

The Business Case for Accessibility and Inclusion

This paper addresses why businesses should incorporate an accessibility program into their business processes. “Today, on November 7th, as we celebrate Purple Tuesday, let us reflect on a powerful statistic: 75% of disabled individuals and their families have walked away from businesses due to poor accessibility or customer service. This glaring reality underscores the urgent need for change. The spending power of disabled people and their households globally is valued at a staggering \$8 trillion, growing by 14% annually. However, only 10% of businesses have a targeted strategy for this immense market.” (AspireGB, 2023)

Keywords: *Business processes, accessibility, inclusion, disabilities, innovation*

Introduction

On November 7, 2023, AspireGB published the following for Purple Tuesday:

“Today, on November 7th, as we celebrate Purple Tuesday, let us reflect on a powerful statistic: 75% of disabled individuals and their families have walked away from businesses due to poor accessibility or customer service. This glaring reality underscores the urgent need for change. The spending power of disabled people and their households globally is valued at a staggering \$8 trillion, growing by 14% annually. However, only 10% of businesses have a targeted strategy for this immense market.”

Worldwide, more than 1 billion individuals have a disability. In many countries, people with disabilities face countless cases of abuse: they are denied the chance to go to school, languish for years in institutions, are subjected to horrific violence, or chained in their own homes - simply because they have a disability. They have a lower rate of employment, which results in a lower rate of income. (Human Rights Watch, 2023)

Figure 1. A Snapshot of Global Disability Statistics



Source: World Disability Statistics, 2023

Literature Review

This paper looks at the reasons why all businesses should incorporate accessibility and user interface design into their business processes, including:

- Every organization has invested millions in technology. However, few have become genuinely tech-enabled businesses. (Reynolds,2023)
- Only 36% of CEOs think executives have what it takes to transform their business through technology. (Reynolds, 2023)
- Missed opportunities will keep growing, resulting in a “high risk of disruption from tech-first players, poor ROI on multi-million tech investments, and inertia and lost market opportunities until businesses incorporate accessibility into their business processes.” (Reynolds, 2023)
- True customer-centric technology transformation only happens with great leaders, starting with the CEO. Tech-first CEOs commit to acting, even when the business is performing, knowing where they are in the tech journey and where to go. They expect leaders to understand how tech drives growth and build agile cultures that allow innovation to thrive. (Reynolds, 2023).

1 The W3C (2020) states the rationale for organizations to address accessibility.
2 It includes tangible and intangible benefits and the risks of adequately addressing
3 accessibility. This discussion also explores how accessibility can:

- 4 • Drive Innovation where accessibility features in products and services
5 often solve unanticipated problems with users.
- 6 • Enhance Your Brand: Diversity and inclusion efforts crucial to success are
7 enhanced with a clear, well-integrated accessibility commitment.
- 8 • Extend Market Reach: The global market of people with disabilities is
9 over 1 billion, with a spending power of over \$6 trillion. Accessibility,
10 along with inclusion, improves the online experience for all users.
- 11 • Minimize Legal Risk: Many countries have laws requiring digital
12 accessibility, which is of increased legal concern.

13
14
15 *Is there a Business Case for Accessibility?*



16
17
18 Source: W3C

19
20 The W3C (2020) states that a business case is necessary for organizations
21 when planning initiatives. Whether an organization is commercial, educational,
22 non-profit, or governmental, most require justification for dedicating resources
23 such as money or effort to support a specific organizational policy or goal.
24 “Business” in this article refers to all types of organizations with the understanding
25 that different aspects will be relevant depending on the corporate focus and
26 purpose. For example, legal and equity aspects may strongly motivate government
27 agencies. Commercial businesses may be more persuaded by innovation and
28 market expansion opportunities. Educational and nonprofit companies may be
29 especially drawn to brand enhancement.

30 To create a compelling business case, it is critical to highlight the most
31 relevant accessibility benefits within your specific operational landscape. There
32 are tangible and intangible benefits to businesses that dedicate resources to digital
33 accessibility. A frequent argument against the accessibility business case is that the
34 direct return on investment (ROI) is too difficult to measure. While essential, ROI
35 is not the only way to measure how an accessibility commitment benefits an
36 organization. A helpful business case also presents the cost and risk of inaction.
37 Your business will respond to various motivating factors as you consider
38 implementing an integrated accessibility program. This article provides research
39 and examples to inspire confidence among leaders and decision-makers that
40 continued investment in accessibility suits your business. (W3C, 2020).

