

Building **better**, more **accessible** websites & digital spaces

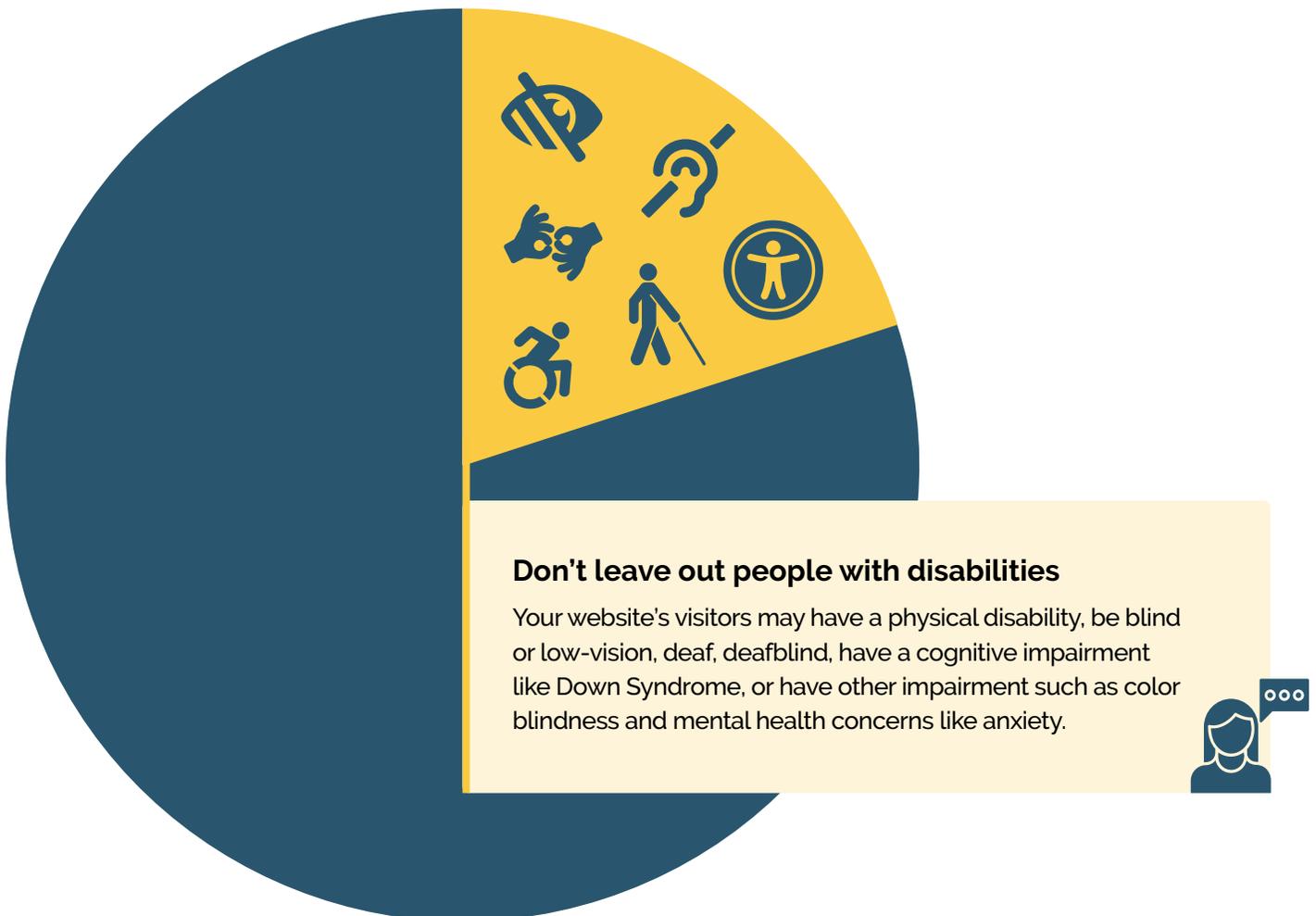
How to make your website ADA compliant, while creating a better, more inclusive experience. For everyone.



An issue larger than you think

You've certainly heard of ADA compliance, but did you know that in addition to your physical place of business, it also applies to your website and digital presence as well?

If it's news to you that the Americans with Disabilities Act has been interpreted by courts to apply to digital spaces and places of business as well, it will be comforting to you to know there are an abundance of recommendations and compliance guidelines for making your website not just user-friendly, but accessible to the **1 in 5 Americans with disabilities**.



Why should your website be accessible?

The same courts who have ruled the ADA applies to digital spaces all turn to the same set of recommendations, which ensure your business is doing everything it can to meet compliance.

