

Event Transcript: Jonathan Hassell CEO & Founder | Hassell Inclusion

(Jonathan Hassell)

Well, I'm delighted to be with you in this session today. I'm going to summarize a little bit of what you've heard so far as a bit of a segway into what I'm going to be talking about. What you've heard was that motivation is important. Don't just do accessibility to be a Boy Scout. It's a huge business opportunity when done right.

We need to get organizations to think of accessibility more like security to make it happen. We've heard about product benchmarking. Accessibility needs to be about usability as well as compliance. We've heard about team maturity benchmarking. It's not about just getting accessibility right once. It's about getting it into the process so it's done consistently and efficiently. And I totally agree.

And there's one international standard that includes all of these and more that I'm going to be talking about. I'm going to introduce myself after I tell you what that is. But no one has mentioned it yet in here. So what do all of these standards... So these are management standards. Environmental, social and governance management standards that organizations all over the world have put in place to make sure that they are doing the right things as a company.

What do they all have in common? So information security, you heard Abid talking a lot about that. Resilience, environmental management and quality. All of these are ISO standards. They didn't come out of the W3C and organizations all over the world have already voted with their feet to put these in place. And that point from Abid was exactly where I wanted to start, really, which is it's really important for people to want to do accessibility and people are doing all of these already.

So wouldn't it be great to have an accessibility standard in here, too? Well, that's what I'm going to be talking about. So ISO 30071 Part 1 is the accessibility management standards, and that is the reason why lots of organizations have not really thought about accessibility at all. Now, again, what we've done security, we've done residents, we've done quality. What's this accessibility thing?

That's what we're going to be talking about. Why we need to talk about this. Well, here's the good news. So there's been an increase of 171% in job postings in the US including the word accessibility in their job titles in LinkedIn. So basically there are loads of companies out there buying into accessibility, wanting to recruit people who know what they're doing.

The bad news is that we've had WCAG for 20 years and I've been working in accessibility for 20 years and we've succeeded in getting 2.6% of the home pages that WebAIM Million looked at it last year in 2021, accessible. 2.6%. So WCAG on its own is really just not getting us what we need. It's going up and well in 2020 it was 1.6%, but that's a really slow improvement.

Why is that? Well, I believe it's because organizations are struggling to progress in the sorts of things that we're talking about today in accessibility strategy. So people want to learn. There are 33% more accessibility conversations on LinkedIn year on year. And a lot of big organizations are appointing sort of senior consultants to run their accessibility. So Derek Featherstone and Rob Sinclair have both been around for as long as I have and now doing things at Salesforce and Atlassian.

We're just off our feet in my company, Hassell Inclusion, because we help organizations get good at accessibility. That's the thing that we all sort of agree about is the aim. So a little bit about me. My name's Jonathan Hassell. I've been doing accessibility for about 20 years. I've been helping organizations get good at accessibility. Initially, I was trying to help the BBC get 400 different websites, mobile apps, digital TV services, all of the above,

working for accessibility. So at scale is what I know. And I am the lead author of The Standard that I'm going to be talking about in this session. So I've been doing this for a long time. I've written books, I've helped organizations all over the world, and my team and I are doing that all of the time.

And we want to try and bring some of that through to you now. People don't always kind of like ISO standards because they're not free. You have to pay 149 Swiss Francs to get 30071 Part 1. But actually testing against this is. So I've written a couple of books that are much cheaper than that and they help you do the right things when it comes to this new standard.

But we've also created a maturity scorecard that is completely free, takes about 15 minutes to fill in. Gives you a score against the standard and some information about how you can improve. So I'm going to come back to that a little later, but there's a lot here that could be really helpful, I hope. So what it brings is, well, if you think about WCAG, WCAG is all about, how do we check to see whether a website or a mobile app or something like that is accessible?

What this standard says is, did the team in creating it are they accessible? The organization creating it, are they accessible? Are they going to continually deliver accessibility going forwards? That's what it's about. It's a management standard and it's very, very much on point for all of the things from the panel that you've just seen. Good at accessibility is something that we've been doing for years.

As I say, I've been trying to help organizations with this. And generally what we find is that they go from initial lack of awareness, through awareness, through competence, compliance and then advantage. So the advantage really comes when people start doing the sorts of accessibility, usability, things that the panel was talking about. So how do we get organizations from the start of their journey to that?

That's what the standard is all about. It's designed to enable them to understand the benefits of going on that journey, why they should care, why it's good business. To go beyond the technical standards and to the managerial stuff. So the stuff that needs to be in place to say, okay, how are we going to use these standards? How much money is it going to cost to actually deliver to these standards?

All of that sort of stuff. It extends beyond the Web and things like mobile, even some platforms that haven't been created yet. So the idea is that it's platform agnostic when it comes to technology. Any sorts of technologies that you might be wanting to create and make accessible would fit in here. And it fundamentally is a blueprint to embed organ accessibility into the business as usual of of an organization.