1 Businesses that integrate accessibility are more likely to be innovative,
2 inclusive enterprises that reach more people with positive brand messaging while
3 meeting emerging global legal requirements.

4 A research study of Fortune 100 companies indicates that disability inclusion,
5 as part of an overall diversity strategy, is common practice among high-
6 performing businesses. When accessibility is part of strategic planning, businesses
7 are better equipped for success in our connected world of commerce, academia,
8 and civic engagement. (Jain, 2023). Let us look at some examples and research
9 outcomes that will help you make the business case that is most effective in your
10 business environment.

11
12 *Accessibility is good for Business*

13
14 “Many organizations are waking up to embracing accessibility, which leads
15 to multiple benefits – reducing legal risks, strengthening brand presence, and
16 improving customer experience and colleague productivity.” Paul Smyth, Head of
17 Digital Accessibility, Barclays.

18 Tim (2020) lists seven reasons why accessibility is good for business:

- 19
20
- 21 • Legal compliance with global laws
 - 22 • Reputation as being sensitive to all users
 - 23 • Inclusivity, internalizing the understanding of the web being for
24 everyone, and then designing and developing our digital experiences with
25 this always top of mind
 - 26 • User Experience t treats all users equally and understands that features
27 that are intended for users with disabilities improve the overall user
28 experience
 - 29 • SEO where accessibility will boost your UX and SEO efforts, increase
30 your ranking, and improve your overall brand.
 - 31 • Coding standards where strict adherence to proper coding standards
32 results in the code being cleaner and more performant; its accessibility is
33 just additional value.
 - 34 • It is just the right thing to do!

35 *Drive Innovation*



37
38 Source: W3C
39

1 Integrating accessibility removes architectural, digital, and social barriers that
2 can get in the way of innovation², for example:

- 3
- 4 • Accessible design thinking provides varied and flexible ways for users to
5 interact with websites and applications, options that are useful for people
6 with and without disabilities.
- 7 • Design of user interaction considers experiences other than screens when
8 accessibility is a consideration. The result is interaction that is more human-
9 centered, natural, and contextual.
- 10 • Accessibility is closely related to general usability – both aim to define and
11 deliver a more intuitive user experience.
- 12 • Innovations like the typewriter, telephone, punch cards, text-to-speech,
13 email, and voice controls were initially meant to include those with a
14 disability, and all have found a much broader application.³
- 15 • Driverless cars, so promising for the independence of blind people, are also
16 projected to help solve traffic fatalities and congestion.
- 17

18 Research and development of the artificial retina project to help restore sight
19 for participants who are blind may also help future robots with real-time image-
20 processing systems, effectively enabling them to “see.”

21 Accessible design is, by nature, flexible, rendering content faithfully across a
22 broad spectrum of devices, platforms, assistive technologies, and operating
23 systems. In physical environments, everyone takes advantage of lower curbs,
24 automatic door openers, ramps, and other features provided for disability access.
25 On the web, accessibility features become options often used more widely by
26 disabled and non-disabled users. (W3C, 2023). A compelling example comes
27 from the early 2000s when people increasingly used mobile devices to browse the
28 web. Accessible and standards-compliant websites were more mobile-ready as
29 they did not rely on mouse input. This revelation led to the responsive design trend
30 with accessibility at its core. (W3C, 2023).

31
32 *Enhance Your Brand*



34
35 Source: W3C

36
37 Businesses can protect and enhance their brands through a clear commitment
38 to accessibility, demonstrating a company has a genuine sense of Corporate Social
39 Responsibility (CSR). Businesses can achieve various benefits as they understand
40 and act on their stakeholders' diverse needs and commit to sustainable, inclusive
41 marketing and employment practices. CSR programs include enhanced brand

1 image and reputation, increased sales and customer loyalty, improved workforce
2 diversity, and many other benefits.

3 Employing people with disabilities is an essential aspect of creating a diverse
4 workforce. To succeed, the technology employees use, including websites and
5 applications, must be accessible.

