

Accessibility Services for Enterprises

Event Transcript

Lori Litz

So we're going to do things a little bit differently this week, and I am going to be the interviewer, and I am going to interview Accessibility.com's President, Mark Shapiro. He has been a leader of the digital accessibility industry since 1998, and he's helped thousands of enterprises get accessible. So, Mark, let's start with how did enterprises view digital accessibility when you started back in 1998?

Mark Shapiro

Well, when I started, organizations had no thoughts or concepts of what it meant to make a website accessible. Most people assumed that everyone to use the web exactly the same. There wasn't really a consideration given to people that use screen readers. This mentality went on for about 15 years. Back then, the most common excuse I heard for not caring about digital accessibility was that they don't sell their products or services to blind people.

So beyond obviously being offensive, this was clearly discrimination. And it was really only a matter of time when the lawyers would start going after these organizations.

Lori Litz

Absolutely. And, how do organizations view accessibility differently today?

Mark Shapiro

So today, most companies do realize that an inaccessible website is, in fact, considered discrimination and that they have a legal obligation to make their digital properties accessible. It's the same obligation that they have to make their parking lots or bathrooms accessible. Lawsuits around digital accessibility over the past few years have just exploded. Most companies have settled, but some companies, such as Domino's, decided that they would try to fight against having an accessible website.

Mark Shapiro

They spent six years and several millions of dollars, only to have a judge rule against them, and they were forced to fix their website anyway. So most companies aren't foolish enough to fight this in court. But now what I'm hearing from enterprises is that it's cheaper to just pay off the lawyers than it is to fix our website.

Lori Litz

But isn't it just cheaper to pay the lawyer?

Mark Shapiro

You know, in the short term? Yeah, it actually is. You could continue to discriminate against people by not fixing your website and pay off the attorney. And it's cheaper, probably for the first or second lawsuit. But at some point, the social pressure, the cost of continued lawsuits, wasting the time of your internal team, it's going to far exceed the costs to just fix your website.

It's just cheaper in the long term to do the right thing and make sure that everyone can use your digital property.

Lori Litz

Yeah, I would agree. And wouldn't you think, you're missing a lot of revenue opportunities by not having an accessible website?

Mark Shapiro

Absolutely. It is difficult to quantify that because most people are just going to go to your competitors. Most people aren't going to say anything. They'll just move on. Go to your competitors and buy from them.

Lori Litz

Absolutely. So how difficult is it for a company to make their website accessible?

Mark Shapiro

You know, understanding how to identify and fix accessibility issues, it does require some specialized skills. But there are a lot of qualified digital accessibility companies that can work with your internal team and help you to get your digital properties accessible. In fact, today we're going to look under the hood of five companies that can help enterprises become accessible.

Lori Litz

Yeah. That's fantastic. Thanks, Mark. And now I'm going to flip it over to you to be back to the interviewer to interview those five companies that we have with us here today. Thanks.

Mark Shapiro

Thanks, Lori. We're excited to have with us Doug Koppenhofer from Crawford, who is the VP of Accessibility. Can you tell us about the company and also what services you offer for enterprises?

Doug Koppenhofer

Yes. we offer a variety of, enterprise software and manual remediation services, ranging from transactional accessibility for system generated files to static files that might be found on a on a public website.

We do that as software, but we also have manual remediation services that we offer as well.

Mark Shapiro

Is there an ideal customer size or industry that you guys focus on?

Doug Koppenhofer

It is all over the board, but I'll say that the main ones are financial services, health care payers, government, higher ed., and there's a few others in there, but those are those are the big ones.

Mark Shapiro

And when a company, when you engage a company for the first time, how long have you seen it take for them before they actually become accessible?

Doug Koppenhofer

Really interesting question. So, a couple examples. A very large global bank, based in the UK, decided to prioritize one type of, document that they wanted to make accessible.

And they got that to market very quickly. Within the first month or so. And this is very large scale, millions of pages. But it took them the rest of that year to get the rest of their system generated content accessible. And that tends to be the progression. Like if you, if you can prioritize what's the most important first, you can typically tackle that in a number of days or a short number of weeks.

But for the entire program for an enterprise, that tends to take, you know, some number of months. So that's a the quick answer, I guess.