It's also a way of that organization being able to say, we're not just good at accessibility in terms of one product. We're good at accessibility in terms of how we do products. And that's the really important thing here. So what is what is the standard? Well, it's a couple of things. For organizations. It's a maturity model. It gives nine categories of maturity that we're going to touch on a little bit later.

But there's things like strategy, processes, skills, how things work out in terms of governance. All of those. And the reason for that being so important is in the real world, most organizations don't just have a website. They have loads of different channels for their customers to interact with, whether it's kind of like stuff that appears on social media, stuff that appears on print, stuff that appears in emails and their apps and everything else, documents that they send out.

All of these things need to be accessible for people to have a good experience of them. The other thing is, in the real world, and this is what Lukas was talking about in the panel, it's not just about your customers. It's about your staff, too. Are all of the tools that you're procuring for your staff to use accessible? And actually, for the people who create those tools.

So the vendors and the digital agencies, are they set up to be able to handle the accessibility needs of their client?. So people saying, yeah, that's a great tool... is it accessible? You know, that's the VPAT for Zoom there. So it's all of these things together and that's that's how you need to be thinking about it. And then for individual projects and for product development, we need to provide some help to help people through in terms of how they get things done in an efficient, repeatable way.

That's what the standard is all about. It's not the technical stuff, it's how you do it. So a number of things sort of came out. I'm going to knock them off, sort of like one by one from the conversation from the panel, how all of these things are actually there in the ISO standard that I'm talking about and how it sets a framework for enabling organizations to understand how all of these things play together.

The first one was was the business case. So, you know, why would you do this? There's loads of reasons for why you would do this. Lukas was talking some really good ones on the panel. There are financial, ethical, legal and innovation benefits. Certainly in my company we're helping organizations all of the time really get to grips with what they need to do to actually get some of these benefits.

Why it's not just about getting rid of, if you like, problems legally, but it can be as much about your reputation and your innovation as everything else. So there's a lot there and it's certainly there and in the international standard. And the key thing really is you need to know why you're doing this to to then actually commit money to doing this in an organization.

So that's what they in ISO 30071 Part 1 requires. There was a sort of a whole tone in the panel around embedding accessibility in the product design process, and that's a key part of the standards. It looks at that from a requirements perspective and also from a perspective of how things work in production. So I'm going to give you a hint of some of those eight activities just to see how some of the things that Abid, Lukas and Lori were talking about actually are already here in the Standard.

So we're going to look at that link between guidelines and research. Are guidelines enough? Is user research helpful? Accessibility - usability? Yeah. What is the aim? Is it one size fits one? What types of testing should we be doing? How do we prioritize fixes? You know, and that whole aspect around progress, not perfection. They are all here in the Standard.

So the first one - guidelines. So it's really important to know what guidelines are the right ones for the right sort of products that you're creating. It's really easy. If it's a website, let's say for example you were working on my project which is working on a prototype of an experience in the Metaverse. Metaverse accessibility you don't use WCAG. There's actually guidelines from the XR Foundation and we're actually creating our own as well via user research.

And it's that sort of thing that we're talking about here. You need to know what your products needs. So it's the platforms you're working on, the technologies you're working on, but also the other aspects of your products that really make it unique. So that's the sort of thing. It's guidelines are a great start, but actually doing the user research that's the folks we're talking about is is really encouraged in the standard.

The next thing was that whole issue around accessibility usability I think is what Abid was talking about. That's there in the standard as well around, so the term used in there is accessibility experience. There are three levels. The technical experience, if you like, is compliance with guidelines, things like WCAG. But the other two layers on top of that are ones that come from the ISO standards around usability.

Exactly what the folks were talking about, effective and efficient. Can people complete their user journeys and then satisfying on top of that? Is this such a great experience that you would recommend it to people? That's the sort of usability things which are there and have been there in ISO for years. So what this does is to enable organizations to say, what level are we trying to get to for our products here?

So really useful stuff there, I hope. Also we have that whole kind of discussion around sort of one size fits one. For me, I always tend to think about things design for all is good, but nobody really wants it. What you really want is design for me. That's what I want. I want somebody designing a product that's perfect for my needs. And so design for all is great as an idea and but sometimes it falls down on that user personalized approach is necessary.

So, for example, what we have on the screen here is say, for example, WCAG says nothing about the size of text because it assumes the browser will be able to make the text bigger. That's great on a computer. It's not so great on a mobile phone. My iPhone can't do that. So actually, if I need that, it's the product itself, the website or the app that actually needs to be working with that.

And it's that sort of thing that is there in the standard. You know, does your product need to think about that? I'm going on into the implementation phase. There was a big discussion about, you know, advocating usability as the right sort of testing to do. And usability is certainly where we would want to get people to... that usability layer of IX.