6
7 *Increase Market Reach*
8



9
10 Source: W3C
11

12 As the global population ages, the market for people with disabilities has
13 become more extensive and is still growing. In the UK, where the large disability
14 market is known as the Purple Pound, people with disabilities and their families
15 spend at least £249 billion every year. In the US, the annual discretionary spending
16 of people with disabilities is over \$200 billion. The global estimate of the
17 disability market is nearly \$7 trillion. Consider these facts from the W3C (2023)
18 when estimating market size:
19

- 20 • At least one billion people (15% of the world’s population) have a
21 recognized disability.
- 22 • As the population ages, many more acquire disabilities and yet do not
23 identify as a “person with a disability.”
- 24 • In countries with life expectancies of over 70 years of age, people spend
25 11.5 percent of their lifespan living with a disability.
- 26 • Globally, the extended market is estimated at 2.3 billion people who
27 control an incremental \$6.9 trillion annual disposable income.
28

29 A Forrester Research Economic Impact Study commissioned by Microsoft
30 concluded that accessibility could contribute to cost savings when integrated into
31 existing and ongoing development cycles. Technology updates and redesigns that
32 include accessibility and other best practices have demonstrated reduced costs for
33 maintenance and service.

34 Moreover, according to Microsoft, as accessibility features are included,
35 overall customer satisfaction improves. They are designing inclusive software that
36 results in improved usability and customer satisfaction.

37 Microsoft’s app developer guide:
38

- 39 • Accessible design considerations often improve general customer experience
40 and loyalty. For customers with disabilities, such improvements are essential
41 for equal access. However, accessibility provides valuable options to all
42 customers in various situations. For example, web accessibility also benefits:

- people using mobile phones, smart watches, smart TVs, and other devices with small screens, different input modes, etc.,
- older people with changing abilities due to aging,
- people with “temporary disabilities” such as a broken arm or lost glasses,
- challenging situations like bright, glaring sunlight or noisy environments where audio cannot be heard,
- those with a slow internet connection and limited or expensive bandwidth, which is common in rural areas and some geographical regions.

Minimize Legal Risk



Source: W3C

A significant demonstration of the risk of ignoring accessibility requirements was the 2008 settlement by the National Federation of the Blind with Target retailers:

- class damages of \$6 million
- plaintiff legal fees over \$3 million
- undisclosed defense legal fees
- court oversight of the website for several years

Consideration of the cost and risk of inaction is critical to any business case. As web use is woven into modern life worldwide, governments and regulators have begun to mandate laws and policies that strengthen the rights of people with disabilities to participate in online digital information and services.

One of the earliest examples of legal consequences to web accessibility was a complaint made to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) in 2000 about the inaccessibility of the Sydney Olympics website. The plaintiff, who was blind, claimed the site was a violation of the Commonwealth Disability.

Discrimination Act 1992.²¹ The 2001 decision in the Sydney Olympics suit²² raised awareness of the need to address accessibility in the emerging practice of web communication.

Over time, the legal risk increased with the adoption of more specific laws and policies in countries worldwide.

- The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) is a comprehensive human rights document that directly references all people's rights to have equal access to communications technology. Passed by the

- 1 United Nations General Assembly, more than 175 countries ratified it by
2 2018.
- 3 • The European Commission adopted the European Accessibility Act,
4 requiring ATMs and banking services, PCs, telephones and TV
5 equipment, telephony and audiovisual services, transport, e-books, and e-
6 commerce to meet accessibility requirements.
 - 7 • In the US, the number of legal actions continues to rise, and courts
8 increasingly decide in favor of equal access²³, often citing the Americans
9 with Disabilities Act (ADA). Structured Negotiation is another way that
10 legal pressure is adequate, encouraging companies to meet accessibility
11 requirements while avoiding litigation.²⁴
 - 12 • In Norway, where commercial websites are now illegal to fail to provide
13 equivalent access for people with disabilities, the government fines
14 commercial companies that do not comply. Austria has had customer
15 protection regulations since 2006, requiring most public websites to meet
16 accessibility standards. Customers who believe they have been
17 discriminated against can take legal action. Parties meet in mediation
18 before they are permitted to go to court. In contrast, the regulation is less
19 evident in the United States, but legal action continues to accelerate.
 - 20 • Between government oversight and regulation on the one hand and
21 increased legal action on the other, the legal landscape is rapidly changing
22 in favor of equal access.
 - 23 • With legal risks increasing, intelligent businesses – particularly those with
24 global activities – are creating accessibility policies and programs to
25 mitigate risk to protect their assets and reputations.
- 26
27

28 *Access to a Diverse Talent Pool*

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30
31
32 Disability inclusion is a critical part of any business and is about more than
33 hiring people with disabilities. An inclusive workplace values all employees for
34 their strengths. It offers employees with disabilities an equal opportunity to
35 succeed, learn, be compensated fairly, and advance. True inclusion is about
36 embracing difference. (Understood, 2023).