Mark Shapiro

All right. What would you say is your company's secret sauce?

Doug Koppenhofer

Well, it's, you know, it's it's, that's a tough one. I think the, I think what we do really well is we offer a very broad platform that you can enter at any point.

Right? You can decide that you want to remediate 15 pages. Or you might decide that you want to tackle the entire system generated content that you have as an enterprise. So we can help you enter at whatever point makes sense for for you as an organization. And, the other thing I'll mention is that we are not as enamored with our tools as we are with understanding what the workflow, what the optimal workflow should be and what the results are that you're trying to, to, to get.

So that tends to be our mantra. And, if there's a secret sauce, that's probably the combination of those two things.

Mark Shapiro

All right. Great. Doug, thank you. Appreciate the the deep dive.

Doug Koppenhofer

Absolutely. Appreciate the appreciate the questions.

Mark Shapiro

All right. Next up we have Mark Miller, the director of sales at TPGi. So to get started, can you tell us about your company and the accessibility services that you offer for enterprises?

Mark Miller

Yeah, absolutely. So TPGi has been around for almost two decades now. Or a little over two decades, I should say. Serving enterprise organizations, medium-sized businesses, primarily. We've spent two decades with the W3C, working on things like the guidelines and all sorts of different working groups that they have around accessibility. And currently we're a little over 100 employees.

Mark Shapiro

How long does it typically take your customers to become accessible once they sign on with you guys?

Mark Miller

So that's a little bit difficult of a question to answer because it depends on a lot of factors. It depends on the size of the organization. It depends on, sort of, how many assets that they may have. So we typically look at it as a journey. And there may be milestones that we could put, you know, put some sort of a time frame around, but most of our clients are really looking to become organizations that can maintain accessibility. Right? Build accessibility into the DNA of the organization.

Mark Shapiro

How do you distinguish yourself amongst your competitors?

Mark Miller

Well, so we've been around for a long time. As I stated before, we're over two decades. So we started, about when you could have an accessibility company, long before, you know, big companies were working like we are today.. And we've contributed significantly to the guidelines to the W3C. So we have more people on the working groups in the W3C and have had for almost that full time.

Right? It was a real focus for the company initially. We're also owned by the same company that owns Freedom Scientific, which creates the screen reader JAWS. Anybody in accessibility knows exactly what I'm talking about. If you're not in accessibility, JAWS stands for Job Access with Speech, and it's the number one screen reader out there. The windows version of it has been around since 1993, I believe, off the top of my head. I could be a few years off. And some iteration of Jaws has existed since the 80s.

So we really are fortunate to have direct access to that user data and to truly, truly understand how these products are being used. And because of our involvement in the working groups, we have deep understanding on other types of disabilities too. Like cognitive disabilities, hearing

impairments, mobility impairments... All of the different types of disabilities that the guidelines try to cover.

So we're in a unique position to really understand how to make these products usable for people with disabilities.

Mark Shapiro

All right, Mark, thanks for giving us an overview of TPGi's accessibility services. Appreciate it.

Mark Miller

Of course. You're welcome.

Mark Shapiro

All right. Next up, we're pleased to be with Chris Werley, who is the VP of Sales at UsableNet. Could you tell us about the company and the accessibility services that you offer for enterprises?

Chris Werely

So UsableNet is a 24 year old company. We built some of the earliest test and remediation tools in the accessibility space. We've been a long time innovator. We have about 100 employees globally, serving clients globally as well. In terms of solutions for our customers, we have two main approaches in terms of how we help them.

The first is called UsableNet Assistive Managed Service. And it's a combination of our people and our platform that allow us to do most of the heavy lifting to help a customer make their website accessible and keep it accessible. We do this for companies like Ralph Lauren, American Eagle, Qualcomm, some of the big health systems like Banner Health.

So the value there is that we can help get a customer's website accessible very quickly. Minimal, with minimal investment of resources from their side, collaborating with them on things that they also need to do and give them some training, But and then keep them accessible over time. The second approach is one where we enable the customer's development, product, design teams to, to, to make their websites accessible and keep it.

Mark Shapiro

Do you have an ideal customer? Like are you focused in a specific industry? Is there a certain size company that is kind of hits your sweet spot?

