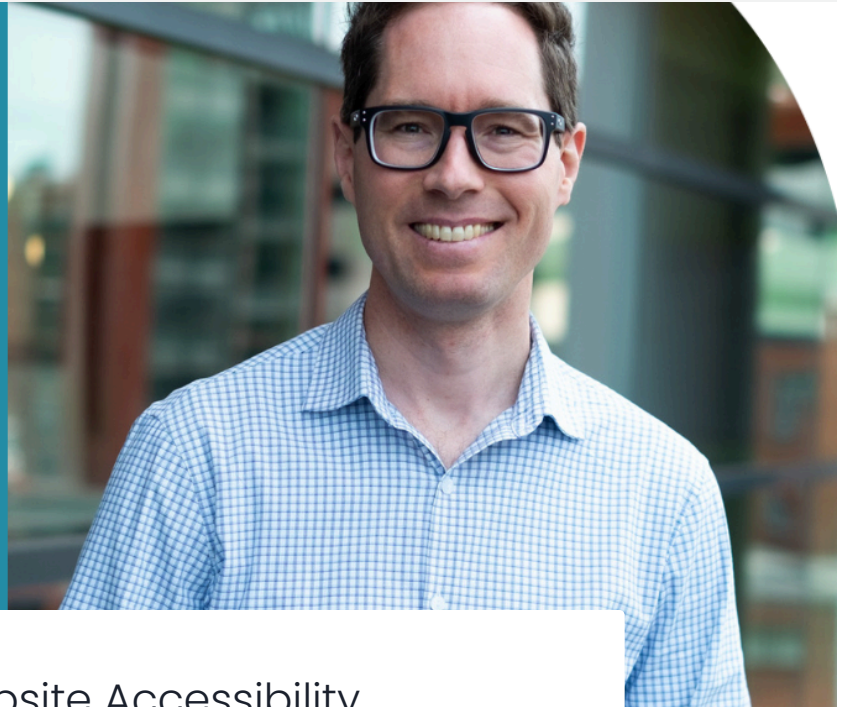




Building a More Inclusive Internet

with iFactory's
Jeremy Perkins



WEB DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Understanding Website Accessibility

By Ariane Komyati • February 22, 2024

If you want your website to effectively reach and serve everyone, it is critical to understand the importance of accessibility. iFactory's Director of UX and Design Jeremy Perkins, our resident expert on web accessibility, recently shared his insights on what it means to build a more inclusive website. Here are seven key takeaways.

Who benefits from website accessibility?

All of us do. Website accessibility particularly benefits individuals with disabilities such as blindness, deafness, deaf-blindness, color blindness, low vision, and susceptibility to seizures. These benefits extend to individuals over the age of 65, since aging often results in declining sensory abilities.

Individuals with temporary or situational disabilities also benefit. Consider someone with a broken arm who struggles to use a mouse or trackpad, or an individual who has misplaced their glasses and finds it challenging to read small text. A person in a noisy environment may have difficulty hearing audio, while those in direct sunlight may struggle to read low-contrast text.

Why does accessibility matter?

It ensures that no one is left behind when accessing products or services online. Whether it's captioned videos or voice browsing, nearly all of us incorporate accessibility features into our daily routines. When your business prioritizes accessibility, you demonstrate your commitment to inclusivity and customer satisfaction.

How is accessibility good for business?



Being more accessible creates a better business and can reach more customers. Since accessibility features offer numerous SEO advantages, they can help make you more discoverable.

Integrating video captions, descriptive link text, alternative text for images, clear headings, and valid HTML not only enhances accessibility but also provides semantic cues about your website's content.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technologies are products, equipment, and systems designed to improve learning, productivity, and daily activities for individuals with disabilities. Examples include screen readers, braille displays, screen magnifiers, mouth sticks, mounted displays, and voice recognition systems. Users should be able to access the web in the way that is most comfortable to them. "We are not just meeting specific needs, but aiming for maximum flexibility," Perkins explained.

How can I make my website more accessible?

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG, is an internationally recognized set of guidelines for improving web accessibility. WCAG has four major accessibility principles:

Perceivable

Content must be detectable to users' senses. This includes providing alternative text for audio and video, ensuring sufficient contrast for text and graphics, avoiding reliance on color alone to convey information, and having text that can be resized without losing content or functionality.

Operable

All users can effectively navigate a website. Content must be compatible with both keyboard and pointer-based devices, so users can stop or hide moving content. Pages must be appropriately titled.

Understandable

Text must be clear and readable, so users can process the information in front of them and understand how to use/navigate the website.

Robust

Code adheres to standards and is compatible with a variety of browsers and assistive technologies.

Am I required to make my website accessible?

Yes -- it's the law! The Rehabilitation Act mandates that "all electronic information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities." In [2023](#), over 4,500 web accessibility-related digital lawsuits were filed, with e-commerce websites receiving a majority of the claims.

How do I test the accessibility of my website?



Accessibility testing tools Perkins suggested include:

- [WAVE](#): WAVE is a suite of evaluation tools designed to help creators enhance the accessibility of their web content. It can pinpoint numerous accessibility issues and WCAG errors and facilitate human evaluation of web content.
- [AXE](#): AXE is an accessibility checker for developers, testers, and designers in Chrome.
- [SITEIMPROVE](#): SiteImprove is a paid service that can check for accessibility across an entire website.

Perkins pointed out that 70–80% of accessibility failures cannot be automatically detected. Unmarked headings, poor alternative text, non-descriptive links, and other website flaws are often overlooked, so it’s important to have a deeper understanding of accessibility. Perkins explained that many accessibility failures occur at the code level, so it’s critical for development teams to be knowledgeable about WCAG. Listening to a screen reader and testing your website with real users are also great ways to test the accessibility of your website.

“At [iFactory](#), we offer a variety of services, including strategy and discovery, user experience, SEO, product design, custom development, and content strategy,” explained Perkins. “Everything we do, we try to infuse web accessible thinking into our process — from design, to UX, to development.”

You can listen to Perkins talk about building a more inclusive internet [in this video](#).

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