37 According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one adult in
38 four in the United States has a disability. That includes invisible disabilities as well
39 as visible ones. It is likely that your workforce already includes many people with
40 disabilities. Without disability inclusion, your business is not doing all it can to
41 support its current employees. (Understood, 2023). Hiring physically disabled

1 people can provide businesses access to a diverse talent pool, increase innovation
2 and problem-solving abilities, and enhance company reputation and brand image.
3 By excluding individuals with disabilities, businesses are limiting their access to a
4 broad and diverse talent pool. Disabled individuals bring unique experiences,
5 perspectives, and skills to the table. (Understood, 2023).

6 People with disabilities represent a significant talent pool. One adult in four
7 has some type of disability, whether visible or invisible. Despite wanting to work,
8 people with disabilities are employed at a much lower rate than their peers. Most
9 people with disabilities are striving to work. In 2018, only 33 percent of working-
10 age Americans with disabilities participated in the workforce. That is compared to
11 almost 77 percent of Americans without a disability. By tapping into this talent
12 pool, employers can gain access to over 10 million working-age people. (Access
13 Force, 2023).

14 Businesses with a reputation for hiring people from diverse backgrounds
15 often see increased customer loyalty and new opportunities. People know the
16 environment in an inclusive company as being open to everyone. Numerous
17 companies have recognized the benefits of inclusion for disability and integrated it
18 into their workforce strategy. For instance, Microsoft has a dedicated program for
19 hiring job seekers with autism, recognizing their unique talent and potential.
20 Similarly, SAP, a global software company, has been accepting autistic applicants
21 to be part of their tech team. Procter and Gamble, also known as P&G, has
22 been hiring Deaf and hard-of-hearing prospects to be part of their company. They
23 are not only accepting Deaf applicants from the US but also from third-world
24 countries and Europe. (Understood, 2023).

25 Such businesses have fostered a more welcoming workplace and reaped
26 financial rewards. They report higher levels of innovation, problem-solving
27 capabilities, and loyalty among their employees with disabilities. Companies can
28 support employees with different disability types by providing reasonable
29 accommodations, offering disability awareness training, implementing inclusive
30 hiring practices, and promoting an inclusive and supportive work environment.
31 (Access Force, 2023)

32 Disability inclusion is also crucial to your hiring process. Companies not
33 proactive about disability inclusion are losing out on qualified talent. If candidates
34 face barriers during the application and interview process, or if they sense that
35 your business is not inclusive, they are likely to look elsewhere. Companies with
36 solid disability inclusion programs have better talent access and employee
37 retention. They have the tools they need to help their employees thrive. (Access
38 Force, 2023).

39 Disability inclusion will strengthen your workforce and is a critical part of
40 employee support. Employees are looking for diverse, inclusive workplaces.
41 Inclusion builds morale and helps all employees do their best work. To support
42 your employees, the business needs a strong disability inclusion program. Without
43 disability inclusion, your workforce will not thrive.

44 Building an inclusive workplace can improve morale and workplace culture.
45 It sends an important message about your company's values. More and more,
46 employees with and without disabilities care about their workplace culture and

1 believe it is essential to help them thrive at work. Research from Deloitte shows
2 that employees specifically value diversity and inclusion. When employees feel
3 that leadership truly owns the effort to build a more inclusive workplace, they will
4 likely have more respect toward those leaders. Moreover, they are likely to show
5 more loyalty to the organization.

6 Inclusive practices not only support people with disabilities but create a more
7 accepting and supportive workplace for all employees. Employers with solid
8 disability inclusion programs can expect higher engagement from all employees.