Chris Werely

So, an ideal customer for us is is generally, somebody with \$30 million plus in revenue that has a sizable investment in digital, in either the web or the or mobile apps. Generally those that have transactional or commerce type functionality on them.

Mark Shapiro

What's the entry price point for for your offerings?

Chris Werely

On the enablement side, it's based on kind of what the customer needs and what we recommend to them. But some of the initial price point start around \$12,000 per year and up in the enterprise space.

Mark Shapiro

What sets you apart from your competitors?

Chris Werely

That's a good question, Mark. So there's a couple of things that are I think are very important for the enterprise space. One is that we offer two different solutions or approaches to help a company. And that's really important in enterprise specifically. Oftentimes because there's a large digital portfolio and it's not one size fits all.

So we can either, you know, we can do some of the work using our platform and our people, or we can enable a customer to do that. And sometimes in the enterprise space we end up with with both. We're we're working on taking some of the work off of their plate or enabling them in other areas.

So that's one that's one benefit. The other is a human-centered approach to accessibility. And that means two things. One, it means that we have developers and experts involved in everything that we do. And in the managed service realm, it means that we're not using AI and machine learning alone to, to, to remediate and fix the accessibility of the site.

Mark Shapiro

Chris, thank you very much for letting us do a bit of a deep dive in your company. Appreciate that.

Chris Werely

Thanks for having me, Mark.

Mark Shapiro

Next we have Sterling Rose, the Sales Director at Acquia. Can you tell us a little bit about Acquia and the accessibility services that you offer specifically for enterprises?

Sterling Rose

Yes. So, Acquia as a whole is, you know, a Drupal affiliate and is comprised of a number of products. So offering, you know, the world's only open DHCP platform connected with Drupal. They recently acquired Monsido in January of this year as their accessibility piece to support their overall inclusion goals. Monsido itself is an automated scanning solution that monitors websites against accessibility standards including WCAG 2.0, 2.1, 2.2, single, double and triple A.

Really alerting our end users if and when accessibility errors arise.

Mark Shapiro

Is there an ideal customer, either size or industry, that that you look for?

Sterling Rose

Yeah. So I mean, first and foremost, if you have a website, you're a great candidate. We do far more than just accessibility. as as a, as a solution. But when it comes to accessibility, some of the main verticals over the years have been state, local, federal government, higher education, K-12, non-profits, health, finance, to name a few.

But over the recent years, you know, retail, e-commerce, and service providers have really been a huge, a huge market for us. With Covid, everything transitioned online. And so a lot of retailers that have retail stores can only do business online. So their site traffic increased, their need for accessibility increased, especially with 20% of the market kind of being impacted by some sort of, you know, challenge with accessing websites.

There's a huge market for them to target. So over the last few years, accessibility has really kind of broadened to just about anybody with a website.

Mark Shapiro

Well, what do you see as the entry price for your services?

Sterling Rose

That that can really differ. Again, so our primary pricing models are based on, you know, how many web pages you have, how many documents you have. So the the smaller the website is typically going to depict the entry price point. We typically see maybe around the \$10,000 mark for smaller websites and orgs. But it can vary drastically depending on the full scope of work.

Mark Shapiro

Okay. What sets you apart from your competitors?

Sterling Rose

Competitors. So, you know, I always like to refer back to our G2 reviews. Those are kind of our customers speaking for us. some of the most common feedback we receive, the tool is easier to use for a larger org. So if you have a bunch of different users with different skill sets, you know, some web developers versus some people that actually just update their teacher pages at the university level, you know, every couple of weeks... We've been able to see higher adoption rates within those types of orgs. So the ease of use of the tool, flexibility training and support tend to be the biggest differentiators.

Mark Shapiro

Great. Sterling, thanks for allowing us to have a bit of a deep dive on Acquia and your enterprise solutions. We're pleased to have with us Travis Franklin, who is the Head of Marketing at

QualityLogic. To start with, can you tell us about your company and the solutions that you have for enterprises?

Travis Franklin

Sure. so kind of just a little background on us. So we're a digital accessibility and quality assurance firm. We've been supporting customers since the late 80s and roughly 200 full-time employees. There's many technology first companies in the market, but our specialty is in delivering accessibility services like the testing, training, consultation and then helping clients really address those accessibility needs holistically.

