

# Accessibility Software Testing Platforms- Event Transcript

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## *Lori Litz*

Hi, everyone. Welcome to today's Accessibility.com event on Accessibility Software Testing Platforms. My name is Lori, and I'm the Director of Conferences here at Accessibility.com. And we're super pleased to have you here with us today. Today's event will take a look at how to select the right accessibility software testing platforms. These platforms will do automatic scans of your website for you to check for accessibility issues.

And, depending on the vendor that you select or company that you select to go with and what platform services they offer will determine what happens next. Our President, Mark, will be interviewing accessibility industry expert, Bridget Shapiro, today about the accessibility software testing platform industry. We'll do a deep dive into today's sponsor, Monsido powered by Acquia with Regional Sales Director, Sterling Rose.

And then we'll do a question and answer session. Please go ahead and type your questions into the Q&A section, and use the chat for networking amongst yourselves and any discussion that you want to have amongst the group about the ongoing discussion. After today's event we encourage you to head out to the Expo Hall and visit with Monsido powered by Acquia.

They have a booth out on the Expo floor and if you visit and chat with them, they will give you a free website scan to help check your website for accessibility issues. And now, stay tuned. We are going to head on over to Mark and Bridget.

*Mark Shapiro*

We're pleased to have with us Bridget Shapiro. Bridget is an expert in the digital accessibility industry, working with such companies as Chipotle, Roblox, AmeriGas, Mondelez, Yelp, Virgin, Ganett, and Restaurant Brands International. Bridget, thanks for joining us today and giving us some insight on your experience with accessibility testing platforms.

*Bridget Shapiro*

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

*Mark Shapiro*

So, Bridget, to start with, what should you expect from any sort of accessibility testing platform?

*Bridget Shapiro*

You know, there's really benefits to both manual and platforms, but, platforms really are great because they can go wide. So when you're an enterprise company or, you know, you've got a large website that's got a lot of things happening... the platforms are really beneficial because they're going to be able to scan and identify issues across many, many, many pages where a manual tester would not be able to put that that time in unless you had, you know, a ridiculous amount of time, which obviously is not going to be beneficial or cost effective as well.

So, you know, if you're looking to do a deep dive of specific things, manual testing is really good for that. But platforms really can span the gamut. And and, cast the net wide, I guess you could say.

*Mark Shapiro*

So what are really the main benefits of deploying any sort of accessibility testing platforms?

*Bridget Shapiro*

Timing and the amount that it can bring back results quicker and across a larger scope. So when you have, a really large website, it's really good to see what are my biggest issues? And, you know, you don't need to spend weeks to have a manual tester go in and do that sort of thing. These these platforms can scan and really identify these issues quickly.

So, I'd say the biggest benefit would be timing, and being able to look at everything, in a, in a much more, I guess in a sped up way versus manual testing having to to put the man hours in.

*Mark Shapiro*

When you're looking for an accessibility testing platform provider, what should you look for?

*Bridget Shapiro*

You want to make sure. So there are some platforms that can do the the fixing for you. And there's going to be some that maybe just identify. So I, I always tell my clients, you know, what's important to you? I did have some clients in the past that really wanted to make sure that their team was the team fixing it. So they they would prefer a platform that really just was identifying

issues and maybe gave some advice about how to fix it. But the team was fixing it on their own, you know, on their own. But there are some teams too that may not have a full dev team at their disposal, and the platforms that can do the fixing as well. Identify the issue and fix the issue, all at once, would be beneficial for them.

So, you know, it's important for the company to understand what their needs are first before they start researching these different platforms.

*Mark Shapiro*

What should businesses budget for these types of services?

*Bridget Shapiro*

Oh, that's a great question. You know, I've seen it for as low as \$50 a month up to tens of thousands of dollars a month. It really does run the gamut of costs. So, you know, when you're talking about what you're looking for and what to budget for.

If you're looking for one of these providers to be doing the fixing for you, that's likely going to run a little bit more than somebody, or some platform, that might just be identifying the issues. So as a company, you really want to identify what your specific needs are. And then, you know, you want to make sure that they put that in their proposal back to you exactly what it is they're going to be doing.