11 **Methodology/Materials and Methods**

13 The research methodology used for this paper was a qualitative approach,
14 using current literature to substantiate the need for businesses to incorporate
15 accessibility programs into their processes and include inclusive design. Using a
16 longitudinal research design, research was conducted on current literature from
17 expert websites, professional journals, and books to produce a retrospective study.
18 A deductive approach, based on theory or existing knowledge, was confirmed by
19 this.

20 The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) says, “Accessibility is essential for
21 developers and organizations that want to create high-quality websites and web
22 tools, and not exclude people from using their products and services.” (W3C,
23 2022). According to the W3C, “web accessibility addresses discriminatory
24 aspects related to equivalent user experience for people with disabilities.” People
25 with disabilities can use websites equally to perceive, navigate, and interact with
26 those sites without barriers (W3C, 2022). Accessibility may ensure websites work
27 well with assistive technology or screen readers but may not address visual
28 appearance or user interaction. This is the approach this paper will use when
29 discussing accessibility.

30 The W3C (2022) notes that “usability is designing effective, efficient, and
31 satisfying products. However, usability practice does not consider the needs of
32 people with disabilities. This is an essential issue for possible future studies.
33 Usability may include general aspects that would affect everyone, but this study
34 looks at usability design as it affects the stroke victim.

35 Inclusion is foundational to ensuring that users of all backgrounds, abilities,
36 and experiences should have the same experiences when using a website.
37 Accessibility, usability, and inclusion often overlap with the three concepts blurred
38 in the digital realm. Not only should inclusion address the needs of people with
39 disabilities, but it can also address the issue of access to quality hardware and
40 internet connectivity, computer literacy, economic situations, age, language,
41 culture, and more.

43 *Validity*

45 Construct validity was established using the features chart on pages 59-61.
46 This chart was based on the research done on current literature and the W3C

1 website. Individual features of accessibility, universal design, and inclusive design
2 were demonstrated on various websites to show the value to stroke victims.

3 Content validity assesses whether a test is representative of all aspects of the
4 construct—the results of an industry-accepted, automated accessibility test on a
5 website provided this example. To produce valid results, the content of a test,
6 survey, or measurement method must cover all relevant parts of the subject it aims
7 to measure. If some aspects are missing from the measurement (or if irrelevant
8 aspects are included), the validity is threatened, and the research is likely suffering
9 from omitted variable bias. Since this study did not use statistics, omitted validity
10 bias is irrelevant.

11 Face validity considers how suitable the content of a test seems to be on the
12 surface. It is like content validity, but face validity is a more informal and
13 subjective assessment. No surveys were conducted during this study, so face
14 validity is irrelevant.

15 To evaluate criterion validity, this study used a direct correlation between the
16 results of any measurements and the results of the criterion measurement. If there
17 is a high correlation, this gives a good indication that your test is measuring what it
18 intends to measure. The website examples used in this study were to demonstrate
19 the effect of the multiple features in accessibility, universal design, and user
20 interface on stroke victims' daily use of websites.

21 Operationalization means turning abstract conceptual ideas into measurable
22 observations. Again, this was accomplished by comparing the various selected
23 website examples to the multiple features in accessibility, universal design, and
24 user interface on the daily use of websites by stroke victims.

25 Internal validity is high because of the confidence that the causal relationship
26 being tested is trustworthy and is not influenced by other factors outside of data
27 found in current literature and studies, as cited in this study. That said, future
28 findings could require a second study.

29 This study provides external validity in that the approach used can be applied
30 to other disabilities, using the three approaches to support the issues associated
31 with those disabilities. For example, someone with low vision. How can
32 accessibility, universal design, and interactive design help someone with low
33 vision?

34 *Reliability*

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36
37 Test-retest reliability measures the consistency of results when you repeat the
38 same test on the same sample at a different point in time. Automated accessibility
39 testing with different testing tools can result in different issues. However, most
40 provide the same or similar results. Manual testing should provide the same results
41 if accepted guidelines are followed, comparing website features (or lack thereof)
42 to the guidelines.

43 Interrater reliability measures the agreement between people observing or
44 assessing the same thing. Since there is only one observer for this study, interrater
45 reliability does not apply. However, this researcher agreed to follow W3C

1 guidelines for accessibility, universal design, and interactive design, so the test has
2 high interrater reliability.