It's also core to our offering that we include individuals that have impairments, as a key part of the test teams. Because we really believe you can't build an accessibility program without including the individuals who most benefit from accessibility practices.

Mark Shapiro

All right. What do you see as your ideal customer? Is there a specific industry or size of company that that's your ideal?

Travis Franklin

You know, size of company? We help every different size. You know, from startups to some Fortune 500 companies. We are best placed to help clients who desire turnkey accessibility support, where they're looking for a partner that will, that can tailor their services to fit the client's needs.

Mark Shapiro

How long does it typically take a customer in your experience to become accessible?

Travis Franklin

It really depends on the complexity of the properties, what investment the customer wants to make. You know, if they're leveraging our full offer, our full testing and remediation support capabilities, with a smaller footprint, accessibility can be really quick. Enterprise organizations with multiple applications, you know, legacy technology, maybe a decentralized process or other aspects can increase that time window.

And then, you know, depending again, on that complexity, it can require additional thought and planning. Oftentimes that can be a multi-month or depending, you know, in some cases it can be a multi-year effort.

Mark Shapiro

What's your entry price for your services?

Travis Franklin

You know, we really work with clients on their budget. We listen to what their, what they need and then figure out how we can make the greatest impact possible with investment that they are

able to make. That can be as low as \$5,000 to \$10,000 to support initial services and auditing. And then for other enterprise clients we've supported in engagements in the hundreds of thousands or more where we provide like a fully dedicated accessibility team. 1% of revenue is usually a good benchmark for figuring out accessibility investment. But whatever it is, you know, we work with our clients based on where they're at.

Mark Shapiro

What sets you apart from your competitors?

Travis Franklin

We built our original practice delivering quality assurance services and then began our accessibility practice. when our Director of Engineering went blind over a decade ago. We really wanted to take his perceived, you know, disability and turn it into a way to help others. So not only do we have deep care for our customers in the mission, but we bring decades of engineering experience and expertise that many of our competitors don't.

You know, beyond that, we specialize in services and consulting rather than putting a large technology platform at the center. And our focus is always customers first, not owner's contracts. You know, we have full flexibility. And then we start with our customer and build plans around what their unique needs. to help them succeed.

Mark Shapiro

Great. All right. Travis, thank you. Appreciate the the deep dive into your company. Now on to the Q&A section. Okay. First question. what is the minimum acceptable level of accessibility? Who determines it, and how is it measured? Mark, why don't you grab this one?

Mark Miller

So, unfortunately, that's not well defined. Right? And you can look at it in multiple ways. One of the ways that that could be answered just out of the gate is that most organizations are looking at the WCAG guidelines, and the market level of those guidelines to attempt to conform to is at the double AA level. And currently we're on the 2.2 version of those guidelines. But many organizations might be a version or two back.

In fact, the US Federal Government and the section 508 Guidelines are still at 2.0. But we would really work with the organization, work with the organization's legal council to to define a minimum standard, usually around making sure people have access to the products and that the the critical user flows are able to be navigated by people with disabilities, so that they have a very, very clear target when they're trying to, when they're trying to work with their products.

Mark Shapiro

Next question. Can accessibility service companies prevent us from being sued? Travis, you want to take this?

Travis Franklin

That's a good question. You can be sued for anything, anytime, whether the lawsuit ends up being successful or not. The most important thing is to take steps to reduce that reduce that risk. So, as we mentioned, you know, earlier, you know, fixed issues that are found by scanning tools, target high traffic pages or critical workflows first.

And give users a way to get in touch if they do find issues. Ultimately getting compliant and accessible. And that will really help stave off some of the challenges that would trigger a lawsuit.

Mark Shapiro

Settling a lawsuit may cost \$50,000, but fixing our accessibility issues may cost half a million. Why not just settle the lawsuit versus fixing the website? Doug, do you take this one?

Doug Koppenhofer

Yeah. Really interesting. So the, I think that, the premise of that assumes that you are only going to fix one lawsuit. So that's the that's the first trap in the in the problem. I think you'll tend to see that if you have a single lawsuit, you likely have multiple complaints as well.

And, it's very rare that you have only one lawsuit. Right? So it's, it's really managing a legal issue that you have as a corporation. But beyond that the challenge of this is that it's not really about as much the litigation and the complaints anymore. It's really about the market that you're missing by not doing this proactively.