Are they doing the fixes? Are they not doing the fixes? How many fixes? Is there a cap of that, per month or what have you. And based on those things, you know, \$50 a month is probably not what you're looking for.

*Mark Shapiro*

Bridget, what should a business do when they're actually looking for the vendor? You've worked with a lot of companies. There's a ton of vendors out there. How do you go about selecting the right one for you?

*Bridget Shapiro*

You're right. There are a lot in this space now. But definitely you're going to want to see if they can provide a demo for you, first and foremost. You really want to look at that software. You want to be able to see exactly what it is. What kind of results are coming back to you.

How can they do? I mean, ask the questions like, how did these results get to my team? Are they in a portal? Can I see that portal? Is it just a file that I'm getting every so often? How often? So, you know, it really does run the gamut. And what's good is that a lot of these companies can kind of cater to your needs, but you really want to find out exactly what it is that they can do.

So a demo is first and foremost. You also want to make sure that you meet the team. So I definitely am strongly recommending that whatever platform you select, these companies

select, you want to make sure that not only have you met the team, but there is a team and it's not somebody that you're calling into somebody different every single time.

You want to make sure that they know how you work, what you do. They know your business, and you're not going to get that by just calling into a pool of people. So it's, it's my recommendation for sure that it's either sometimes they're called client managers, project managers, or, you know, just, that that point of contact is really important.

*Mark Shapiro*

Okay. Great. How is the platform deployed?

*Bridget Shapiro*

Typically, for the most part, I would say, software as a service. So it's something that, you know, you're, it's a software as a service. If, if you do need something that's kind of running internally, you will have to talk to that vendor to see if they have something that you can put on a server and kind of run internally there.

But for the most part, it is a SAAS type of platform.

*Mark Shapiro*

Great. All right, Bridget, thank you for for shedding some light on this for us. We appreciate that.

*Bridget Shapiro*

Oh my pleasure. Anytime. Thanks for having me.

*Mark Shapiro*

I'd like to welcome Sterling Rose, the Sales Director at Acquia. Sterling, thanks for letting us take a deep dive into Acquia's accessibility software testing platform.

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. Thank you for having me. Excited to be here.

*Mark Shapiro*

Can you tell us about the company and your testing platform?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. So, Acquia as a whole is, you know, an open DXP you know, GAM, all things websites that you would need to host your business and to run your business effectively online.

Monsido's their latest acquisition that finalized in January of this year and Monsido is an accessibility testing platform. And what it will do is scan your websites for WCAG compliance levels, prioritize, locate issues, and then provide training and support. At the end of the day, for all of our end users, to make the corrections. We do far more than just accessibility.

We are a web governance tool. We also scan for things like broken links, misspellings, SEO... But accessibility is definitely our bread and butter.

*Mark Shapiro*

Who's, who's the ideal customer? Who are you really targeting?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. So over the last like 6 or 7 years, some of our target verticals have been state, local, federal government, as accessibility's been, you know, a mandate for them. Nonprofits, higher education, K-12... Over the last 3 or 4 years, it's really grown into pretty much any and all verticals, especially since Covid, you know, everything went online and the attention around website accessibility skyrocketed.

So retail, e-commerce, you know, really any website that's publicly accessible, falls under, you know, Public Accommodation Act. And so if you have a website it needs to be accessible. But those are some of the main verticals we've kind of targeted over the last 6 or 7 years.

*Mark Shapiro*

In your experience, how long does it take your customers to actually become accessible by using your platform?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah, it's a great question. And it can be spread across the board. It could be, you know, a couple months or it can be a couple of years. It just depends how active they are in trying to remediate their website. Do they have one person tackling it? Or do they have a team? And how often are they going in and trying to remediate, you know, old pages?

How many websites do they have? And how many pages are on the website? And how many templates are they using? So all of that will, you know, obviously play into a factor. But, you know, if organizations have a team, I'd say, you know, 3 to 5 people really dedicated to working on the website, they can see pretty drastic improvements in the first like 3 to 6 months.