3
4 *Bias*

5
6 Using the criteria for validity and reliability helped prevent bias from
7 affecting the data. Using the two-phased approach described above, one to
8 substantiate current theories and one to demonstrate the use of specific features
9 found in accessibility, usability, and interactive design, the data results are based
10 on fundamental issues for stroke victims. The opinions of this author did not affect
11 the results.

12
13
14 **Results**

15
16 The five critical success factors, including strategic focus, people, operations,
17 marketing, and finance, help businesses determine their strategy for long-term
18 success. On the other hand, critical success factors “are the steps a company needs
19 to complete to reach a goal. As an organization that caters to its consumers,
20 comprehending the needs and values of a business’s target demographic is crucial
21 to forming a logical strategy. Identifying and understanding the five critical
22 success factors of business is the best way to establish a foundation of knowledge
23 about a company and its customers.” (Zippia, 2023.)

24 A recent World Bank study found that businesses prioritizing accessibility
25 saw a 20% increase in customer engagement and satisfaction. Since we live in an
26 increasingly digital world, ensuring websites and products are accessible to
27 everyone is more important than ever. Accessibility can mean many different
28 things, but it means ensuring everyone can use your services and products,
29 regardless of any disabilities they may have. By providing that your business is
30 accessible, you not only make life easier for people with disabilities, but you also
31 open your market to a broader range of potential customers. So, how do you make
32 sure your business is accessible? (Cruz, 2023).

33 Accessibility in business is a term used to describe the degree to which
34 products, services, and websites are usable by people with diverse abilities or
35 disabilities. Companies need to design their infrastructure, technology, products,
36 and services in an accessible way since this ensures that they can reach out to a
37 broader audience. (Cruz, 2023).

38 Furthermore, accessibility should be considered during the entire
39 development process to ensure that users of all capabilities can interact with the
40 product or service effectively. Doing so helps businesses increase their potential
41 customers and creates a positive impression of the company among its users.
42 (Cruz, 2023).

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1 **Discussion**

2
3 *Common Barriers to Accessibility in Businesses*

4
5 Businesses should strive to make their products or services accessible to as
6 many people as possible, but unfortunately, many common barriers can make this
7 difficult. Common accessibility issues that businesses face include language
8 barriers for those with limited English proficiency; economic resources obscuring
9 access for lower-income communities; virtual access issues due to lack of or slow
10 internet connections or devices with outdated browsers; assistive technology needs
11 of those with disabilities; and geographic factors including people living in rural
12 areas or older people who are unable to travel long distances. (Cruz, 2023).

13 By becoming aware of and addressing these barriers, businesses can ensure
14 equitable access for all, leading to a more level playing field. For instance, say you
15 are looking into accessibility overlays. These are tools that make web content
16 more accessible for people with disabilities. They can include text-to-speech tools,
17 resizable text and images, and keyboard shortcuts. Installing these overlays can
18 help create an inclusive experience for everyone, regardless of ability or disability.
19 Look up some facts about accessibility overlays if you need more convincing.
20 (Cruz, 2023).

21
22 *How Businesses Benefit*

23
24 Making a business more accessible allows it to reach a much more
25 comprehensive and diverse customer base, which is critical for continued growth.
26 By introducing measures in the form of accessible websites, physical store
27 accessibilities, or even customer service accessibility, businesses can increase their
28 focus on potential customers who may have been previously excluded due to their
29 circumstances or physical capabilities.

30 Increased accessibility not only brings in new customers who may take
31 advantage of the business's products or services but also helps strengthen the
32 brand image and show customers that the company values all its purchasers
33 equally. (Cruz, 2023).

34 Accessibility should be an essential part of any business's success. Making
35 your business more accessible will open the door to many opportunities. From
36 potentially widening the customer base to boosting brand awareness, there are
37 many reasons to make sure your online presence and physical location cater to
38 people with disabilities as well as those without. For businesses to progress in the
39 modern era, they must strive to be as accessible and accommodating as possible.
40 (Cruz, 2023)

41 Business owners constantly work to make the best decisions for their
42 company and employees. With so many moving parts, owners find a balance
43 where employees are cared for and satisfied, and the company gains. One simple
44 way to up the caliber of the organization while also doing right by the staff? Focus
45 on accessibility and inclusivity. (Nordqvist, 2021).

