

Are You An Accessible Expert?

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Are You An Accessible Expert?

By Sandra Stammberger

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It's all well and good to be an expert these days. It's a credit to your profession that you know your business well enough to get that particular stamp of public appreciation. The question is, are you an accessible expert?

The fact is, in these days of cold hard realities and tumultuous times consumers have no patience with huge egos and hard to reach professionals. It doesn't matter how much time and effort you have put into your status. What consumers do respond to is the expert that makes himself friendly and available. If you have spent the last few years working hard to build your expert status, take the next step by expanding on that effort by making yourself accessible. Consider the following friendly maneuvers:

Email:

The more popular you become as an expert the harder it will be to manage the ongoing and increasing flow of email. However, with that expert status comes more income. Use some of it to hire assistance to tend to the incoming email in a friendly and approachable manner.

Usually it's not who answers the email as much as that the email gets answered. Don't leave customers hanging, prospects wondering, and leads languishing. As you grow in expert status grow the help you need to keep your business running smoothly. Lost emails sent to experts give the sender a feel of not being important.

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Hardcopy Newsletter:

Everyone has an email newsletter. Break out from the pack and offer a hard copy newsletter as well. It can be offered as infrequently as four times a year. Hardcopy newsletters that are informative and resourceful give the receiver a sense of being cared about.

Phone:

When in doubt, pick up the phone. If email is not getting the job done with a particular client, don't hesitate to pick up the phone. Voice to voice is the means for building true confidence and that necessary personal touch.

Picture:

Show your visitors, clients, and leads who you are. A site with a picture of the owner feels more friendly and personal than an ultra-swift website without one.

Tell Your Story In First Person:

Many biographies are most appropriate in a third person format. However, at your website it is more approachable to tell about your experience and background as if you were speaking with a friend.

Speak English:

Don't show off your in-depth industry skills by verbally overwhelming your clients or prospects. Respect their level of knowledge by speaking clear and easy-to-understand English.

Experts abound in the marketplace, but accessible experts are the ones that set themselves off the pedestal and into the crowd. This is the next step in personal, confidence building marketing with today's smarter consumer.

Web Accessibility Myths

By Trenton Moss

With more and more countries around the world passing laws about blind and disabled access to the Internet (including the Disability Discrimination Act in the UK), web accessibility has been thrown into the spotlight of the online community. This article attempt to put a stop to the misinformation that has been thrown around and tell you the truth behind web accessibility.

1. Creating a text-only equivalent is sufficient

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Creating a separate text-only equivalent can lead to a number of problems: A text-only version is not necessarily accessible. Two versions of the same website represents a huge time and money investment for you. Your primary site may not be accessible to many users. An 'extra' accessible website for blind and disabled users can be one more way to make them feel marginalised from mainstream society.

Web accessibility isn't just about blind and disabled Internet users being able to use your site – it's about everyone being able to access it successfully. It really doesn't have to take very much time or money to make your website accessible.

2. It's complicated and expensive to make my website accessible

To develop an accessible website from scratch will cost virtually the same as to develop a website that isn't accessible. A very large, highly inaccessible website may take a bit more time and money to fix up, although the basic layout and design usually need not change.

Web accessibility is not complicated and anyone with basic web design skills can easily implement it.

3. Accessible and attractive web design can't go together

Many advocates of web accessibility tend to have rather dull, unattractive websites. This is unfortunate, as web accessibility need not affect the design of the website in any way whatsoever. To fully dispel this myth, have a look at the CSS Zen Garden (

) – a beautiful website

offering 100% accessibility.

4. Accessible websites stifle creativity

Web accessibility actually places very few restrictions on website design. In fact, as with regular websites, you're only really limited by your imagination when creating accessible websites. Have a look at the CSS Zen Garden (

) to see for yourself that accessibility doesn't

have to affect creativity in any way.

5. My site visitors don't have a problem accessing my website

Not necessarily. See Benefits of an accessible website – part 1 (

) to see just how many Internet users you may be excluding from your site. You can be sure

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that with 35 million websites to choose from it's unlikely that a site visitor prevented from accessing your website is going to waste his time contacting you to ask you to fix the problem.

6. Web accessibility places restrictions on the web page design

Not at all. As with regular websites, you're only limited by your imagination when creating accessible websites. Text size can be as large or as small you like (provided it's resizable), you can use any colour scheme you like (provided colour isn't the only way you differentiate information) and you can use as many images as you like (provided an alternative description is provided).

These accessibility provisos mostly happen behind the scenes and don't affect the presentation of the website.

7. Blind and disabled people don't use the Internet

On the contrary, blind and disabled people benefit from the Internet perhaps more than anyone else.

For example, visually impaired people have to phone up a supermarket when they want to go shopping to inform them of their arrival. When they get there, a store assistant will accompany them around the store. Through accessible websites blind people can now shop at home, and in their own time.

Conclusion

Web accessibility isn't brain science. It's not just about disabled users being able to access your website – it's about everyone being able to access your website, including people using handheld devices, WebTV and in-car browsers. Any web developer with basic HTML and CSS design knowledge, and a bit of time on their hands, can easily learn and implement web accessibility.

Trenton Moss is crazy about web accessibility and usability – so crazy that he went and started his own web accessibility and usability consultancy (Webcredible –

) to help make

the Internet a better place for everyone.

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