And the main important thing with accessibility is just seeing your progress. So keeping that steady, you know, not letting it fall backwards, but continuing to improve.

*Mark Shapiro*

What do you see that sets you apart from your competitors?

*Sterling Rose*

You know, I like to usually bring our G2 reviews into the mix. So, you know, from our, our clients that have switched, you know, we've had over 800 organizations switch from our competitors.

And the most common feedback we receive, and you can verify on G2, is the platform is easier to use. When you think about an organization that may have, you know, 30, 40, 50, 100 or 200

users... For higher education, for example, you might have skilled web developers and you might have teachers or professors that are updating their pages, you know, once a month or once a quarter.

And so finding a tool that can allow any and all, you know, skill sets and technical backgrounds to use, effectively, I think is really important. And that's one of our most common feedback.

*Mark Shapiro*

Great. Sterling, thanks. So I appreciate you letting us to a bit of a deep dive. We're not going to go into the question and answer portion.

First question. If my website passes an automated test, can I assume that it's fully accessible? Sterling, you want to take this?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah, yeah. Happy to take that. It's a great question. We get, you know, these all the time. And the short answer is no. You cannot assume your website is fully accessible if you just go and pass an automated test.

For example, with our tool and many of the tools out there, anybody could go in and ignore a bunch of checks. They could go and say, don't check this, don't check this, this is why. And it improves your score. If you're doing that, you know, inappropriately, therefore your website, you know, it's not going to be guaranteed, you know, accessible.

But in addition to that, a lot of things can't be determined 100% or not by an automated test. And you would need to perform what's known as a manual audit, going in and manually navigating and looking at pages, testing all the accessibility components yourself.

*Mark Shapiro*

Right. That actually ties into the next question. Do automated testing platforms identify what needs to be tested manually?

Sterling want to take this one?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So kind of feeding off the last, question. They can, and they should... I can't speak for all automated testing tools, but, us and some of our, you know, biggest competitors do. And we flagged these types of checks with different definitions and different logos. So, for example, in our platform if something needs to be manually tested, we're going to flag that with a review check.

And that's telling you as the end user this needs to be manually reviewed yourself. We'll provide the criteria and the steps and the training for you to do that in-house if you'd like. I don't know

what all vendors are providing in terms of training and support, but that's something we would provide.

*Mark Shapiro*

Do accessibility software testing platforms offer some proof or certification of guarantee that your digital content meets accessibility standards?

Bridget, you want to take this one?

*Bridget Shapiro*

Sure. There are some that we'll say they do and provide a certification. And I just want to put an asterisk on this. So you might have the certification, but all it takes is one broken link on your website to be an accessibility issue. And all of a sudden your site is not 100% accessible. So there's really not a way for anybody to claim that they are, their website is 100% accessible to 100% of the population. It's... that's the unicorn. It doesn't exist. There, there are so many different browsers and versions of the browsers working with the different assistive technology that each user is using and the version that they're using that it's an impossibility, really. So to say that you are 100%, it's a hard thing for clients new to this to understand that.

But it's an important thing to really understand, as you look into this, is that your goal is to be as accessible as you can to as many people as you can. And, and to prove that you've made this a priority and that you're working toward that, but you can't... You're not... No one's going to be able to provide you with this big badge that says you are 100% accessible at all times. Maybe at that one point in time.

But like I said, all it takes is one image that went up that has no alt text. You know, your dev team forgot to put that on there. And for that time... that's an accessibility issue. A broken link, same thing. So, be cautious. just know that there are things that you can do to improve, but there is no golden badge,

I guess.

*Mark Shapiro*

What type of reports to accessibility testing providers provide to us on an ongoing basis? And do we get alerted immediately if a new issue is found? Sterling?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. So I can take, you know, Monsido and a couple of our, you know, direct competitors I'm familiar with. I'll start with the the the latest question is like, how often are we going to get notified? And our tool and then most of the tools out there, you can schedule a cadence of scans.