But that requires user testing, which can be really expensive. Now there are ways of making it cheaper. I mean, specifically the Fable way is a great way of making the cost of that cheaper. But cost and the reliability of findings are really important. So what the standard says is you need to have a strategy, you need to use the money that you've got for testing wisely and think about it before you even start creating, creating anything to see what is the best way of spending money to get the best results. From there from the testing, you'll have that problem of priorities. So and the question always is what things should we prioritize? Should we prioritize the bugs from compliance, the bugs from user testing? Well, there's a lot of really good stuff in the standard to kind of say, okay, if you were to fix a bug, how many people would benefit? How much would it cost?

And you can use much more, if you like, nuanced ways of using that information and especially things like is it in part of the products that the users care about most? Is it in a core user journey? That sort of thing can really help you prioritize. And then the last things are all about launch risk. So that whole issue around, you know, can you ever get to perfect? You know, every product that launches has bugs.

Why can't they have accessibility bugs? And the key thing here is to say, actually, chances are it will have accessibility bugs. So what do you do to make sure that you balance the risk there to get a good governance sign off there. These are the sorts of things that the standard has got a lot about. So it just gives you an idea of some of those things.

Embedding things in organizational culture and capability was another thing that people were talking about. You know, how do we get people trained? You know, how- who's responsible for accessibility actually is the key thing. What sort of support should you be bringing onboard? Do you do things in-house or use organizations like ours or any of the others who might appear on these sessions?

How do you embed stuff in policies in your governance? These are the sorts of things an organization needs to get good at to get things through. So that gives you just an idea about the about the standard itself. I wanted to give you some things which are a little bit more tangible that you can do. How do you benchmarking yourself against this?

Well, we've been doing that for years. It's a really involved and absolutely fascinating process of interviewing people, doing a lot of assessments with organizations. Not everybody can afford that, which is why we created our scorecard. It enables organizations to do a self-assessment to say, okay, I want to benchmark to see how well we're doing against the standard.

It sounds quite interesting. And that's, you know, 15 minutes, maybe half an hour's work, and you get a score that just as long as the information you put in is correct, that's a good indication of how well your doing. Obviously, this is not the only maturity model in town. So Lori on the on the on the panel was mentioning the W3C one.

From our perspective, that one is not bad. But the key thing here is because this is all based around the international standards, then everybody in the world, it's common currency. That's the thing that people tend to love about it is that I could be doing this for my company. I could be asking our suppliers who produce fillings for our company, you know, how are they doing as well?

And we're using the same model? It's also really, really easy to start with. It doesn't cost very much money and it flows from, you know, a bit of information to some suggested outcomes. So it's really, really useful. And I wanted to give you some kind of hints of some of that. So we've had about 300 companies who've done the scorecard.

Actually, it's probably more like 400, 500 now. And these are some of the things that have come out of it for those companies, but also for the industry. So for those companies, because we've got lots of different organizations doing it, we're able to say we never share results of one company with another one, but we can share averages in different parts of industry.

So if you're a software as a service vendor and you've got a particular score, how well are you doing against the average of other vendors? That can be quite useful. And we've also done some research reports from this. I just wanted to give you a just a few of the sorts of things that come out of it.

For example, we found that most organizations who've taken it have got good motivation. That's why they've done it, but they lack capability and responsibility. Only 3% have some sort of formal assessment procedure to see how good their staff are at accessibility. 47% have a board member who would take

some responsibility for accessibility. Those are the ones who are spending money on it so are actually doing good.

39% don't have somebody actually engaging strategically at all in accessibility. When it comes to the stuff they're doing with their suppliers, only 32% actually ask their suppliers in the contract to deliver accessible results and 14% actually check those results. So it's entirely possible that if you aren't creating your website, you're actually asking a digital agency to do it.

If you're not doing this stuff, they may not be giving you what you want, and that could be the reason why you're not getting what you want. 35% of organizations say they get tests done, but they don't know how to fix stuff, so they just don't bother. And only 5% of organizations are looking at their spend and 62% are measuring their return on investment.

This stuff can cost a lot of money, and it's our contention that a lot of companies are spending loads of money and not really getting any results from it. So therefore they will do less of this in the future rather than more. That's the sort of thing that we believe is really important. So just a couple of sort of calls to action before we go into some Q&A.

We would love you to try our scorecards. You know, it's, there's the link there on the screen. Hassellinclusion.scoreapp.com. Check check it out. See if it's going to be helping you in your company. If you are an accessibility company, from our perspective, ISO 30071 Part 1 actually provides a framework to help organizations understand the value of the services you've got. So all, for example, all of the things that Fable does to help people understand how people with disabilities feel about their product, that's great. But loads of companies out there don't think that that's valuable yet. Well, the Standard says that that that really is it. Also, if people have been following it, gives them the right information to go to the people at the top of the company to say accessibility is valuable, let's do it.

Can you give me the money to make this happen? So people might have the budget for your services as well. That's why we believe that this Standard has a real chance of changing the way the industry works and actually getting loads more companies spending money in the right places, doing the right things systemically, so that they're able to deliver this all of the time.

So thanks... Thanks for your time. And we'll be moving on to the Q A very shortly.