Right? You're... 27% of US adults have some type of disability. And, so you're missing an opportunity, really. And I think, that's really the way to look at this problem. That's the way a lot of the big, our big enterprise clients are beginning to look at it anyway.

Mark Shapiro

What measures should be put in place to alert us of an accessibility error? Sterling?

Sterling Rose

Oh, right. So at the end result here, you want a service that can monitor your website consistently and on an on demand cadence or an automated cadence to alert you and your team if there's anything found on the website. And that's what Monsido will provide. It's a continued weekly automatic scan and an email alert to whoever wants one if there are accessibility issues present.

You can also take this a couple steps earlier in the process and monitor development, staging or production environments. So with our service, you can give our crawler authorization to bypass firewalls if they're password protected. And you can find and be alerted of those issues before it even gets published to your live website. Some tools can scan those environments, some can't.

So both are available. But those are two scenarios I would encourage all organizations to consider.

Mark Shapiro

Next question. What should be included in an SLA from a digital accessibility company? Chris, why don't you take this one?

Chris Werely

Sure. You know, a lot of this in our world comes up in terms of our managed service, where we're, we're doing the heavy lifting to help a customer stay accessible. Now, in our SLA is around, around remediating issues that are found by UsableNet that are introduced through new code or content changes from a customer, and having really good platform uptime so that, that somebody always has access to the accessibility, to an accessible site. Otherwise, you know, some of the other solutions around, testing and response should, should really be that of like a really good partner. You need a, you need a good SLA and good engagement with a partner because there's a lot of interaction back and forth with, with your, with a, with an accessibility partner around solving issues.

And then a lot of, a lot of us like UsableNet provide an accessibility platform for testing and that, you know, that needs to have good uptime.

Mark Shapiro

We have several locations across various countries. How do accessibility service companies manage all of this efficiently for us, and what standards do they adhere to? Mark, you want to take this?

Mark Miller

Yeah, sure. That's a important question today, because Europe has new regulations out. The EAA, European Accessibility Act, which is requiring all the different countries in Europe to adhere to a cohesive standard for accessibility. While we often think about the WCAG guidelines, the WCAG guidelines. There's something called 301, EN 301 549 in Europe.

It actually points to the WCAG guidelines as well, but adds some additional clarity on, on top of them. So the good news is, is that if you're working towards conformance with the WCAG guidelines, that's going to cover you, for the most part, globally. Right? And then, we help our customers look at some of the subtle differences that exist, like with the EAA.

With different, you know, different areas of the world, you can have kind of kind of subtle shifts. So, it does make sense to, to kind of take a look at it where you might have some variation.

Mark Shapiro

Okay. That's all the time we have for questions today. Thank you. Travis, Sterling, Mark, Doug and Chris for your insights on accessibility services for enterprise. Also, I'd like to thank the audience for attending and participating in today's event.

Lori Litz

Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. Don't forget, we have four remaining sessions. Right up at 1:30 PM, Navigating Launch: Crafting Your Enterprise Accessibility Program by UsableNet. 2:00 PM Eastern time, Launching a Sustainable Accessibility Program by TPGi at 2:30 PM Eastern. The Intersection of Digital Accessibility and Trust by Monsido powered by Acquia.

And at 2:55 PM, Make Every Document in the Enterprise Accessible presented by Crawford Technologies. The expo floor is open till 4:00. Don't forget about the game that we're playing today where if you complete all of the treasure hunt activities, you're entered for a gift card. \$250 from Amazon. If you missed the rules earlier, if you missed them in the email, don't worry.

They're posted out there in the lobby and you can go ahead and see them. Thank you to our sponsors today. They are Crawford Technologies, UsableNet, QualityLogic, Monsido powered by Acquia and TPGi. And again this event is recorded and will be available for viewing on demand this evening. I will send out instructions and how you can view that.

You can always view any of our past event on demand by visiting [Accessibility.com/events](https://www.accessibility.com/events), scrolling down to Past Events, finding the event that you want to consume on demand and clicking on it and following the links from there. Thank you all so much for being here today. We will see you at the end of this month for Accessibility Services for Mobile Applications and Kiosks.

Have a great rest of your day.