1 If you create a proactive workplace in its approach to the inclusivity of folks
2 with disabilities, you can reap the immense benefits of a diverse professional
3 community. Folks with different experiences can offer unique perspectives that
4 enhance your mission and help you meet your goals innovatively. By prioritizing
5 the inclusion of all neighborhoods in your workplace, you will also improve your
6 company culture and make your organization an incredible workplace for
7 everyone.

8 Levin (2020) provided six tips to make a business more accessible and
9 inclusive:

10

11 ○ Train your team. Ensure that your team is trained to deal with customers
12 with disabilities. To reach out to them on multiple channels, hold specific
13 training courses in customer service.

14 ○ Follow website accessibility best practices, including voice recognition
15 options, subtitles, descriptive text for images, and clear links. Many
16 people use a screen reader to access websites, and you are required by law
17 to be prepared for visitors who might be visually or hearing impaired.

18 ○ Include Braille on signs in hallways, entryways, and restrooms.

19 ○ Create an accessible space by installing ramps and stairlifts, ensuring there
20 are broad enough corridors for wheelchairs, and providing all necessary
21 items at a reachable height.

22 ○ Allow service animals. Over half a million service dogs are working in the
23 USA alone, so ensure your business is always accessible to them.

24 ○ Include people with disabilities in your marketing by referencing multiple
25 races, ages, disabilities, and more.

26

27 *Forethought Goes a Long Way*

28

29 A great way to begin your move towards a more accessible workplace is to
30 take an honest and curious look around. From what you already know about the
31 importance of accessibility, where may your organization fall short? Noticing the
32 immediate areas for improvement can put the tasks at hand in perspective and give
33 you some concrete actions to take immediately. For example, if an employee in
34 your company uses a service animal regularly, do they have adequate space for
35 their dog and all the service dog supplies they need throughout the day? While you
36 may not be legally required to consider these minute details, these small
37 observations can lead to adjustments that improve your staff's day-to-day quality
38 of life.

39 After that initial assessment of your workplace, check to see if your current
40 operations are up to par with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
41 ADA mandates that businesses and public spaces all meet basic standards of
42 accessibility in an attempt to ensure equity for folks with disabilities. This includes
43 things like table and counter heights that are accessible and hallway widths that
44 can accommodate mobility equipment like wheelchairs and walkers.

45 ADA also has specific mandates about service animals. With proper
46 licensure, employees who need the assistance of service animals are legally

1 allowed to have those pets accompany them to work and other public and private
2 spaces. ADA compliance should be the bare minimum accessibility standard for
3 your business, ensuring these benchmarks are met first and foremost.

4 5 *Turn to the Experts*

6
7 When in doubt, it is always best to seek guidance from organizations or
8 individuals who advocate for the inclusion of disabilities in the workplace. It is
9 OK if you feel lost in the process, and it is better to ask for help crafting policies
10 and standards within your organization from the get-go. If you feel comfortable,
11 ask employees with disabilities in your workplace what they need to feel included
12 and safe in the office. Listen to their experiences and follow their lead since they
13 know more about their experience than anyone else.

14 Another great time to turn to experts for help is for training. Investing in
15 training for your staff will ensure that everyone understands and supports those
16 with disabilities within your workplace. Once this type of training becomes
17 standard practice in your workplace, discussions around disability will be
18 normalized. Those with specific accessibility needs will feel empowered and
19 supported in asking for what they need. (Nordqvist, 2021).

20 21 22 **Conclusions**

23
24 Public web use is over 25 years old. It is no longer a novelty but an
25 integrated, critical tool of modern life. As intelligent businesses integrate
26 accessible design into their development and procurement processes, they
27 understand the need for equal access by all people. The legal risks of ignoring
28 accessibility are significant, and leaders like Apple, Barclays, NPR, IBM,
29 Microsoft, and hundreds more have also demonstrated the benefits. Business
30 leaders and the advocates who influence them can have tremendous social impact
31 and a healthy return on investment as they follow a roadmap that leads to equal
32 access. More than one billion people with disabilities worldwide are eager to
33 engage with you as customers, clients, partners, employees, and equal participants
34 in civic and social activities. By developing a long-term commitment to
35 accessibility and using WAI resources to develop policy and implement a strategy
36 to bring that commitment to life, your business will reach this market. It will likely
37 thrive in unexpected and autonomous ways.

38 39 40 **Acknowledgments**

41
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