

Improving the accessibility of your website or digital workplace

The most important thing to bear in mind when it comes to designing something is to always have your users in mind. It doesn't matter how good your product or service is if your target audience have a terrible experience when trying to use your online platforms.

You need to ask yourself several questions. Who are your users? What requirements do they have? What would they class as a pleasurable and positive experience? The answers may seem obvious, however, so many businesses and organisations miss the mark.



For example, some of your users may be partially or fully blind. There are a few different but very important things to consider. They are likely to use a screen reader, therefore, you want to make sure that all of your images have accurate alt text and that all videos have transcripts. Furthermore, always remember to write descriptive titles, links and headings instead of generic labels such as 'click here'.

On the flip side of this, some users will be fully sighted but may not be able to hear. This means that providing the option of subtitles on videos or audio is vital.

It's important to make sure that the layout of your sites are logical and linear, rather than cluttered and unclear. Also, never force your users to only use their

mouse. It's a must that they are able to navigate using just their keyboard. If you are evaluating how accessible your current website or digital workplace is, try out a screen reader for yourself. Or, you could try out navigating your site using just the keyboard.

You'll notice that some of the things mentioned cross over into other areas. For example, it's not just visually impaired people that will benefit from clear and descriptive titles and headings, it's everyone! You want all users to have a smooth experience.

When it comes to text, size matters! Small text and/or difficult to read fonts are extremely off putting. Most people will simply leave your site rather than battle to understand it.

The same mentality applies to colours. You don't want to just guess what works and what doesn't. You can use a free contrast checker such as [Webaim colour contrast checker](#) to help you, the ideal contrast is 4:5:1.

Another thing that improves user experience is if they feel comfortable.

This can be achieved in many ways:

- Having large clickable areas rather than tiny ones that demand precision is often seen as the better choice
- Provide users with enough time to complete an action
- Always provide clear and comforting instructions and explanations to reduce any potential worries
- Offer shortcuts such as 'find address'
- Use the numbers or bullets provided in your web editor to make clear lists that avoid confusion

If you want to put your site to the test, you can download 'Wave'. It's a Google Chrome extension that identifies any errors to do with features, alerts or semantics. Not only does it recognise issues, but it also provides an explanation as to why there is a problem and how to solve it.

Following these simple guidelines can help you to ensure that you provide your users with a positive and highly accessible experience.