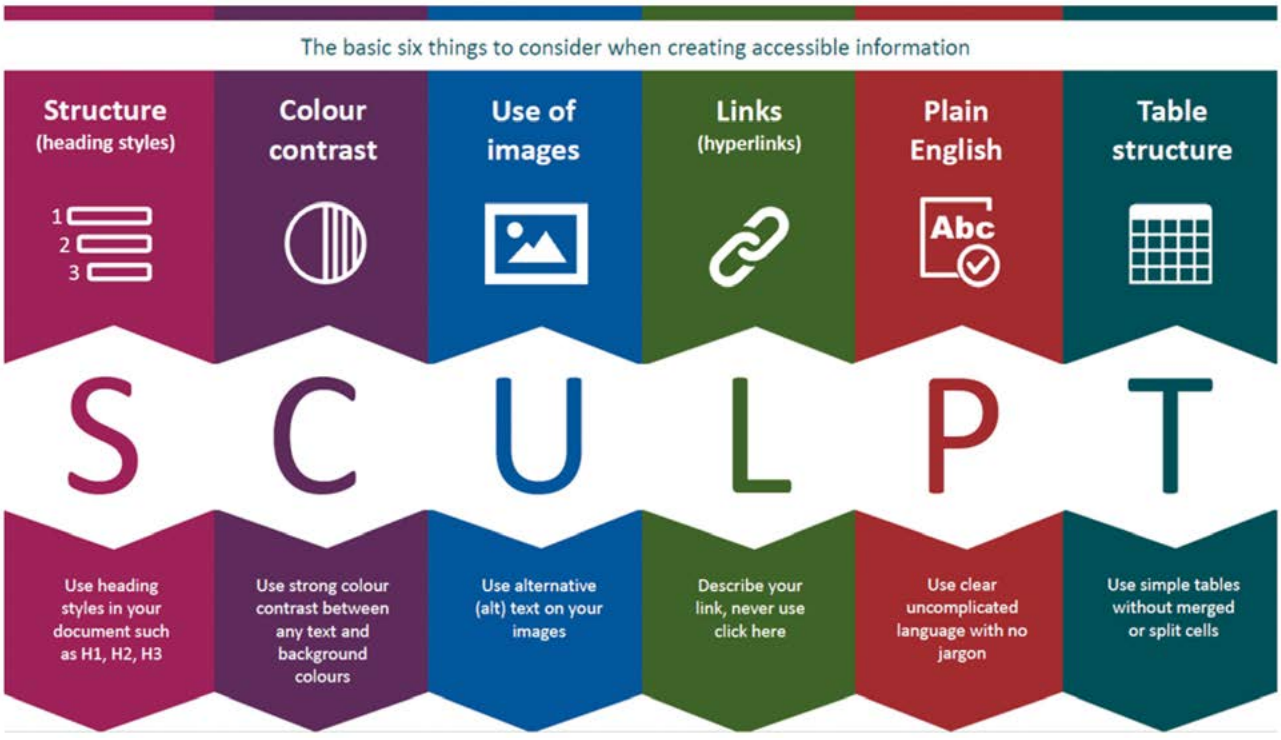
Failing to correctly understand your target audience can result in a product or service that can cause unnecessary frustration and exclusion, which in turn can put commercial success at risk. Ultimately a product that is designed with inclusivity in mind will allow you to focus marketing activity on a larger target audience and stand out from the competition.

With this in mind, it may be impossible or not commercially viable to retrofit existing products to bring them up to meet accessibility standards. If this is the case your focus should be on future software releases and advancing products that will eventually replace those that have not been developed with inclusive design in mind.

Six things to consider when creating accessible information

The WCAG 2.1 Guidelines break down every requirement to achieve accessibility at level A, AA and AAA. As a minimum, business should be aiming to achieve an AA standard. The guidelines are incredibly detailed, but the simple acronym 'SCULPT' can offer a clear process to follow when getting started creating accessible information.

SCULPT came from research conducted by **Worcestershire County Council**. The aim of the acronym is to provide a beginners guidance framework to support workforces with the basics that should be included in everyday inclusive design. It covers key headings of – Structure, Colour Contrast, Use of Images, Links, Plain English and Table Structure.



It is important to recognise that the aim of SCULPT is to provide something easy for people to remember and use as a guide to creating and diseminating accessible information. One of the things hindering the uptake of accessibility within businesses is the idea it is going to be time-consuming and complicated no matter what. SCULPT can be used to educate anyone within a business to meet some basic accessibility requirements, essentially making accessibility more accessible.

How to get more support

As a BASDA member join the Ability Specialist Interest Group which amongst many benefits, brings access to industry experts committed to this cause. For more information and to explore this further, please contact **marketing@basda.org**. If you are not a BASDA member, but this guide has inspired you to drive forward on our business's accessibility journey, take a look at the following resources and contact these providers who can help support you with further guidance and training.

Glossary

1 https://bighack.org/the-business-case-for-inclusive-design-big-hack-study-research-digital-accessibility/

2 http://www.clickawaypound.com/downloads/cap19final0502.pdf

3 Digital Accessibility Maturity Model (DAMM) attributed to AbilityNet

4 Building a Business Case for Digital Accessibility – July 2021 – attributed to AbilityNet

5 Attributed to AbilityNet

6 Based on HMRC's presentation at BASDA Summit 2021

HMRC digital Accessibility

HM Government – Public Services Accessible

Making your service accessible: an introduction

Making Online Public Services Accessible

Sample Accessibility Statement for Public Sector Websites

Equality Act 2010

The Public Sector Accessibility Regulations 2018

Statutory Code of Practice

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2

WCAG 2.2 quick reference guide

Web Accessibility Easy Checks

EqualWeb Accessibility Checker Chrome Extension

AbilityNet

All Things Web®

WebAIM Contrast Checker

Web Accessibility First Aid: Approaches for Interim Repairs

SCULPT for Accessibility

BASDA's commitment

BASDA started this journey in autumn of 2020 by dedicating an annual summit session solely to this topic and as a result of collective interest, in early 2021 it launched a dedicated Ability Specialist Interest Group and our goal is to bring our members with us.

The aim is to demonstrate BASDA's commitment to a broader inclusivity agenda across the wider software industry and to spearhead 'Ability' as one tangible delivery for members' solutions - to the benefit of all businesses and citizens across the private and public sectors who consume such products and services.

We recognise that a collaborative approach, working with members and specialists in the industry, will help create awareness, understanding and a structured way forward that will help us all embed best practice regarding 'ability' across our respective businesses.

Prepared on behalf of BASDA by the Ability Specialist Interest Group and our member AbilityNet.

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