So for ours as an example, you can set a weekly scan that will take place every Monday at 8:00 am if you want it to. You can also request on demand scans throughout the week. Manually, if

you want more scans. And you'll be alerted when those scans are completed. So it's not in real time. I don't know any vendor out there that's able to automatically scan the entire website consistently 24-7 and alert end users. But with our tool, you can request a single page scan when you're done working on that page. And it will give you feedback within 1 to 2 minutes.

So you can request these scans as many times as you like. But it's not automated and it's not going to be immediate unless you request that scan. The types of reports that are sent out can be a mixed bag. So you can request a CSV or an Excel report, a PDF report. And with us, these reports are going to be applicable to different types of use cases.

So the PDF reports are more visual, more pretty, more so for upper management. More so for any executive leaders that want to see, hey, how is my website doing as a whole? Some of the more granular reports and actionable reports might be a mix of PDFs, but also CSV and Excel. So those might be for the developers, that are getting sent reports into JIRA, or any of their other kind of internal ticketing systems.

So those are, you know, the types of reports people can expect.

*Mark Shapiro*

All right. Next question. Will any of these companies conformance reports stop us from being sued? Bridget? Why don't you take this?

*Bridget Shapiro*

I wish. But no. So there's always... there are always going to be these people that will sue for the, you know, love of suing. They will not stop a lawsuit, but you can absolutely, help defend against a lawsuit when when you are using these and when accessibility is top of mind. So, definitely, it is a benefit for companies to put accessibility as a top priority to be utilizing these sort of platforms. But unfortunately, there is no silver bullet here that, you know, just lets everybody avoid a lawsuit, unfortunately.

*Mark Shapiro*

Okay. Will these companies fix our issues as well or just report them to us and then we have to figure out how to fix them?

*Bridget Shapiro*

So there are some companies that will do the fixing for you. So that's definitely something to vet out if it's important to you in that vendor selection process stage. So, you know, some companies are just going to identify and maybe provide some background on how to fix it. But there are going to be these platforms also that identify and fix.

So that is a huge thing depending on your needs or any companies needs to identify that from the beginning and start going after those platforms that do whichever is your preference.



*Mark Shapiro*

Okay. When should we bring an accessible software testing platform into our development process? Sterling?

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. Great question. So as soon as possible. With our tool, we have the ability to scan dev, staging and production environments, if you give the tool authorization. Now the content has to be accessible via the internet. So it can't be locally hosted.

At least with our tool. There are some tools out there that you can download and scan locally hosted on prem, content that you're creating. But the sooner you do it, the better. It's much better to try to find that before you publish it on the live website, then scan it, then go back into your dev environment, push out the fix, publish it again, scan it, and see if it's accessible at that point. It's a lot of wasted time and effort. So earlier the better.

*Mark Shapiro*

Great. All right. That's all the questions we have time for today. Sterling. Thank you. I appreciate you helping, as well as Bridget. Thank you both.

*Sterling Rose*

Yeah. Thank you for having me.

*Lori Litz*

Thank you, Sterling, Bridget and Mark for such a great conversation about accessibility software testing platforms. I know I learned a little bit more today, and I'm certain the audience did as well. Up next, we have a presentation from Monsido powered by Acquia. So you can go ahead and join that from the lobby or watch it from the lobby.

I also encourage you to head on out to the expo hall and visit with Monsido powered by Acquia. If you visit their booth, they will get you a free website scan if you stop and chat with them for a little bit. If you haven't already signed up for our event later on this month, Building and Remediating Accessible Websites, I highly encourage you to do so.

You can visit [Accessibility.com/events](https://www.accessibility.com/events) to register for that event. Today's event is recorded and will be available later this evening. You'll receive an email from me with instructions on how to access it. And at that time, you can also sign up for our next event this month, Building and Remediating Accessible Websites. There's a lot to learn in that upcoming session, and I hope that you all will find the time to join us.

Thank you again to our sponsor today, Monsido powered by Acquia. And thank you all so much for taking your time, which we know is very valuable and precious, to spend a little bit with that with us here today to learn more about accessibility software testing platforms. I hope you enjoy the rest of your day and we'll hope you join us next time as well. Thank you so much.