Making your website compliant doesn't just reduce liabilities for your business, it also creates a web presence that is easier to use, appeals to search engines (meaning your website may rank higher!) and best of all, broadens your audience and **makes your website a better experience for everyone.**

Think of your website just like a physical place of business (*And the U.S. Judiciary system has ruled you should*). You shouldn't feel compelled to make your website accessible because you feel it is something you **MUST** do. You should want to make your website accessible for your clients, visitors and employees. You want them to feel welcome and to receive the information you have to share with them in the most clear and effective ways possible.

20% of the population has some form of disability that prevents them from experiencing your website the way you intended. A poorly coded website may cause adaptive technologies to have issues interpreting content, or even fail to work properly altogether. This risks conveying the wrong messages to your audience.

Adaptive technologies

People with disabilities use many adaptive technologies (specialized hardware and software) to access the web and its contents. This can include screen reader programs, joysticks, alternative keyboards, and refreshable braille outputs, like the one shown here.





So where do you start?

There's always more you could be doing to make your site compliant, but how do you know where to begin?

How do you judge when you've done enough?

And how do you know if it is working?

If you are asking yourself these questions, it's probably time to seek a professional. Look to a firm that is experienced in marketing and development and that has both studied and executed ADA compliance projects effectively.

Working with a firm will ensure you are providing a human-centered user experience and necessary depth to your auditing process.

Don't leave humans out of the process

Get a team of real people behind you!

While automated tools do exist to provide you with a surface-level overview of what your site may be missing, the reality is **only about 50% of the accessibility criteria can be found with automated checkers.**

Working with a team of professionals gives you a partner that does more than identify the areas that need to be addressed.

A team, like the one at Lion + Panda, can navigate your organization through the evolving compliance guidelines, and keep you ahead of the recommendations, so you aren't in a position to always be playing catch up. Instead, your website can set the standard, so compliance is catching up with you and not the other way around.



Accessibility Guidelines

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Accessibility Guidelines

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Automatic scans miss 50% of issues!

Free or pay scans the use AI to find accessibility issues on your site can only test for half of the guidelines. The other half need human eyes and practical judgment.



5 things to know about compliance.

Navigating the road of website compliance has its fair share of swerves, making it difficult journey to undertake. The guidelines are complex, yet flexible in their application, but this should not deter you from the challenge!

Here are five things you should know before getting into WCAG & ADA website compliance, and a pathway for how to get there.

1

The WCAG sets the standards and guidelines

Accessibility standards are set by the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). While the Americans with Disabilities Act does not clearly state that commercial websites must adhere to accessibility standards, the law has been interpreted by the judiciary system as applying equally and the WCAG represents the guidelines that are used in cases of litigation to determine if you have done enough to make your website accessible.

2

There are 3 levels of compliance to the guidelines

There are different levels of compliance. The WCAG sets forth guidelines at the A, AA, and AAA level. The AA level is used most commonly as the standard.

A - Minimal level of compliance

AA - Acceptable level of compliance

AAA - Optimal level of compliance





5 things to know about compliance (continued).

3

Most businesses should strive for AA compliance

While AA is used commonly, it is best to think of ways to stay ahead of the curve, as new guidelines are expected to be released within the next 3 years. If you are working on making your website accessible, working to the guidelines instead of the human experience may be a mistake.

4

The guidelines can be complex

Accessibility is not as simple as adding in alt text to images. The WCAG guidelines includes a list of over 50 recommendations to help people with disabilities navigate your website with greater ease. When you fall into some of the most common marketing traps, you may have unintentionally made your content confusing and difficult to grasp. In this situation, clarity is your greatest asset.

5

Sometimes, it's better to just start over.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, you probably have a good reason to be. Think about making your website accessible in the way you might think about remodeling a house. Sometimes, it is just better to build new to get things the way you want them to be, rather than tearing down a bunch of walls to make an old house fit your needs. Remediation is one thing, but building better is the next, and often smarter, more cost-effective step.

Accessibility vs. Automation

Why it is important to make changes with humanity in mind.

If you've started researching how to make your website more accessible, chances are you've run across websites claiming to help you by using automated scans.

Don't take the shortcut! (It never works out.)

While it's clearly a temptation to find a quick, easy solution, turning to automated software to help you with your compliance needs is likely to cause your business more harm than good.

As with most things related to your website, it is better to take a different approach — a human one.

Whether you have decided to make your website accessible as the result of a complaint, to avoid litigation, or to get ahead of the risk, never forget that the most significant reason is the human one. **Friendly, clean, and easy accessibility makes your website a more appealing experience that takes into consideration the needs of your users.**

Designed for humans, by humans

Disabilities affect people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities. Impairments can be permanent (lasting a lifetime), temporary (such as a broken arm), or situational (arms full of groceries). Everyone will experience impairment at one point or another. Having an accessible website benefits everyone.





Why it is important to make changes with humanity in mind (continued).

Utilize empathy

Automated programs are incapable of empathy, the most important element for how best to outfit your website in accordance with WCAG standards. This is about more than just checking off boxes. You have set out to create a better experience. To do this effectively, you need to put yourself in the shoes of the audience you are trying to serve and discover if the changes you make are truly working to create a better experience for them.

If you don't know, ask.

Guidelines are just that — guidelines. Words on paper. If you want to create a better experience, you need to do more than just think like your audience. You need to involve them. When working through user experience, don't hesitate to test things out and make alterations following the user's input. For example: the guidelines might tell you to make something easier to read, but how does one know what is easy? Subjective interpretation of the guidelines requires a deft interpretation, something an AI or app can not provide. Connect with your audience by showing them how their voice brings about change.

Approach changes from a place of care.

In an age of technological brilliance, it is often difficult to remember that computers do not care. As you work to bring your website into compliance, focus on the human touch before implementing changes and don't be afraid to ask the hard questions.

Whether your journey started as a goal to meet with demands or a drive to create a better overall user experience, you will need the empathy and humanity to stay ahead of the curve.

What you can do now

3 easy steps to make your website more accessible.

The WCAG guidelines includes a list of more than 50 items you will need to check if you want to bring your website up to AA standards. It can be easy to feel overwhelmed at this point, so why don't we take a look at some basic steps you can take to make your website a little more compliant with ADA guidelines.

Alternative Text (alt tags)

Alt Tags - When was the last time you took a look at the alt tags on your website? The alt tags are the alternative text you input when adding an image to a page. If you've been skipping that step, you have essentially left a big black hole into the middle of the page for anyone who has trouble seeing, or interpreting what they see.

An example

A good use of HTML to place this image on a webpage would include alt text so that those with no, or low vision understand what context the image brings to the page.

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Another thing to keep in mind with alt tags (and this is where a machine, or automated system may steer you wrong) is that inserting alternative text for every image can ultimately cause more confusion. Alt tags should only be added to images that further the meaning of the text. What does this mean? Imagine if you had alternative text for supplemental design elements, graphic elements or sunsets that have no business being in the header. If your user is using a screen reader to read the alt text to them as they navigate through the

3 easy steps to make your website more accessible (continued).

page, the value of your website may be interrupted incessantly by these types of descriptions.

All images need a tag. But not all need to be filled out.

Contrast

One easy change you can make to your website is enhancing the contrast, making it easier to read. WCAG Level AAA requires a contrast ratio of at least 7:1 for normal text and 4.5:1 for large text. Large text is defined as 14 point (typically 18.66px) and bold or larger, or 18 point (typically 24px) or larger. The easiest way to accommodate this is to avoid color and design elements that blend like colors, including overlays or soft-spoken, or hidden text. If you find it acceptable that a portion of your audience is not able to read such a section, ask yourself what it is doing there to begin with and what it is adding to the site.

Poor tonal contrast

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Good contrast

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An example

Strive for good contrast between foreground elements (like text) and the background in both the tone (light vs dark) and hue (colors). It's hard for anyone to read gray text on a similar gray background or blue text on a teal background, but it is even harder for those who have low vision or are colorblind.





3 easy steps to make your website more accessible (continued)

Clear and simple language

It's important to make your website accessible to those with anxiety or cognitive disabilities. Think about everything from the copy on your website to the buttons and calls to action themselves. Do they clearly explain to your audience what they can expect, or have you left it a little bit of a mystery? Avoid figurative language, but also, avoid using buttons that don't clearly state what will happen when you click on them.

These three recommendations are just the tip of the iceberg when you consider what will be involved in bringing up your websites compliance. Hopefully we have given you a taste for what this project will involve and how we can help you with your task.

You can see, it's not always as clear or easy to decipher as the guidelines may make it seem on paper. Consider the example below.

Headline option 1: **We won't leave you adrift at sea**

Headline option 2: **We support our clients throughout the process**

Example: figurative speech

Some people with cognitive disabilities and mental health concerns have trouble with figures of speech or non-literal text. Which headline above is clearer in what is trying to communicate? Why make communication more complex and unclear?

[Learn More](#)

[Learn About Our Process](#)

Example: clear button text

Which call to action button is more clear? Do you know what will happen if you click the first button?



We can help!

You need a partner for this process!

Traversing the unknown is far less intimidating with a knowledgeable guide to show you the way! Hiring an experienced firm will give you the confidence you need to take those steps. Lion + Panda can provide you with an accessibility audit of your website, a comprehensive strategy to move forward, or a complete website rebuild from the ground up. Consider working with our firm to help protect your site – and your business – while creating a brighter and more inclusive experience for everyone.

Ready to get started?

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